PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1992-93

COMPRISING PERIOD
14 December 1992—15 January 1993

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* *Denotes change since 30 November 1992.*

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OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 216**

TENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93

House of Commons

Monday 14 December 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Tenants (Cash Incentives)

1. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to investigate the effect of the cash incentive schemes available to enable tenants to move from public sector to private sector housing on local house prices and house availability for local people in Wales.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): I shall certainly watch these schemes with great interest, and I expect the results to be beneficial.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that there is something offensive and unfair about the fact that Welsh taxpayers' money might go by way of grants to people from cities such as London to buy houses in Wales that local people cannot afford? Thousands of local people are trying to find rented accommodation or, if they can, to buy. Does not that need an initiative by the Welsh Office to ensure that equivalent funds are available for people in Wales to get a home, which so many of them are unable to do at present?

Mr. Jones: No, I think that the transferable discount scheme represents good value for money. It is certainly good value compared with new build, for instance. It facilitates two important objectives: allowing families to own a home of their own, while freeing other accommodation for housing need. I can reassure the hon. Gentleman that we are already making great efforts, through Housing for Wales and housing associations as well as local authorities, to create further housing throughout Wales, particularly in rural areas.

Welsh Wine

2. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hectolitres of Welsh wine have been produced in each of the last three years and from how many vineyards.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): One hundred and thirty one hectolitres were produced from 10 vineyards in Wales in 1989; 202 from 13 vineyards in 1990; and 147 hectolitres from 16 vineyards in 1991.

Mr. Steen: As I know the Secretary of State enjoys the odd glass of Welsh wine, whether at home or in his office, will the Minister explain why the Government seem to discriminate against Welsh wine and Scotch whisky in their taxation regime? A bottle of English or Welsh wine is subject to 98p tax, whereas a bottle of French wine is taxed at only 2·2p. Is the Minister aware that Rovral, a poison not allowed to be used on Welsh vines because of its content, is allowed to be used in France and that we import French wine without asking questions? Finally, why do not the EC rules and regulations allow us to use the word "Welsh" on the labels of wine made in Wales?

Sir Wyn Roberts: My hon. Friend will be well aware that taxation matters, to do with either whisky or wine, are for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I am glad that my hon. Friend has drawn attention to the fact that we have some excellent Welsh wines. I gather that none of them is a quality wine because we do not have enough sweet reserve—and looking at the faces opposite me, I am not surprised.

Quasi-autonomous Organisations

3. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those individuals who hold two or more positions on quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations in Wales.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): I shall arrange for the list of 47 names, out of the total of over 1,200 public appointments, to be published in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Llwyd: We are assured by the Secretary of State that politics have no part in the appointment of people to quangos in Wales—and that goes presumably for the new chairman of the Gwynedd area heatlth authority, the former Tory party chairman in the Caernarfon constituency, and for the late lamented Mr. Grist and others. I could name several hundred of them in Wales. Given this insidious system, is it not time that the Secretary of State introduced an element of positive discrimination so as to introduce some form of legitimacy into this terrible system in Wales?

Mr. Skinner: Why did Dafydd Thomas go to the House of Lords then?

Mr. Hunt: That famous saying—the Lords is not a quango—will presumably go into the *Official Report*. I am not too sure whether it was in order.

Of course appointments are made on merit. Instead of sniping from the sidelines, it would be helpful if the hon. Gentleman suggested names of individuals whom he thinks are suitable for public office. I shall, of course, consider them in the usual way.

Mr. Richards: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House whether some individuals are appointed to two or more non-departmental bodies purely because that generates cohesion between various bodies? Does that not lead to a greater understanding between non-governmental bodies and ultimately to better government in Wales?

Mr. Kinnock: It takes two to quango.

Mr. Hunt: I hope that that is not in the *Official Report*.

The House has decided previously that an individual may sit on more than one of those bodies in Wales. It has decided, for example, that the chairman of the Development Board for Rural Wales should sit also on the board of the Welsh Development Agency. My hon. Friend rightly reminds the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) of those important facts.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Secretary of State agree that, whenever possible, political patronage is best avoided? If so, what is his policy on advertising for people wishing to be appointed to public bodies? Will he start to advertise, to draw on the widest possible selection?

Mr. Hunt: Yes. We have advertised and, as I told the Select Committee, we are placing composite advertisements in Welsh newspapers asking people to come forward to be considered for public office. I take this opportunity to thank the hon. and learned Gentleman, who is one of the Members of Parliament who submit the names of suitable individuals. I have been able to respond by appointing them to public office.

Mr. Dickens: May I ask my right hon. Friend, on behalf of all the wonderful ladies of Wales, to state what action he or his Department is taking to ensure that more Welsh ladies serve on such bodies?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend has hit on an important point. Of the appointments that we make to public bodies in Wales, 18 per cent. are women. I have clearly said that I would like the target to be 30 per cent., and I hope to achieve that by 1996.

Mr. Barry Jones: Why does the right hon. Gentleman appoint persons from the Wirral to quangos in Wales? Will he concentrate on being the Secretary of State for Wales rather than the Secretary of State for the Wirral? Why does he appoint people to quangos in Wales when at the same time he plans to take away assisted area status from Deeside and to prevent the expansion of Deeside industrial park, which is adjacent to the Wirral?

Mr. Hunt: The assisted area review is another matter. As to appointments, I understand that in preparation for Labour winning the general election, the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) and the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) had a little list of people who would be suitable for appointment. If they will share that little list with me, it might help—I might well be able to appoint some of those persons to public office. By keeping that list quiet, the hon. Gentleman does himself and his right hon. and hon. Friends no good at all.

Mr. Ron Davies: Does the Secretary of State really understand the contempt and derision that he is bringing on the Welsh Office by the way in which he exercises his patronage over public appointments, especially as neither the right hon. Gentleman nor his party has a mandate from the people of Wales? Nevertheless, the right hon. Gentleman appoints Conservative party hacks. Is it not clear that quangos produce neither more effective nor more efficient administrations than democratic structures? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that it is time that all such matters were made subject to proper democratic control and scrutiny through a Welsh assembly?

Mr. Hunt: Democratic accountability lies in this Chamber, and it is evidenced by the fact that the hon. Gentleman raised those questions with me—*[Interruption.]* I say to the Opposition Back Benchers who shouted at me that Labour has not denied the existence of that little list. I should like to see it, so that I can consider appointing people from Wales, irrespective of their party affiliation—which I always endeavour to do.

Following is the information:

List of individuals holding two or more appointments on public bodies in Wales.

J. D. Allen CBE	1. Chair, Housing for Wales. 2. Deputy Chair, Land Authority for Wales.
Dr. H. R. Bichan	1. Chair, Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board. 2. Member, Court of Governors, UC North Wales.
Dr. W. B. Clee	1. Member, Welsh Committee on Drug Misuse. 2. Member, Advisory Council on Misuse of Drugs.

A. G. Cox	1. Member, Cardiff Bay development corporation. 2. Member, Higher Education Funding Council.
Prof. G. C. Crompton	1. Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. 2. Member, Public Health Laboratory Service Board.
R. Cuthbertson	1. Member, Health Promotion Authority for Wales. 2. Member, Gwynedd district health authority.
E. Glyn Davies	1. Chair, Development Board for Rural Wales. As Chair of DBRW Mr. Davies also sits on the Welsh Development Agency (ex officio member). 2. Member, Wales tourist board.
T. G. R. Davies	1. Chair, Wales Youth Agency. 2. Member, Sports Council for Wales.
Prof. B. C. Dimond	1. Member, Mid Glamorgan family health services authority. 2. Member, Mental Health Act Commission.
Prof. Sir H. Duthie	1. Member, South Glamorgan DHA. 2. Member, Committee for the Welsh Scheme for the Development of Health and Social Research.
R. Ellis	1. Member, Welsh Health Common Services Authority. 2. Member, Housing for Wales.
A. Evans OBE	1. Chair, Hill Farming Advisory Committee for Wales. 2. Member, Food From Britain Council
R. G. Gee	1. Member, Development Board for Rural Wales. 2. Member, Court of Governors, St. Davids UC Lampeter.
E. M. W. Griffith CBE	1. Chair, Glan Clwyd District General Hospital NHS Trust. 2. Chair, Countryside Council for Wales. 3. Member, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.
R. M. Howells	1. Member, Agriculture Advisory Panel for Wales. 2. Member, Hill Farming Advisory Committee for Wales.
B. H. R. Hudson-Davies	1. Member, Cardiff Bay development corporation. 2. Member, Powys DHA.
G. D. Inkin OBE	1. Chair, Cardiff Bay development corporation. 2. Chair, Land Authority for Wales.
G. L. Jones	1. Chair, West Glamorgan FHSA. 2. Member, Land Authority for Wales.
Dr. M. Gwyn Jones	1. Chair, Welsh Development Agency. 2. BBC National Governor for Wales. (sits on S4C Authority) 3. Member, Court of Governors UC Swansea.
T. Jones	1. Member, Agriculture Advisory Panel for Wales. 2. Coleg Normal Board of Governors.
Dr. M. R. Keen	1. Member, Welsh Committee on Drug Misuse. 2. Member, Advisory Council on Misuse of Drugs.
R. W. S. Knight	1. Member, Land Authority for Wales. 2. Member, Board of Governors Cardiff Institute of Higher Education.
R. K. Lacey	1. Member, Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales. 2. Member, Urban Investment Grant Appraisal Panel.
Councillor P. J. Law	1. Member, Welsh Language Board. 2. Member, Gwent FHSA.
Mrs. C. E. Lewis	1. Member, Development Board for Rural Wales. 2. Member, Health Promotion Authority for Wales.
I. R. Lloyd	1. Member, South Glamorgan FHSA. 2. Member, Swansea Institute of Higher Education Board of Governors.
Mrs. F. M. Lynch-Llewellyn	1. Member, Ancient Monuments Board for Wales. 2. Member, Snowdonia National Park Committee.
D. G. Margetts	1. Member, Powys DHA. 2. Member, Further Education Funding Council for Wales.
J. Morgan	1. Member, Development Board for Rural Wales. 2. Member, Court of National Library of Wales.
I. Phillips	1. Member South Glamorgan FHSA. 2. Member, Welsh Committee for Postgraduate Pharmaceutical Education.
R. Pratt	1. Member, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Committee. 2. Member, Agriculture Advisory Panel for Wales.
E. Rae, OBE	1. Member, Development Board for Rural Wales. 2. Member, Welsh Language Board.
R. E. M. Rees, CBE	1. Chair, Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales. 2. Member, Meat and Livestock Commission.
R. P. V. Rees	1. Member, Land Authority for Wales. 2. Member, Welsh Development Agency. 3. Member, Board of Governors, University of Glamorgan.
Prof. A. Richens	1. Member, Gwent FHSA 2. Member, Standing Medical Advisory Committee.
Dr. Brynley Roberts	1. Member, Library and Information Services Council.

	2. Member, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.
Prof. N. R. E. Robertson	1. Member, South Glamorgan DHA. 2. Member, Welsh Scheme for the Development of Health and Social Research.
Mrs. P. Ryan	1. Member, Curriculum Council for Wales. 2. Member, Further Education Funding Council for Wales.
Prof. P. S. J. Spencer	1. Member, Board of Governmors, Gwent College of Higher Education. 2. Member, Medicines Commission. 3. Member, Standing Pharmaceutical Committee for England and Wales. 4. Member, Welsh Committee for Postgraduate Pharmaceutical Education.
G. Stanley Jones	1. Member, Court of Governors of UC Aberystwyth. 2. Chair—appointed as member, elected by membership—Welsh College of Music and Drama.
Prof. E. Sunderland	1. Member, Welsh Language Board. 2. Member, Court of National Museum of Wales.
Dr. D. J. Temple	1. Member, Welsh Committee on Drug Misuse. 2. Member, Advisory Council on Misuse of Drugs.
B. K. Thomas	1. Member, Cardiff Bay development corporation. 2. Member, Countryside Council Wales.
M. Wallace OBE	1. Chair, Further Education Funding Council. 2. Member, Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board.
Sir F. Donald Walters	1. Chair, Llandough Hospital NHS Trust. 2. Dep Chair, Welsh Development Agency. 3. Member, Development Board for Rural Wales.
D. S. Williams	1. Member, West Glamorgan FHSA. 2. Professional Member, Rent Assessment Panel for Wales.
Prof. P. Williams	1. Chair, Housing Management Advisory Panel for Wales. 2. Member, Housing for Wales.

Coal Mining

4. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of coal mining in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The outcome of the Government's review of the coal industry will be set out in a White Paper to be published in the new year.

Mrs. Gorman: I am sure that my right hon. Friend will be pleased to know that recently I was fortunate enough to visit north Wales, where I met a number of people who lived in the vicinity of the Point of Ayr coal pit, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson). They strongly made the case for their pit to be taken over by a consortium of local miners and other local people. They feel that it could well be one of the most productive pits in the area.

As my right hon. Friend will know, a large number of north Wales pits are privately owned and run, and I believe that 90 pits in the Principality overall fall into that class. The local people feel strongly that they could make a very good go of keeping their pit open, if only they were given the opportunity. Will my right hon. Friend consider putting that point to our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the role of the private sector in Welsh coal mining. We have more than 90 licensed mines—two thirds of the United Kingdom total—which employ about 1,300 people in Wales. I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of the private deep-mined sector.

I regard the Point of Ayr pit as an extremely good one; I have visited it and have been underground. The future is, of course, a matter for British Coal, as it has always been, but I very much hope that British Coal will consider any reasonble offer from the private sector.

Mr. Hanson: Will the Secretary of State join me in congratulating the miners of the Point of Ayr colliery, whom I visited last Friday and who last week—yet again—broke all production target records, proving how profitable and viable the pit can be? Will the right hon. Gentleman take it from me—not from the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), who represents a seat in Essex—that the one thing that the miners, their families and their north Wales community do not want is privatisation? They wish to remain part of British Coal, productively and viably, and to make a success of their livelihoods and their future.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman should be careful about trying to introduce party political division to this subject. A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House would like Welsh coal mining to develop, in the private sector.

I join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to the Point of Ayr work force. Hon. Members who are familiar with the coal mining industry will know how difficult it is to move from the longwall mining technique to continuous mining, but the Point of Ayr miners have achieved that with remarkable success. I hope, therefore, that the hon. Gentleman will accept the suggestions made by my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) for securing the pit's future. All those aspects should be considered—but, as I said at the outset, the question of individual pits must be a matter for British Coal.

Mr. Nigel Evans: As my right hon. Friend and you, Madam Speaker, will know, I was born in Wales, and I know all about the past—if not, perhaps, the future—of the coal mining industry in that country. Will my right

hon. Friend remind the House how many pits were closed during the 1960s and 1970s under Labour Administrations?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend is right: 331 pits were closed under Labour Governments. That is an enormous total. Of course, pits have closed under all Governments; the difficulty that now faces British Coal is that it produces more coal than it can sell. All those points will be carefully considered in the energy review that is being supervised by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Secretary of State has made what strikes some of us as a disturbing statement. He said that, if British Coal were not prepared to transfer its licences to another operator, that was a decision entirely for British Coal. Will the right hon. Gentleman and the President of the Board of Trade make it clear that, if British Coal refuses to hold tenders, the licences will be taken away from it and will be issued by the Government in the future?

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful for the opportunity to clarify exactly what I said. I said—as all coal Ministers have said from the Dispatch Box—that decisions on individual pits must be a matter for British Coal. Returning to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay about whether there should be a viable private sector place for the Point of Ayr colliery—or, indeed, for Betws—I very much hope that British Coal will give careful consideration to any such proposal. If I become aware of circumstances in which British Coal is not prepared to give proper scrutiny to a private sector bid, I trust that the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies)—and others on both sides of the House—will make me aware of them.

Male Unemployment

5. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the figure for male unemployment in Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: As at October 1992, the seasonally adjusted male unemployment figure in Wales was 103,000.

Mr. Hughes: In view of the shattering blow suffered by Newport over the weekend with the announcement of the proposed closure of the GEC-Marconi factory and the loss of 400 jobs, I should have thought that the Secretary of State would at least have the decency to answer my question. Does the Minister appreciate that this is essentially a high-tech factory and that no equivalent work is available locally? Will the Secretary of State, with his colleagues, the Secretary of State for Defence and the President of the Board of Trade, intervene to prevent the closure from taking place?

Mr. Jones: It would be unrealistic not to accept that there have been unwelcome announcements such as the news from GEC-Marconi. I note, however, that the hon. Gentleman does nothing to acknowledge the excellent news about the 200 maintained and the 280 new jobs at the two INMOS factories in Newport—one of which I believe is in the hon. Gentleman's constituency—or the other recent announcements of support for 300 new jobs at Ford of Treforest and 200-plus new jobs at Robertson of Treforest or the Australian investment at Amcor of Mold leading to the creation of 150 new jobs there. There is certainly a positive side to the coin, and the hon. Gentleman should take that into account.

Mr. Kinnock: May I say, without any discourtesy to the Minister, that the Opposition find it peculiar that the Secretary of State is not answering questions on employment in Wales? May I put it to the hon. Gentleman that if pressures continue on the Royal Ordnance factory in Galscoed, there will be more job losses at the ROF, and that that will be poor reward for half a century of loyal, highly skilled service to the defence of the nation and in the production of excellent products? Will the Minister ensure that, at all levels in the Government, full account is taken of the change in strategic needs so as to ensure that we manage to continue to use to the maximum the skills and commitment of the people at Galscoed?

Mr. Jones: I accept that the right hon. Gentleman intended no discourtesy, and there is no discourtesy in my suggestion in return that the doom and gloom that the right hon. Gentleman always preached as a Leader of the Opposition who lost two general elections would have done nothing to reduce unemployment in Wales. If he were at the Dispatch Box now, he would be accepting the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty, which would mean another 70,000 unemployed in Wales.

Mr. Rowlands: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, as a result of the large loss of male full-time employment, the valley communities' per capita share of gross domestic product is now barely 70 per cent. of the national average? What significant additional funds will come from the Welsh Office or from the funds agreed at Edinburgh to create some degree of convergence and cohesion between the economies of the valley communities and that of the nation as a whole? The principles of cohesion and convergence should surely apply within the United Kingdom as within Europe.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman again ignores the recent announcement that my right hon. Friend was able to make to the effect that, in the coming financial year, here will be a total of £243 million, through the Welsh Development Agency and regional selective assistance, to help industry and redevelopment, especially in the valleys of south Wales. The hon. Gentleman chooses to ignore the fact that the latest figures show that average earnings in Wales are increasing faster than the United Kingdom average and that our unemployment rate is now lower than that for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Morgan: There is great concern in the Newport area following the announcement about GEC-Marconi and there are fears, too, that, on top of the job losses, Newport will lose its assisted area status when the assisted area review is completed. The same applies to Deeside and to the Cardiff travel-to-work area, where, in the past few weeks, there have been 200 redundancies at Wiggins Teape and 260 further redundancies at Powell Duffryn Standard and at the British Rail wagon works in Cathays. The curious thing about those job losses is that none of them relates to the recession in trade: they all relate to the Government's incompetence in handling transport and defence matters. Will the hon. Gentleman give us a guarantee that all those job losses will be fully taken into account before any areas in Wales are downgraded for assisted area purposes?

Mr. Jones: All pertinent matters will be taken fully into account by my right hon. Friends and by the President of the Board of Trade as he conducts his review of assisted area status. Already, we should be able to point to the successes that the present policy is achieving. The hon. Gentleman would probably be interested to know that, in the first three quarters of this year alone, regional selective assistance succeeded in attracting and maintaining almost 8,000 jobs in Wales.

Cereals Scheme

6. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement as to the statistical basis for his decision to make Wales a separate single region for the cereals scheme; and if he will deposit the relevant detailed statistical information in the Library.

Mr. David Hunt: The statistical basis is the cereal production survey which was conducted over the 1986 to 1990 harvest years. The data shown are in the United Kingdom regionalisation plan, a copy of which has already been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Evans: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the statistical data to which he referred are inadequate to separate regions within Wales that have very different cereal outputs? Will he please explain why, if that is the only reason, he has treated Wales as a single region, whereas Scotland has been treated as two regions, with less-favoured areas treated differently? Will my right hon. Friend he let us know what steps he proposes to take to put right that extraordinary state of affairs next year?

Mr. Kinnock: Answer.

Mr. Hunt: I have to say to my hon. Friend—I need no help from the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock)—that the data are insufficient. I recognise that. What I have said to my hon. Friend and to other hon. Friends who have contacted me on behalf of their constituents, and indeed to the leaders of the National Farmers Union, is that we have to find a better statistical basis. We are now conducting a survey to find ways in which we can have more reliable data on which to base our decisions for the second and subsequent years, because this decision is for only the first year.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I have written to the right hon. Gentleman about farmers in my constituency who are farming very near the English border and who are obtaining substantially less than their colleagues a few miles away in relation to cereal production. If at all possible, will the right hon. Gentleman try to secure a more level playing field on the issue next year so that cereal producers in Montgomeryshire, for example, are not placed at a disadvantage compared with colleagues in Shropshire, particularly when some farms actually cross the English-Welsh border?

Mr. Hunt: Those cross-border comparisons work both ways, as the hon. and learned Gentleman is aware. I was advised that I did not have sufficient statistical data on which to base a decision to look forward on a county basis or on a less-favoured area/non-LFA basis, and I am doing everything possible to ensure that I have the right statistical information on which I can base a decision for the second and subsequent years.

Milan (Ministerial Visit)

7. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the outcome of the Minister of State's visit to Milan; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My visit to Milan was made in connection with the second highly successful Welsh Office trade mission to Lombardy. It gave me the opportunity to reinforce contacts and to open formally, on behalf of Control Techniques plc of Newtown, Powys, the new factory of its Italian subsidiary, Soprel.

Mr. Richards: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Was there any positive financial outcome to his visit to Milan? If so, is he considering making similar visits to Milan and, indeed, to many other parts of the world which in the past have proved so fruitful in bringing jobs to Wales?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am delighted to tell my hon. Friend that there was a very positive outcome in that the companies on the export mission returned with more than £5 million worth of orders. As that and other export missions have been so successful and are clearly of great benefit to Wales, my right hon. Friend and I are considering how we might expand the programme.

Mr. Flynn: Did the Minister discuss with the Italians their investment in Welsh industry, especially to create jobs in the Agrate area? Unfortunately, those Welsh jobs will now become Italian jobs. From 1993 the INMOS transputer graphite chip will be produced in France and Italy only. When shall we get investment in Welsh technology, particularly for the Newport Wafer Fab Company, on the same scale as that invested by the French and Italian Governments in their industries? The truth is that in the future there will be 200 jobs in INMOS when once there were 850. We have also lost 500 jobs from Marconi. How can we be anything but gloomy about that situation?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware of the development at INMOS whereby I understand that additional investment from a Hong Kong-based company will lead to additional jobs. Of course, investment is international these days. I spoke to representatives of the distinguished Italian company, Cogefar Impresit, the largest building contractor in Italy and a subsidiary in Fiat, which has invested extensively in Cardiff and is interested in further investment in south Wales.

Valleys Initiative

8. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the future of the valleys initiative programme.

Mr. David Hunt: I will make an announcement in due course.

Mr. Hain: The Secretary of State will be aware from figures that he has given to me that one in three male adults covered by the valleys initiative programme are now out of work; they are either on the official unemployment register or economically inactive. That unemployment rate is much higher than elsewhere in the United Kingdom, especially for those in the economically inactive category. When the

right hon. Gentleman makes his announcement, what specific proposals will be included to address the problems faced by village communities up the valleys—communities which are dying? I have spoken to the right hon. Gentleman about those communities and I know of his interest in them. They are industrial villages and they need to become areas of high technology, high quality and high skills. They need a distinct strategy and investment from the Welsh Office and the Welsh Development Agency to achieve that.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman and several of his hon. Friends have put proposals to me and I am now considering how best to develop the initiative. I hope that implicit in everything that is said is a recognition of the fact that the programme for the valleys was a good initiative taken by my predecessor, Peter Walker, now Lord Walker, which has achieved positive results. There is, of course, much more still to do.

Mr. Richards: Has my right hon. Friend estimated what the level of unemployment in the valleys would have been, had it not been for the valleys initiative and had unemployment in Wales increased according to the national average?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend raises an important point. Since the programme started, unemployment in the valleys has gone down from 34,000 to under 33,000. Had the unemployment rate in the valleys gone up in accordance with the United Kingdom average, nearly 10,000 more people would be unemployed in the valleys. I hope that the House recognises the importance and value of the valleys initiative.

Mr. Murphy: The Secretary of State will realise that there are other problems apart from unemployment in the valleys. Is it not time that we had a housing initiative in our valleys to allow district councils to build homes once again, or a schools initiative concentrating on books and equipment instead of the silly league tables that were published last week? Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that the only way in which the valleys initiative can succeed is when he works with and not against our local valley councils? We call on him to set up a valleys standing conference of the valley local authorities which can act as the engine for the proper revitalisation of our valley communities.

Mr. Hunt: I gain great strength from the fact that the Welsh Office and the local authorities work in close partnership in the valleys area. One of the first meetings that I had when I was visiting every valley was with the local authorities. The hon. Gentleman must not downplay the achievements that the Welsh Office and the local authorities have had in the valleys area. There is, of course, more to be done, but the largest land clearance programme anywhere in Europe is currently being undertaken in the valleys. A great many things are taking place, including the remarkably successful experiment on community revival strategies. Five communities were given £500,000 each by the Welsh Office towards local community projects. I am now reviewing the results of all those strategies with a view to taking the programme for the valleys forward when it comes to a close at the end of March. I am determined to make sure that we learn all the lessons that must be learnt from the past and present programmes.

Quasi-autonomous Non-governmental Organisations

9. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to publish the party political affiliations of those he appoints to public bodies and quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Jones: Presumably the Minister of State is reluctant to tell the House about the party political affiliation of appointees because recent analysis showed that 65 per cent. of appointees were Conservatives or had leanings towards the Conservative cause. The invitation of the Secretary of State for Wales for the production of lists is irrelevant, because a Conservative Secretary of State is bound to appoint more Conservatives than anyone else, as the record shows. The Minister must surely be aware that we are talking not about the appointment of the odd Liberal, Labour or Plaid sympathiser but about a system that is wrong. It is a grotesque distortion of the democratic process and the best argument for a Welsh Parliament that I have ever heard.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman really does astonish me. We do not ask prospective appointees, either on our nomination lists or in conversation, what their policies are. If they reveal on their nomination forms that they are active in politics as part of their qualification to serve the public, that is a matter for them, but we have no record of appointees' political affiliations. The hon. Gentleman does no service to his own supporters or to those of Opposition or Conservative Members by seeming to imply that activity in a political organisation somehow disbars a person from office. We have heard about the Labour party's "little list". I wonder whether Plaid Cymru has a little list, or whether the hon. Gentleman is able to make any recommendations, because I do not recall hearing from him about anyone he wished or thought suitable to be nominated for office.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Will my right hon. Friend entirely resist the McCarthyite sentiments being shouted from the Opposition Benches? Will he note that the chairman of Housing for Wales was asked recently by the Chairman of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs whether he had ever been a member of the Conservative party and said that he had first been appointed to public office 18 years ago by a Labour Government? Will he further note that there will be incredulity in Wales at the remarks of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), discounting so many public servants as party hacks, especially the noble Lord Brooks who holds two such appointments as well as being a former leader of the Labour group on South Glamorgan county council?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I hope that the country as well as the House heard what my hon. Friend said. The Labour party's obsession with the political affiliations of public appointees takes us back to the time when it regularly appointed failed Labour candidates to high office in Wales; quangos were very much its preserve. The obsession of the hon. Member for Caerphilly with quangos and appointments shows that Labour is already thinking in terms of its little list, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State called it.

Mr. Kinnock: May I remind the Minister of State that it was Gilbert and Sullivan who had a little list and not Kinnock and Jones? Quango appointments of people with associations—I put it no stronger—with the Conservative cause in Wales have reached almost one-party state level. The extent of the Minister's embarrassment is evidenced by the length of his completely unconvincing answers on the subject.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I note that the right hon. Gentleman has not denied the existence of the list. He has thrown it away with a reference to Gilbert and Sullivan, but he has not denied its existence and there are some guilty faces on the Labour Front Bench. Party affiliation, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. I am sure that there are many people whom the Labour party considers to be Conservative political hacks, as it calls them, but who in fact are not, and perhaps many people who I think may belong to the Labour party but who do not.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Market Testing

23. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to meet representatives of the civil service unions to discuss the impact of the Government's market-testing programme in the civil service.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): My ministerial colleagues and I have meetings with the civil service unions from time to time to discuss the range of Government policies. Meetings on market testing take place as the need for them arises.

Mr. McAllion: When contracting out has been set up by civil service departments and agencies, will the Minister instruct them to apply the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to those transfers, thereby avoiding the legal mess in which Ealing council now finds itself because it failed to apply TUPE? Will he confirm that in applying TUPE to the contracting out of its photocopying services, the Central Office of Information has set a firm precedent which the rest of the civil service will follow?

Mr. Waldegrave: The TUPE regulations have of course applied since 1981—there is no question about that—and if they have been wrongly applied in any individual case it does not change the overall position, which is that application of the regulations has allowed a great deal of contracting out in the central Government and local government sectors.

Mr. Garnier: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that money saved as a result of market testing can and will be reinvested in our public services?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend makes a very important point. We are market testing about £1·5 billion of central Government services. If the savings were to run at the rate of about 25 per cent., which we have achieved in the much smaller programme so far, we should achieve about £300 million of savings a year to plough back into services.

Mr. Benn: Is the Minister aware that the Government decided to sell to Robert Maxwell the Professional and Executive Register, which provides services for people with professional qualifications? The company went bust and some of the people who worked for it set up by themselves, but the Department is now setting up in competition with the people whose organisation it privatised. Is that a proper way in which to conduct a public service?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall inquire into the particular case, but the right hon. Gentleman is perhaps ill advised to press connections between our party and Mr. Robert Maxwell.

Ms. Mowlam: Will the Minister now attempt to give a straight answer to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion)? It might enhance what little credibility he has left as Minister for open government. If the situation is as clear as he suggests in relation to the application of TUPE, can he explain why the Foreign Office has suspended programmes for market testing until further clarification is given, the Welsh Office has told its health authorities to cease contracting out while it seeks legal advice and the Health and Safety Executive has put its programme on hold because it has received contradictory legal advice? Will the Minister give a straight answer which his civil service Departments will understand and stop the prejudice that he exhibits to the effect that private is good and public must, by default, be bad?

Mr. Waldegrave: There is no need for the hon. Lady to be quite so offensive. I have tried to explain the issue to her several times and I am sorry if I failed. It is not very difficult. Each individual case must be judged against the 1981 regulations. Nothing has changed because of the Bill currently before Parliament. Obviously, it could not have done, as the hon. Lady is claiming that cases have got into difficulty under the 1981 legislation.

Institution of Civil Engineers

24. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received about science policy from the Institution of Civil Engineers.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received a final total of about 800 responses to the consultation process for the White Paper on science and technology. Copies of the responses from organisations, including the excellent contribution from the Institution of Civil Engineers, will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses as soon as possible.

Mr. Marshall: Can my right hon. Friend tell the House whether the institution emphasised the need for the adequate teaching of science and mathematics in schools? Does he agree that the national curriculum will make that far more feasible?

Mr. Waldegrave: The submission made the point about the importance of technological and science education more broadly. My hon. Friend is right. In the medium to longer term, the national curriculum will greatly improve science and technology education. In the past five years, there has been a welcome increase again—a recovery—in the numbers reading technology and science courses at universities and polytechnics. That is welcome, too.

Mr. Miller: In considering the responses that he has received, has the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

read the interesting report from Lancaster university headed, "Future Relations between the Ministry of Defence and the Office of Science and Technology"? Does he agree with the conclusions reached in that report?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sorry to say that I have not read that paper, although I have a high regard for Lancaster university. I shall now read it and I write to the hon. Gentleman about the conclusions that it reaches. It will certainly be taken into account.

Charter Mark

25. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to extend his charter mark scheme to the European Commission.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): None, but considerable interest in the charter was expressed at the recent European "Service for the Citizen" conference held in London under the United Kingdom presidency of the Community and at the meeting of directors-general for public administration in European Community states which took place at the same time in London.

Mr. Steen: As the public are increasingly affected by rules and regulations from the European Community should we not use the last few weeks of our presidency to press for the citizens charter to be extended to the Brussels bureaucracy? Will my hon. Friend don the mantle of St. George to do that important job?

Mr. Jackson: I hope that my hon. Friend has noted the conclusions of the Edinburgh summit which apply the citizens charter approach to the European Community. The basic principle of subsidiarity has been recognised, reaffirmed and expanded. There is a commitment to greater openness in the Council of Ministers. The Community is to have an ombudsman. Those are all the result of British efforts and British initiatives to try to do as my hon. Friend suggests.

Charter Proposals

26. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress is being made under his charter proposals.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Excellent progress is being made. More than 90 per cent. of the initial 150 commitments in the programme of action in the 1991 citizens charter White Paper have been met or are in hand. More than 80 further policy commitments were set out in the citizens charter first report which was published on 25 November.

Mr. Jones: I welcome the initiative. I should be pleased if, in the spirit of Christmas, the Minister could extend the initiative to the homeless and the unemployed. May we have a charter for the homeless and the unemployed this Christmas?

Mr. Jackson: I greatly appreciate the hon. Gentleman's comment on the citizens charter. There is a charter for the Employment Service, and in my previous ministerial job I was responsible for it. The Employment Service is doing its best to apply charter principles to improve the quality of the service that it offers to unemployed people.

Service to the Citizen

27. **Mrs. Browning:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what methods his Department has used to judge how the public sector is meeting its targets for improved service to the citizen.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The citizens charter commits all public service providers to setting specific levels of service and to measuring and publishing details of their performance against those standards. The way in which this is done will obviously vary from service to service.

My Department is responsible for driving the charter initiative forward across the whole public sector and for reporting, in publications such as the White Paper of 25 November, the details of performance against standards.

Mrs. Browning: Does my hon. Friend agree that monitoring standards in public services and publishing the results is vital? Is the Prime Minister keeping a watching brief on progress?

Mr. Jackson: I can confirm to my hon. Friend that the Prime Minister is keeping a close eye on progress. He will host the third seminar on the citizens charter on Wednesday 17 February 1993. There have been several important developments covering the whole spectrum of public service reform since the Prime Minister's previous seminar in June this year. We have now published the first progress report on the citizens charter. My right hon. Friend and I consider it to be of the utmost importance that we regularly review progress in implementing the charter. The seminar will give us a further opportunity to do so at the highest level.

Citizens Charter

28. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what response he has had to the report on the citizens charter.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have had a very encouraging response to the citizens charter report.

Mr. Skinner: Instead of the Minister talking as his belly warms about things like charters, why does he not listen to the people who are really shouting out—the unemployed people who want a full employment charter and the people who do not have roofs over their heads who want a homeless charter so local authorities can build houses? Why does he not listen to the pensioners who are crying out for an extra £20 a week so that they can keep warm this winter? Those are the policies that the people out there are shouting for, not these tinpot charters.

Mr. Waldegrave: As the hon. Gentleman is, I suppose, the greatest partisan of lost causes in the House, I regard his attack on the charter as rather a compliment to it. The work to improve performance in local government and central Government to meet the needs of people is reinforced by the work that we are doing on the charters.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Is not the success of the citizens charter demonstrated by the interest taken in it by European Governments and also by the interest now being expressed in the United States?

Mr. Waldegrave: That is entirely right. As the recent conference that we held in London showed, there is tremendous international interest in the citizens charter

principles. The president-elect of the new American Government has made it clear that he regards this kind of campaign, which is derided by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), as very important.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The Minister has previously told me, and states again in the report, that he intends that customers should give a view about the quality of service that they are receiving and that customers should be heard in relation to how charters are being met. How does he intend to involve the customer in setting charters in future instead of consulting them only after charters have been set?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member makes a good point. We announced in the first report that we would be conducting regular surveys of customer needs. That is a useful first step. However, the principle that the hon. Member states is absolutely right. In every case the service provider should sets objectives and standards after consulting the public and users of that service very widely.

Alcohol and Drugs

30. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has to improve the co-ordination of Government policies on alcohol and drugs.

Mr. Waldegrave: Cabinet sub-committees, bringing together all relevant Government Departments, co-ordinate Goverment policy on alcohol and drugs. These are chaired respectively by me and by my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council.

Mr. Michael: Does the Minister recognise that there is a need for all Government policies, including the application of the law, education, social services, housing provision and residential treatment, to be drawn together if we are to tackle those two misuses? Will he have a word with the Secretary of State for Health, who seems most obstinate in regard to listening to advice on the issue, and with her junior Minister, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), and persuade them that the arrangements that are to come in from 1 April will greatly damage the provision of residential facilities for alcohol and drug misusers? Will he persuade his colleagues to find a new arrangement quickly before the threatened closures start to apply, from as early as February, so as to ensure that those facilities continue to be available?

Mr. Waldegrave: After my useful meeting with the hon. Gentleman and the all-party committee on alcohol abuse, I passed on to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health the representations that were made to me on that occasion. My right hon. Friend is clear that the community care new arrangements will meet the needs, but I have passed on the feelings of the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues on that matter.

Citizens Charter

31. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of the commitments in the original citizens charter White Paper have been met, or are in the process of being met.

Mr. Waldegrave: More than 90 per cent.

Mr. Streeter: I thank my right hon. Friend for his most encouraging reply. Is he aware that, despite the efforts of some courteous and hard-working staff, the British Rail service from Plymouth to Paddington remains at best patchy and at worst downright unreliable? Can he assure me that under his watchful eye standards will increase?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can confirm, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear in a speech last week, that it is our intention to drive up standards on British Rail. The standards that we set this year were merely the starting point.

Mr. Barnes: Why are unemployment, homelessness, and the plight of pensioners described by the Secretary of State as "lost causes"? If they are lost causes by this Government, it is time this Government went.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member gives me the opportunity to clarify exactly what I meant. It was not those important issues which are lost causes. A lost cause is anything that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) supports. This Government have done and are doing much more for those causes, which are close to our hearts, than the Labour Government ever did.

Research Councils (Budget)

32. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the budget of the five research councils.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The science budget in 1993-94 will be £1,164·6 million. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will be announcing its distribution shortly.

Mr. Coombs: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer, which I suspect shows an increase in cash terms on the total budget for the five research councils, four of which have their headquarters in my constituency. What reassurance can my hon. Friend give the House that the budgets of the individual research councils will not be at the mercy of international currency fluctuations in so far as they affect the cost to Britain of its membership of such international organisations as CERN?

Mr. Jackson: I can confirm that my hon. Friend is right. The sum represents a 4 per cent. increase in cash terms, which is significant in what has been a difficult public expenditure round.

My hon. Friend asked about CERN and international subscriptions. It is a long-standing problem, although we have recently renegotiated our arrangements for CERN subscriptions to make it a little easier. The Advisory Board for the Research Councils will offer advice to my right hon. Friend shortly about how the increases will affect different councils. My right hon. Friend will then have to consider that advice to see what action we should take.

Dr. Bray: Will the Minister confirm that although the total for all Government expenditure remains as planned for next year, the science budget for research councils has been cut from that which had been previously planned? Does he acknowledge, therefore, that the effect of the creation of the Office of Science and Technology has been to reduce the priority given to science by the Government?

Mr. Jackson: I do not accept that at all. The hon. Gentleman is completely wrong on that point. This year has been difficult for public expenditure. It has obviously had implications for every part of public expenditure, but we think that it is an important achievement to have safeguarded a 4 per cent. increase in cash terms.

Dr. Spink: Will my hon. Friend consider increasing the importance of near-market research, relative to fundamental research, as one of the mechanisms for improving our industrial strategy?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend's question is pertinent to the White Paper on science and technology which we are developing. That White Paper will be published early in the new year. Both science and technology are important. They feed through into the industrial development of the economy. Fundamental science provides the background of ideas and opportunities for training the people who will take forward science and technology throughout the economy.

Constituents Charter

33. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he proposes to implement a constituents charter.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have no such plans. Constituents already enjoy competition and choice—and the right to demand redress—through the ballot box.

Mr. Banks: That seems to be a great lost opportunity. Would it not be an imaginative extension of the charter principle if constituents—electors—were able to get some recompense from a Government who break promises that they made at the general election? To take one example from many—*[Interruption.]* the Prime Minister has come in on time—I refer to the promise made by the Prime Minister when, just before the election in April, he said, "Vote Conservative on Thursday and the recovery continues on Friday".

Mr. Waldegrave: So far as I remember, the deputy Leader of the Labour party has already withdrawn all the proposals made at the election, so the hon. Gentleman's suggestion seems rather foolish. He has had the opportunity to put the arguments to the electorate three or four times now, and he has always been rejected.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we had a constituents charter there should be regular testing, as there is at general elections? In the past four general elections our constituents have had their say on how well we have behaved and performed. In 1979 they voted Conservative. In 1983 they voted Conservative. In 1987 they voted Conservative. In 1992 they voted Conservative. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman has his answer on consumer testing of what policies our constituents prefer—those of the Labour party or those of the Conservative party.

Mr. Waldegrave: I would only complete the prospect by saying that it is likely that our constituents will do the same again in 1996 or 1997.

European Council (Edinburgh)

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, I shall make a statement about the European Council in Edinburgh on 11 and 12 December. My right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and I represented the United Kingdom.

Let me first pay a warm tribute to the city of Edinburgh for its welcome, its first-rate organisation and the good-humoured way in which it accepted the necessary disruption of hosting such a big event.

On the agenda of the European Council were a series of interlocking issues: the economic situation in the Community and our proposed strategy for growth and jobs; the need to find a solution for Denmark's problems following its first referendum; the financing of the Community until the end of the century; the need to remove the block on the opening of enlargement negotiations with Sweden, Finland and Austria; the issues of subsidiarity and openness; and the long-standing issue of the site of a number of Community institutions. Beyond the Community, there were pressing issues to discuss on Macedonia and on Yugoslavia more generally.

We reached the following agreements. First, the European Council agreed on the growth initiative put forward by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Community is on target to complete the single market—the world's largest free trade area—by the end of the British presidency. We are continuing to work for an early general agreement on tariffs and trade settlement, and—in line with our own deregulation initiative—there was agreement on the need to reduce Community burdens on business.

The European Council agreed to establish a new lending facility within the European investment bank to finance infrastructure projects throughout the Community, especially in transport, energy and telecommunications. This investment will be worth up to £7 billion over the next two years. The Council also agreed to set up a new European investment fund to guarantee loans for investment in trans-European networks and to small and medium-sized enterprises. Those guarantees can support projects worth up to £17 billion.

Additionally, member states agreed, following the pattern of our own autumn statement, to give priority to capital spending and encourage private investment; to keep the public sector wage bill under tight control; and to cut subsidies and increase competition. We have all agreed to pursue the prudent policies that will control inflation and create the conditions for lower interest rates across Europe.

Overall, the initiative proposed by my right hon. Friend could support up to £24 billion-worth of projects. It will help to boost confidence, support new investment and encourage business to create jobs throughout the Community.

Secondly, we agreed a solution to the issues raised by the Danish Government following their referendum. The solution is binding in international law. It does not in any way change the Maastricht treaty or require a new round of ratification in member states. It provides an interpretation of the treaty which Prime Minister Schlüter believes will enable him to hold a second referendum in Denmark in the spring. It has been welcomed by all seven parties that drafted the original Danish document.

Thirdly, we have achieved an agreement which freezes Community spending until 1995. Until then, there will be no increase in the expenditure ceiling. Thereafter, it allows a gradual increase up to 1999. The overall increase is far smaller over seven years than the increase over five years that was agreed in 1988. It is less than half that originally proposed by the Commission. Moreover, the special rebate for Britain, which brings back about £2 billion a year to this country, remains unchanged and is now guaranteed for the rest of the century. Even then it could not be changed without our agreement.

Fourthly, negotiations for entry into the Community will start straight away with Sweden, Finland and Austria, with Norway to follow shortly afterwards. Work will also start to prepare the Visegrad countries of eastern Europe for Community membership, an aim endorsed by the Council for the first time. That is a breakthrough in the attitude of our partners and prepares the way for a far wider Community, stretching across eastern Europe.

Fifthly, the Council agreed a package of measures to reverse centralisation. The Edinburgh statement makes it clear that national decisions should be the rule and Brussels action the exception. The Commission also produced two lists of measures: first, proposals which fail the subsidiarity test and will be dropped or changed; and, secondly, a list of Community laws which the Commission believes must be simplified or abolished. Further proposals for reducing the burden of legislation will follow.

Sixthly, as we said we would do at Birmingham, we have put together a package of measures to open up the Community to scrutiny by the people of Europe. The Commission will consult more widely before making proposals. This will include the publication of Green Papers to allow an input by member states before formal proposals come forward.

Seventhly, on the sites of institutions, we have signed a decision confirming the sites and working arrangements for all the main Community institutions. This settles a problem that has bedevilled the Community for more than 30 years.

The number of Members of the European Parliament increases by 49 to 567, to reflect in particular the growth in the population of Germany from 61 million to nearly 80 million following unification. Under the arrangement, Britain, France and Italy will each have six more members of Parliament. Weighted voting in the Council of Ministers remains unchanged, with Britain, France, Italy and Germany retaining 10 votes each.

We needed to solve all those issues if the Community was to regain its confidence, but they were far from the only issues on our minds. Macedonia could be a tinderbox for a wider Balkan conflict. At the meeting, we were able to agree to unblock European Community and international economic assistance to Macedonia, which will help to provide stability in that country. We unreservedly backed the United Nations plan to put a battalion of soldiers in Macedonia to monitor the peace there. We gave our support to putting a similar United Nations force in Kosovo. In Bosnia, we have called for the Security Council to examine systematically the operation of the no-fly zone. We believe that the first step should be for the United Nations to draw up a report on violations of the zone.

I believe that the majority of people in this country want us to make a success of our membership of the European Community. That is not just a matter of idealism: it is a matter of hard-headed national self-interest. Anyone who looks objectively at what has been agreed under the British presidency, and at this European Council in particular, can take pride in Britain's achievement.

The Community has reached decisions on issues which many thought were insoluble. It has come together again as 12 member states with a common purpose. It has solved many of its intractable problems. It has prepared the way for enlargement. It has made itself more responsive to public opinion. It is tackling the most urgent problems within our own continent. It has taken concerted action, which will offer hope for growth and employment. Those are all substantial results—good for the European Community as a whole and good for this country—and I commend the outcome unreservedly to the House.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I thank the Prime Minister for his warm tribute to the city of Edinburgh and its first-rate organisation, which will be much appreciated by its Labour council—*[Interruption.)*I think that hon. Members should agree with the Prime Minister when he pays such a tribute. As a citizen of Edinburgh, I do so.

On the substance of the statement, may I say how much Labour Members welcomed the agreement made at the summit to commence enlargement negotiations at the beginning of 1993. Those negotiations will allow applications from Austria, Sweden, Finland and Norway to be considered without delay. Enlargement will provide a new and healthy dynamic for the whole Community and the inclusion of European neighbours with such strong democratic traditions will be of great benefit to us all.

Does the Prime Minister accept that enlargement creates a necessary opportunity to reform Community institutions to make them more open, democratic and efficient? Will he say in a little more detail what specific action is proposed to help the Visegrad countries proceed with economic and political reform?

We also welcome the accommodation for Denmark. There has been a satisfactory recognition all round of the need to keep the Community together by meeting Danish concerns and responding to the national consensus proposals, in the construction of which Mr. Poul Rasmussen, the leader of the Danish Social Democratic party, played such a leading role.

The concern expressed at the summit about the deteriorating position in the former Yugoslavia is welcome, as is the emphatic denunciation of the barbaric treatment of Muslim women and other victims of brutal violence. Will the Prime Minister assure the House that the Community will never recognise states established by force and the despicable policy of ethnic cleansing?

As the mandatory sanctions agreed by the United Nations are apparently being breached on an unacceptable scale, was not that matter discussed at the summit? Is it not now clear that Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs must be denied the supplies and materials to allow them to wage war and that there must be the political will to achieve that objective? Will the Community insist that the autonomy of Kosovo is restored and human rights safeguarded there?

On subsidiarity, although we agree that there should be a proper balancing of Community and national responsibilities, would not the Government's adhesion to the principle and the guidelines set out at the summit be more convincing if they were prepared to accept the principle of subsidiarity within the United Kingdom? Should not the Government accept the same logic at home and tackle the over-centralised nature of the British state, which is such a depressing feature of Conservative government?

May I say how much I welcome one aspect of the Commission's review of all its proposals in the light of the subsidiarity principle. That is the conclusion reached at the end of the section 2 of annex 2 to part I of the conclusions, which states:

"Turning to social policy, the Commission considers that the group of directives based on Article 118a of the Treaty is too recent to warrant re-examination. Instead its priority will be to supplement them by implementing all the provisions of the Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers."

Despite the deplorable neglect of social issues throughout the British presidency, and the foolish British opt-out, is not the social chapter alive and well and fully supported by all other member states? Given that one of the Danish negotiating achievements was that member states could insist on even higher levels of social provision, is there not some justified optimism that the forthcoming Danish presidency will correct the neglect of the British presidency?

Should not the economic measures be judged against the scale of the severe economic problems facing Europe, which are most acute in Britain? As *The Times* reminds us today, unemployment is rising twice as fast in Britain as in any other European Community country. Against a backdrop of barely 1 per cent. growth forecast for next year and with unemployment in the Community expected to rise above 11 per cent., should not the recovery of economic growth and the stimulation of employment have been crucial objectives of the summit? In that desperately serious context, the increase in facilities for the European investment bank and the establishment of the European investment fund—while welcome, as any improvements would be—fall far short of what is needed to get the European economy moving again.

Will the Prime Minister confirm that the extra £6 billion for the whole Community will amount to less than 0·01 per cent. of total EC output, and that the highly optimistic forecast of £24 billion in new investment which might conceivably be generated is put sharply in focus by the Commission's forecast that investment in the European Community will be £32 billion below normal levels next year? Given that, at the very best, there is likely to be an £8 billion investment gap, how can anyone believe that the economic challenge has been met?

Why will there be a delay of six months in putting into place the new facilities? Why were such initiatives not taken at the beginning of the presidency so that they could start now? How many jobs does the Prime Minister calculate will be created in the United Kingdom? Given the appalling prospect of sharply rising unemployment, why was there no proposal for an emergency employment programme right across the Community?

Finally, will not the people of the European Community regard action against unemployment as the most important test of the Community's relevance to their lives? It remains a matter of concern and regret that that dimension has been so consistently downgraded throughout the whole of the British presidency.

The Prime Minister: With great good will, I have to say that that was a mealy-mouthed and nitpicking speech. For weeks, both at home and abroad, the right hon. and learned Gentleman and the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) have been disparaging about the British presidency. Right across Europe today, the Heads of the Governments who deal with us have praised the outcome of the summit, but we have heard not a single word of retraction from the right hon. and learned Gentleman. One day, he will learn that opposition for its own sake is not opposition of any value. I am pleased that the right hon. and learned Gentleman welcomed enlargement, welcomed Denmark and welcomed the declarations, all of which he suspected we would not obtain at the summit.

On the specific questions that the right hon. and learned Gentleman asked, the summit has enhanced the trade measures for the Visegrad countries to help to prepare them for the Community. As for recognising states established by force, I can give the right hon. and learned Gentleman the assurance that he seeks: we shall not recognise any state established in that fashion.

The issue of breaching sanctions was discussed by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and his colleagues, who considered the actions that need to be taken to strengthen the sanctions procedure. We shall consider that afresh. On the matter of subsidiarity, I am surprised that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is still unable to draw the distinction between subsidiarity, which produces something down from international to national Governments, and devolution, which removes it from national Governments and gives it to regional governments. He will know that there is far more administrative devolution in this country than there ever was during the time of any Government in which he served. He must also wait for the proposals that we shall have early in the new year.

As for the right hon. and learned Gentleman's remarks on expenditure, he is now alone among the socialist leaders of the Community in apparently believing that fiscal measures of a Keynesian variety—with large revenue expenditure—are the right way to deal with the problem. Every other socialist leader wants to meet the Maastricht criteria; but the right hon. and learned Gentleman talks about Europe, but votes against it, speaks against it and acts against it.

On economic measures——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): A total failure.

The Prime Minister: I am glad to hear that the opposition to Europe of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) carries the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) with him. I hope that the whole country will note that the position of the hon. Gentleman is similar to that of the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

On economic measures, the proposals advanced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor were warmly welcomed by all the Heads of Government. They will support up to £24 billion-worth of projects, and they will be capital projects, quite apart from the enhanced moneys from the structural and cohesion funds which will also be used for capital projects. There is no doubt among the Heads of the Community: they believe that this is the right package; it is only those who nitpick here who seek to criticise it.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): Does my right hon. Friend recognise what many of his friends and colleagues in every part of the House will recognise—that his extraordinary mastery and grasp of the complex European Community features at the Edinburgh summit as well as his mastery of the volatile intergovernmental aspects of the summit unmistakably demonstrate that the Maastricht treaty is the creature, not the coercer, of sovereign Heads of State and as such deserves a fair wind from all part of the House?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend's last point is entirely right. If some of the right hon. and hon. Members among the Opposition who believe that there will be a European central state had sat in the European Council and heard the debate, it would have removed that fear from their minds for good and all. If they understood the Community better, they might oppose it less.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I congratulate the Prime Minister on a positive outcome to the Edinburgh summit, consolidating progress towards European union. Will he assure me in respect of the interim Danish solution that he certainly does not favour a two-tier solution for the Community? In respect of subsidiarity, is he aware that we welcome the clear statement that, in matters of Community law, the International Court of Justice will be the arbiter?

Finally, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that this is the first time I have heard him distinguish between subsidiarity and devolution? That distinction was certainly not clear to the 25,000 people who demonstrated in Edinburgh for a Scottish parliament.

The Prime Minister: It was entirely clear among the Heads of State at Birmingham, and it was discussed and made public at that time.

I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's general welcome. Underpinning all our discussions at Edinburgh was the belief that the Community should continue to go ahead as 12—not as 11, 10 or any other number—until such time as it was enlarged.

The hon. Gentleman is entirely right about the agreement with Denmark. It is a binding legal agreement between Governments, but if necessary the arbiter will be the International Court of Justice.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Will my right hon. Friend accept that he has fully earned the tributes that the rest of Europe have paid him for his skill and success at Edinburgh? He has opened the way for Europe to develop in a better and more decentralised direction, which is wholly in the interests of this nation.

When my right hon. Friend speaks of new guidance and procedures to limit the powers of Brussels to interfere in our affairs, will he assure us about the way in which this and other nation states and the House of Commons will be able to decide what is subsidiary and which powers lie with us? That is preferable to these matters being decided on a judge-and-jury basis by Community institutions in Brussels.

The Prime Minister: The definition of subsidiarity itself lies in article 3b of the Maastricht treaty, and it is on that basis that the judgment will be made as to whether or not individual matters are subsidiary. We are seeking to prepare a series of lists. The first were published at Edinburgh last week. There will be a continuous stream of

them. What is subsidiarity will remain continually under review in the House and in Europe. My right hon. Friend is entirely right about the sort of Europe that we want to develop—a wider, more responsive and decentralised Europe.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Prime Minister knows the difference between presentational and substantive success, and between the applause of European leaders and that of his own people. On the question of Denmark, the Prime Minister asserted that the arrangement was legally binding. If it is, surely there must have been an amendment to the treaty. If there was, it must be ratified before it becomes effective. As to subsidiarity, if the Prime Minister wants to convince us that there is both the will and the intention to transfer power to national parliaments, surely he will have to do something more than present a list of trivia through the Commission and to evade such substantive matters as the return of the common agricultural policy to the peoples and Governments of the member states.

The Prime Minister: Sometimes, I suspect that the right hon. Gentleman does not want to be convinced about changing attitudes within Europe. As to his point about trivia, it is precisely trivial laws—although this might cover others as well—that have caused so much frustration, anger and annoyance throughout the European Community for so many years. This is a legally binding, intergovernmental agreement. It is binding in international law. That was the clear and unequivocal advice of Council legal services, accepted by the European Council—but it does not change the substantive nature of the treaty itself.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Given that my right hon. Friend has negotiated an opt-out for the British in respect of a single currency and a central bank, why is it that the Danes are allowed to ratify when they choose to do so—namely, now—whereas the United Kingdom must wait several years?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend asks an intriguing question. The arrangements that we have on the single currency, whereby we decide whether or not we join it in 1996—are arrangements that we judged to be right for this country. We also have a special provision not to take part in the social chapter. We have made provisions that we think are right for our country; Denmark sought provisions that it believes are right for that country—and the Community has accommodated both of us.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): If the Edinburgh summit has genuinely succeeded in putting Europe back together, as the Prime Minister said—and as many of us hoped—is not the reason that all 12 Community members were prepared to compromise? It is not so much a triumph for Britain and the Prime Minister—more a success for the European Community.

The Prime Minister: I am happy to confirm that it is a success for the European Community. Everyone has compromised, and I am delighted to have played a part in bringing them to that compromise.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Is not one of the most encouraging features of the agreement the fact thgat European Community leaders were determined to dispense with constitutional gobbledegook and to make it possible for the conditions for the Danes to succeed? Is it now possible that European Community leaders will take the measures necessary to open their borders, so that the east European countries can trade freely with the Community and in time take their full part as Community members?

The Prime Minister: I agree strongly with my hon. Friend on that point. We made progress on that at Edinburgh over the past few days. We have agreed to enhance the special trade agreements with east European countries. In addition, we have for the first time agreed that the Visegrad countries will in due course become full members of the Community. We have held that out as a potential prospect in the future. This is the first time that we have ever stated unequivocally that when the east European countries are ready, the European Community will be open to them. That means that we will have the opportunity—although admittedly some years ahead—of moving the Community's boundaries much further across eastern Europe. In terms of security, trade and prosperity, that is a remarkable move forward.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I congratulate the Prime Minister on what was undoubtedly a very effective and efficient chairmanship of the summit. I also thank him for his kind words about the capital city of Edinburgh—a city with two parliament buildings but no parliament of its own.

Does the Prime Minister recognise that, given that the Spanish and Danish questions dominated the summit, he has finally given the lie to the idea propounded by his party that small nations cannot affect the direction or the development of Europe? Having said in his statement that national decisions should be the rule rather than the exeption, how can he continue to deny the right of the peoples of Scotland and Wales to have their own parliaments? The demand for that right was clearly demonstrated by the 25,000 people who were on the streets of Edinburgh on Saturday—people kept outside their own buildings.

The Prime Minister: Many may think that a rather contrary view was expressed by rather more people on 9 April.

I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her opening remarks. I think that both large and small nations must be treated with great care, and ascribed great importance, in the Community; Spain, I think, would regard itself as rather a large nation.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Once again, my right hon. Friend has demonstrated—as he did at Maastricht—that his tough but flexible approach to negotiation is the best way of defending British interests. I welcome the success of his presidency and, in particular, the proposals for enlargement of the Community.

Is it envisaged that the new members of the Community will subscribe to the common agricultural policy, which—in the context of an enlarged Community—is an increasingly anachronistic arrangement?

The Prime Minister: They will, of course, subscribe to the general principles of the common agricultural policy; they will have to negotiate on specific points, as this country did when it became a member of the Community many years ago.

[The Prime Minister]

I welcome enlargement—not only for the reasons that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and I have already given but because each of the Nordic applicants for Community membership will be a net contributor to the Community budget. That, in due course, will ease the position for all the other contributors.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): What discussions did the Prime Minister have in Edinburgh with other European leaders about GATT? More especially, how did he get on with the French?

The Prime Minister: GATT is on course, as a result of decisions that we made at the Birmingham summit some time ago. The Council recognised the fundamental importance of GATT to the world economy. Negotiations are continuing: agreement has been reached between the United States and the Community, and the negotiations are now concentrating on other matters at Geneva. The Commission, which negotiates for the Community, is negotiating in a hard and constructive manner. The aim is a political understanding before the end of the year.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I, too, congratulate my right hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues, not only on what they achieved in Edinburgh but on their achievements during a difficult six months of the British presidency.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the welcome, extremely small increase in European Community financing between now and 1999—it amounts to significantly less than one tenth of 1 per cent.—compares very favourably with the one-third increase that was agreed in 1988? Is it not a tribute to the co-operation and far-sightedness of all the participating nations at Edinburgh?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is entirely right about the realism shown by nation states in the Edinburgh negotiations. It was, I think, generally realised that, in the present economic climate, it was not appropriate to increase expenditure by a substantial amount, even over the coming years. It was for that reason particularly that the summit agreed a two-year freeze in the ceiling before any increase in the contributions is effective.

At present, the United Kingdom's net contribution is about £2 billion a year. It would be £4 billion but for the rebate, which remains and—lest there be any doubt—is extended to cover the fresh areas of expenditure that were agreed at Maastricht. In the case of the cohesion fund, for example, that means that we would pay only 5 per cent. of the total cost.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Given that the solution to the Danish problem appears to be based on an interpretation of the treaty, can the Prime Minister tell the House and the country to which interpretation of the treaty the Government and the country are being asked to sign up—the Danish interpretation or that apparently accepted as definitive by the rest of the Community?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the clarification agreement signed in respect of Denmark and the Danes' opt-out provision on the single currency. The face of the treaty remains as it was; there has been no change in that.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I wish to draw further attention to the truly remarkable agreement about Denmark, whereby the treaty is to be amended in a manner that is legally enforceable but does not give rise to any necessity for further ratification in Europe. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if the House votes to amend the treaty in any manner, he will ensure that that vote gives rise to an amendment that is legally enforceable but does not require ratification around Europe?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend's assumption that the treaty is legally binding and that the face of the treaty is not changed is entirely correct. I myself do not anticipate that there will be amendments to the treaty during its passage through the House.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): My question is to the Prime Minister as Prime Minister, not as outgoing President of the European Community. Is he aware that, by denying the British people the right that the Danes, the Irish and the French have enjoyed—to determine the matter for themselves—and by drafting the European Communities (Amendment) Bill in such a way that the House of Commons has no right to call for a referendum, he is running against the flow of democratic development in this country, which, for many years, has been from the centre down to the people and has prepared us for a Europe run by the edicts of a junta of European Heads of State which will be the means by which laws are enforced in future? That represents a direct betrayal of democracy and will not work without the consent that is essential if any European co-operation is to succeed.

The Prime Minister: With great respect, the right hon. Gentleman is talking colossal nonsense. On the most important matters for this country there is unanimity and, without unanimity, there is no agreement. We have no tradition of referendums in this country. We have had a referendum on Europe—in which the right hon. Gentleman played a significant part—the purpose of which was not to determine the issue but to cure the splits in the then Labour Government.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Does my right hon. Friend accept that most people believe that, without his leadership at Edinburgh, the summit would not have been a success and that, because of that, he deserves immense congratulations? Will he now try to ensure that all his Ministers go out to explain to the British people what Maastricht is all about? Too many people still do not understand the treaty, and it would be useful if Ministers pushed the thing forward as quickly as possible. Will my right hon. Friend also try to ensure that the European Communities (Amendment) Bill goes forward as quickly as possible, as many people are sick to death of hearing about it over and over again and would be delighted if the House could get on with dealing with other matters rather than spending too much time on the Bill?

The Prime Minister: I am pleased that my hon. Friend looks forward to discussing the Bill. He is certainly correct in saying that it is all too easy to misrepresent the Bill—often in statements that are a grotesque parody of what is

in it and of what it means—rather than dealing with its realities, which are very much in the hard-headed economic and commercial self-interest of this country.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Prime Minister aware that what he has said today, and what was achieved at the Edinburgh conference, has nothing in it to help pensioners who will be starving this winter and who need heat and more money in their pockets? Is he aware that he has brought nothing back for the unemployed—4 million of them—or for all those kids who need proper schools or for the homeless? All he has done is to fall in line, like a patsy should, with the Franco-German axis and take 100 million quid of British taxpayers' money to achieve some so-called "success".

The Prime Minister: I do not know how long the hon. Gentleman rehearsed that point, but it was time wasted. I thought that the dinosaur was dead—clearly not.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I, too, congratulate my right hon. Friend on the way in which he engendered a spirit of co-operation, of compromise and of working together at the conference, which was an outstanding achievement. Bearing in mind the fact that the public have often not been given enough information about the Community, the treaty and future developments, on which I think the anti-Europeans are right, what are the plans in detail for making the Council of Ministers more open? Will my right hon. Friend use his role in the troika to work to make it more open, not in the formation of policy—which would be a lot to ask—but in legislation?

The Prime Minister: We have agreed at the meeting in Edinburgh that we will make the Council of Ministers more open up to and including the extent that certain sessions of it will be open to television.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): On several occasions, the Prime Minister has told the House that the decisions on the Danish opt-out, being an agreement between 12 Heads of State or Government, is binding in international law; we accept that. However, as the primary law of the Maastricht treaty and the primary law of the treaty of Rome is European Community law, will the right hon. Gentleman now confirm that the decision is also binding in European Community law?

The Prime Minister: No. This is an intergovernmental decision. It is binding between Governments. It is judicable not at the European Court of Justice but at the International Court at The Hague.

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on his achievement at Edinburgh, particularly on the emphasis on the importance of subsidiarity. Does he agree that, too often, hostility to petty over-regulation from Brussels has detracted from the genuine benefits to business and consumers of the completion of the single market—benefits which we shall increasingly see from the end of this year?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend on that point. She is right to draw attention to the fact that the British presidency has now completed the single market. Fifty measures have been concluded during the British presidency. The single market will be open for business from 1 January. That will increase trade, increase prosperity and, yes, increase jobs.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Albeit this is not a very elevated question, I have given the Prime Minister notice of it. What do I say to constituents in Bathgate or Fauldhouse—to people not living in the city of Edinburgh who in no way benefited from what was a national occasion—who think that, through their poll tax, they have had a quite disproportionate payment to make? What were the expenses? What is the Prime Minister going to say to British Telecom, which put on a shame-making performance for us all, by using Meadowbank and not allowing incoming calls for distinguished foreign journalists? Many of our guests were extremely angry.

The Prime Minister: I have made inquiries about the hon. Gentleman's latter point. We have no knowledge of the particular incident to which he refers, but we will investigate it and I shall write to him at the end of the investigation. As for the hon. Gentleman's first point, the police costs of £2·6 million will of course be covered in the normal way—51 per cent. by central Government and the remaining 49 per cent. by the local authorities.

What the hon. Gentleman might have missed in his question is a significant cash benefit that actually went to many people in Edinburgh as a result of holding the European Council there. It is difficult to put a precise figure on it, but estimates that I have seen are around £10 million to £11 million.

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): I, too, congratulate my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary on weaving their way so successfully through the intricacies of the Edinburgh summit. Does my right hon. Friend think that, provided that Denmark and the House ratify the Maastricht treaty reasonably quickly, the dangers of a two-speed Europe have receded—a two-speed Europe that would be deeply damaging to inward investment in this country, British industry and British jobs?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is right, in that the dangers of that happening have receded. He is also right in saying that we must do all we can to prevent it from coming about at any stage in the future. We certainly shall.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): Will the Prime Minister clarify the financing of the welcome new cohesion fund? Will he confirm that the money made available for that fund will not in any way draw money away from the Community's structural fund, which is used for investment in essential projects in Britain's regions? Could the cohesion fund be used in the future to benefit not only Europe's poorer countries but its poorer regions, including England's northern region, which has yet to be aligned with the rest of Britain, let alone the rest of the European Community?

The Prime Minister: On the latter point, it is the structural fund that deals with regions; the cohesion fund specifically deals with the four least prosperous countries in the Community. I can confirm that the cohesion fund in no way draws resources away from the structural fund, both of which were increased in the future financing agreement that we made.

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Mrs. Teresa Gorman: (Billericay): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that in the horse-trading that went on at Edinburgh to achieve the results of the conference, the Danes have been granted their opt-outs, the Germans will get 18 new MEPs and the Spanish will get a handout through the cohesion fund, without which they would have held up the agreement? Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that neither he nor the House has the moral right to grant that money without first consulting the British people about the massive increase in taxation that they will face, which will be necessary to pay for that money?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend cannot have looked at the figures with any great care. The effect on the United Kingdom's net contribution to the European Community will be less than 0·1 per cent., and it will not even reach that dizzy figure until 1999. In return for that, our abatement, which is worth £2 billion a year, has been reconfirmed to the end of the century. We will also be eligible for structural funds and we will receive net advantages from the cohesion fund. On balance, my hon. Friend may consider it rather a good deal.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I welcome the progress made at Edinburgh and I hope that the Maastricht Bill will move forward rapidly to the statute book, so that we can get on with dealing with issues such as unemployment and the economic problems that face us. Can the Prime Minister clarify the position regarding the six additional MEPs? Is there one each for Wales and Scotland? What progress has been made in relation to the Committee of the Regions? Can he clarify whether the new Green Papers, to which he referred, will not just be considered by the Governments of each member state but, in line with the subsidiarity principle, may be discussed at a lower level, including that of regional and local government?

The Prime Minister: On the Green Papers, the Commission has offered to send them to Select Committees of the House and other interested bodies, so there will be wide consultation. The Committee of the Regions was not discussed at the Edinburgh summit, but we are still determining how the composition of that Committee may be finally decided upon. The provision of six extra MEPs will mean that fresh boundaries are set across England, Scotland and Wales, which will be a matter for the Boundary Commission, not the Government.

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): Does my right hon. Friend accept that he greatly deserves the tributes that he is getting from all parts of the House on the outcome of the Edinburgh summit, which is in Britain's and Europe's best interests? May I ask him to utilise the great support that he has on this issue to press on with the Maastricht Bill to get it through the House sooner rather than later?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that advice. The Bill will be returning to the House shortly after we return from the Christmas recess.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Will the Prime Minister guarantee that welfare benefits and welfare services will not be cut as a result of the agreement that we got at Edinburgh?

The Prime Minister: There will be no increase either next year or the year after in Britain's net contribution to the European Community; nor will there be an increase from any other nation state over the next two years—that is the period covered by our press statement. The answer to the hon. Gentleman is yes—I can give him the confirmation for which he asks.

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): Does my right hon. Friend accept that one of the most significant things he said to the House was on enlargement, particularly as it affects the countries of central and eastern Europe? Does he further accept that, for many parliamentarians in those countries, that opportunity, which I believe is now firmly in place, is one of great significance? Will my right hon. Friend assure us that that matter will be looked at with the greatest possible urgency?

The Prime Minister: I most certainly can give that assurance. When I visited the Visegrad countries earlier this year, it was clear that the opportunity to enter the Community would be a lifeline of hope for them at a time when they face real economic difficulties. They will be delighted that that is now certain in due course and not just an option that may be considered.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Will not yet another superhumanly brilliant, stunningly successful triumph and great victory leave most people in Europe unmoved because it does not address any of their concerns, the main one of which is the 17 million people who are unemployed across the Community? That was caused mainly by the exchange rate mechanism, which was stage 1 of monetary union.

The Prime Minister: I rather fancy that the 17 million people who are unemployed may notice the proposed £24 billion package; there is surely a relationship between the two, as the hon. Gentleman should realise.

Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the specific successes that were achieved under his skilful presidency at Edinburgh. Does he agree, however, that the main achievement of the summit, which should continue to be emphasised constantly, was to strengthen the move that he began at Maastricht last year from federalism and centralisation towards a broader, more flexible Europe of nations, which would be more acceptable to the peoples of not only this country but most of Europe?

The Prime Minister: Yes, that is entirely right. It is important to bring the European Community a good deal nearer to the people who elect its members and who ultimately pay for the expenditure that it incurs. *[Interruption.]* That has been sought for many years but, far from being impossible, as the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) mutters, we are now doing it.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Is the Prime Minister aware that claims of success at Edinburgh will cut no ice with the vast majority of Scots, who will never share his southern and suburban sense of Scotland as a mere appendage of Greater England? Does he realise that the only lasting European settlement will be one founded on democracy and the national right to self-determination and that, although he may have been successful in shutting out Scottish democracy at Edinburgh, Scottish democracy will prevail by winning a Scottish parliament and shutting

out for ever the minority and undemocratic Government whom he has imposed on our country for the past 14 years?

The Prime Minister: What upsets the hon. Gentleman is that his ideals and his party have been a minority for too long. That is his problem.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): As a result of the summit, are the French Government now willing to change their mind about the GATT negotiations?

The Prime Minister: They gave no indication either way at the summit, but they certainly made no attempt to prevent the GATT procedure from continuing at Geneva.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Prime Minister has asserted in a number of answers that the nature of the treaty on European union will not be affected by the declaration on Denmark. If so, why must the declaration be in the form of a legally binding international treaty? Is not the European Council in danger of setting itself up as a Caesars' collective that can not only require legislation for the whole Community but change treaties under discussion without ratification by Parliaments or assemblies of the people that they represent? Does that not show that the European Community and union, far from being people's organisations, are a means for top people to impose their will on others?

The Prime Minister: Precisely not. The hon. Gentleman began with a fallacy and moved on from there. What was agreed was an intergovernmental binding decision, not a treaty. There is a clear distinction between the two.

Sir George Gardiner (Reigate): Is my right hon. Friend correct in saying that, even after the Edinburgh meeting, there is still no legal definition of the concept of subsidiarity that will stand up to test in the European Court?

The Prime Minister: No, my hon. Friend is not correct about that. The legal definition of subsidiarity is in article 3b of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Surely the Government have all the evidence they need of Serbian violations of the air exclusion zone over Bosnia, of which there have been more than 200. Surely the urgent need is not for yet another report but for United Nations action to enforce its exclusion zone.

The Prime Minister: The declaration that was made at the Edinburgh summit made it clear that the United Nations should now look closely at the situation—at the number of violations—and decide how to proceed. That is what the United Nations will now do.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): Is not one of the most significant achievements at Edinburgh the fact that uncertainty has been removed for the foreseeable future and that we can now see a positive way forward? In that context, should not the decision to proceed with enlargement be welcomed, especially by those who wish to see a change in the character of the Community, which is wholly consistent with the Government's views?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with that. I think that it does, over time, change the character of the Community. Equally relevantly, I think that extending the borders of the Community is not only right economically, in terms of extending free trade areas; I believe that it will be seen over the years to be right in security and other political terms as well. I am bound to say that had Yugoslavia, for example, become a member of the Community 30 years ago, I very much doubt that the present difficulties would exist.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Why are the Government so pusillanimous about intervention against Serbia? Is it not clear that arrangements will have to be made to stop Serbian aggression by taking out Serbian guns and by keeping their planes out of the air? Is it not essential that the Bosnian Muslims should be allowed to get arms and ammunition with which to defend themselves against Serbian massacres?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that I can share the analysis or the conclusions that the hon. Gentleman makes. We are seeking, not least as a result of the London conference on Yugoslavia which was launched under our presidency, a negotiated political settlement to the present difficulties. That does seem to be the right way forward, allied with the no-fly zone which we have imposed, and also with the substantial amount of humanitarian aid. British troops are there delivering humanitarian aid. The hon. Gentleman may know that, far from being a soft option, those soldiers undergo grave risks—indeed, they were attacked by mortars today. It is right for them to be there, but we should acknowledge the danger they face in delivering that humanitarian aid.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): My right hon. Friend has shown that the most effective way of achieving change is negotiation from within. Does he agree that the most important factor in terms of recovery—not only our recovery from recession but Europe's recovery from its problems—will be the two lists of directives and regulations which he described in his statement and which are to be dropped, reviewed or abolished? Will he undertake that for every European directive or regulation that is abolished, we shall not only abolish the relevant legislation in this country but match it by abolishing another home-grown regulation, thereby giving British business the best opportunity for recovery?

The Prime Minister: I believe that that is a very worthy ambition indeed, and I have charged my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs with making himself the most unpopular member of the Government by destroying directives that are beloved of individual Departments. I hope and expect him to do that speedily. The subsidiarity lists released at Edinburgh are, of course, not final lists—they are but preliminary lists, and more will follow.

Mr. Lew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): Does the Prime Minister accept that his refusal to hold a referendum on the treaty shows that he is treating the views of the electorate with disdain and saying that their views are not important? Does he also accept that his refusal to hold a referendum shows that he recognises that there is no support for the treaty outside the House?

The Prime Minister: My views on the referendum mean no such thing as described by the hon. Gentleman. I believe that, as a parliamentary democracy, we should

[The Prime Minister]

adhere to the traditions of a parliamentary democracy. That is what I was elected to do here, and I thought that was what the hon. Gentleman was elected for as well.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Given that the increase in the budget will amount to one first-class stamp per family in the United Kingdom in two years' time and that all the new entrants to the Community are likely to be net contributors, can we not press forward with the enlargement of the Community as quickly as possible and, putting the recent past behind us, get the treaty ratified in the House as quickly as possible, even if it means staying up all night, every night for a couple of weeks to do so?

The Prime Minister: I hear what my hon. Friend says about ratification. On getting new entrants into the Community, during our presidency, we have virtually completed the dossiers that will enable negotiations with the Nordic countries to begin very speedily. I very much hope that at least three of them, and possibly four, will join the Community by the beginning of 1995.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Prime Minister confidently announced a number of economic initiatives. In the light of Edinburgh, can he now confidently predict a reduction in unemployment over the next 12 months? If he cannot give that guarantee, surely Edinburgh has failed the real test set by the public outside who want a reduction in unemployment. Why was the European emergency programme for jobs not on the agenda?

The Prime Minister: It is not all that long ago that the hon. Gentleman asked me similar questions and asked me to tell him when inflation would be reduced. He will know that it is now down to 3 per cent., and he might occasionally voice his congratulations to the Government on that matter. No Government have ever given estimates on unemployment, as the hon. Gentleman knows very well. Of course our policy is geared to bringing down unemployment and to creating permanent jobs, but we cannot do that without low inflation and without the lower interest rates that we now have. We have set the framework for job creation and we must now ensure, not least by removing many of the burdens on business, that business will expand, grow, invest and create jobs. That is what this summit was about.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. Friend's negotiating skills have shown remarkable results. Will he use those negotiating skills to look carefully into the situation in Scotland, where the summit took place? Some 74 per cent. of Scots did not support the Conservative party at the general election. My right hon. Friend has heard some of the comments from the Opposition Benches today, and he has seen the demonstration and heard the speeches made in Scotland. Does he recognise that, if we continue to bypass Parliament and to give powers to Europe, the Scots may end up breaking up the union that really matters—the Union of the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I believe that there is widespread appreciation across the whole of the United Kingdom about the importance of the Union. It is not just a question of the Union being important for Scotland, although I believe it is: the Union is equally important to England. Scotland's contribution to the United Kingdom is vital both within the United Kingdom and for the United Kingdom within Europe. There should be no doubt that it is a two-way process.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Does the Prime Minister agree with his Foreign Secretary who said last week before the summit that, whatever the outcome of the summit, the Government would claim that it was what they had always intended? Given that the summit failed entirely to deal properly with unemployment, with social policy and with subsidiarity, is it not the case that the Prime Minister's self-congratulatory glow about his statement today is nothing more than over-egging the pudding?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman would do well to look at what his right hon. and learned Friend the leader of the Labour party and his hon. Friends were predicting about the summit. When he has looked at their predictions and when he then sees what happens, he will notice a sharp difference between their predictions of failure and the outcome on a whole range of subjects.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The Prime Minister has clearly enjoyed his visit to one of the great nations of the United Kingdom. Was he able to form a judgment that the partial pooling of sovereignty which took place almost 300 years ago has brought about rather better results for both partners in the United Kingdom than did the endless warfare that preceded it?

The Prime Minister: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. His remarks chime neatly with the point I made a moment ago about the importance of the Union both to England and to Scotland.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): At the Edinburgh summit, what discussions did the Prime Minister have on the growing feeling that Europe is becoming a fortress against those fleeing from oppression and intolerance in other parts of the world? What discussions took place on the passage of the Asylum Bill in this country and the change in the German constitution to reduce the number of asylum seekers entering Germany, which are widely seen by the Nazi right throughout Europe as victories that they have achieved? Does not the Prime Minister think that it is important to recognise that Europe has a major role to play in accepting and welcoming victims of oppression from wherever they come, rather than slamming the door in their faces?

The Prime Minister: Far from being a fortress, the Heads of Government at the Edinburgh summit agreed over time to open the boundaries of the Community to bring new nations into the Community. There can be no better way of showing that Europe is not a fortress. As to the hon. Gentleman's remarks about right-wing extremism which has occurred in a number of countries in Europe, there is great concern about that among all Heads of Government—none more so than Chancellor Kohl, who has denounced it very roundly and taken action against it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move to the next statement.

Local Government Finance (Wales)

4.35 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): With your permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement on local government finance matters in Wales.

On 12 November I proposed the levels of total standard spending and aggregate external finance for Wales. I am pleased to announce to the House today a further increase in TSS and AEF for 1993-94 of £1·6 million, in recognition of the additional responsibilities which local authorities will assume from next April following changes to the independent living fund. This increases the overall levels of TSS and AEF which I propose to provide in 1993-94 to £2,599·8 million and £2,344·2 million respectively.

The levels of council tax set in Wales will depend on the budgetary decisions of local authorities. I am, however, determined that local taxpayers in Wales should be protected from unreasonable council tax bills. I therefore announced in May that, for the first time, for 1993-94 I would issue provisional capping criteria to assist local authorities in their budgetary decision making. I consider capping criteria to be necessary because for both 1991-92 and 1992-93 the overall level of budgets set by local authorities in Wales have exceeded my plans by around 3 per cent., despite settlement packages for those years which together provided for increases in the level of revenue spending of almost 25 per cent.

I am today announcing my provisional capping criteria. However, because of changes in local authority functions in 1993-94—essentially the loss of further education and the acquisition of community care responsibilities—and other changes arising from the Local Government Finance Act 1992, it is not possible, for the purpose of capping, to make a direct comparison between budgets set by local authorities in 1992-93 and the budgets to be set for 1993-94. As a result, I will exercise my statutory powers to specify for each authority in Wales a base position, known as a relevant notional amount, to measure budget increases for the purposes of applying capping.

I intend to allow larger increases for authorities that set budgets closer to their standard spending assessments—SSAs—whose budgets are relatively higher. My intended capping criteria are: first, any increase of more than 2·5 per cent. over the 1992-93 notional amount will be considered an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget requirement above the authority's SSA; secondly, any increase of more than 1·75 per cent. over the 1992-93 notional amount will be considered an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget requirement over 1 per cent. above the authority's SSA; thirdly, any increase of more than 1 per cent. over the 1992-93 notional amount will be considered an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget requirement over 5 per cent. above the authority's SSA; fourthly, any increase of more than 0·5 per cent. over the 1992-93 notional amount will be considered an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget requirement over 10 per cent. above the authority's SSA; finally, any budget requirement more than 12·5 per cent. above SSA will be considered excessive subject to certain conditions. An authority that sets its budget at or below its SSA will not be capped.

I have placed in the Vote Office and the Library of the House full details of my proposed capping criteria, a draft of the report setting out each Welsh authority's notional amount on the basis of its calculation, and details of each authority's provisional standard spending assessment for 1993-94.

Provisional standard spending assessments have been calculated in accordance with distribution formulae that have been agreed with the local authority associations in Wales and ratified by the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. Details of my provisional capping criteria and provisional standard spending assessments and a copy of the draft notional amounts report are being sent to every local authority in Wales. Authorities have the opportunity to make representations on notional amounts before I lay the report for the approval of the House.

My capping criteria are, of necessity, provisional. I will take account of all appropriate considerations in making my decisions on capping. Local authorities have all the information that they need to make progress in setting their budgets for the coming financial year. In the present economic climate, I consider my proposals for local government revenue spending to be reasonable.

I turn now to capital resources. Following the autumn review of public expenditure, I have decided to issue capital grant and credit approvals to local authorities for 1993-94 amounting to £483·5 million. This, coupled with the use by local authorities of their own resources as enhanced by the temporary relaxation of the debt redemption rules relating to capital receipts, is expected to deliver gross capital expenditure of £620·1 million.

In addition, I have made separate provision of £70·6 million for forecast receipts from the European regional development fund. To the extent that local authorities are successful in their bids for ERDF grant, they can expect to receive matching supplementary credit approvals additional to those in the local authority capital settlement.

Excluding the ERDF grants that it is estimated local authorities will receive in the present financial year, the expected gross capital expenditure of £620 million in 1993-94 represents an increase of £61 million or 11 per cent. on this year. That is a very generous settlement in this period of exceptionally tight control on public spending and complements the Government's strategy for growth in the economy. The continuing high level of investment in infrastructure in Wales will help to ensure that the ingredients for economic growth are in place.

My proposals include support of £23 million over the next three years for investment in 15 new schemes of special or regional significance. The schemes involved include the regeneration of Pembroke Dock; the introduction of new local rail services between Bridgend and Swansea; a further phase of development at the Redwither industrial estate at Wrexham; new headquarters offices for the Snowdonia national park; a sports and leisure complex at Brecon; and town centre redevelopment in Swansea and Wrexham.

The capital package also includes provision of £66·6 million for transport grant-assisted road schemes. This allows two important schemes to commence in 1993-94—the Tredegar bypass and the A4067 dualling in the Swansea valley. It will also allow Clwyd county council to spend a further £2 million on preparation work for the third Dee crossing. Further assistance for that scheme, which I will announce next year, will permit a start to the main works for the third Dee crossing in 1994-95.

[Mr. David Hunt]

Another key element in the package of support for local authority capital investment is the urban programme, for which today I have approved a package amounting to £28·4 million. Of this, I am allocating £26·4 million to 228 projects, 10 more than in 1992-93. The remaining £2 million will be allocated early in the new year.

The projects include £500,000 for major infrastructure development at Cwmcynon, £300,000 earmarked for regeneration of Tredegar town centre and £500,000 for crime prevention initiatives across Wales. Five new strategies are approved for Caernarfon, Ely, Barry, Amman valley and Coedffranc near Neath. They will receive a total of £2·5 million in 1993-94. The valleys programme area as a whole will benefit from £15·3 million. The 50 most deprived wards in Wales will receive £8·3 million, or 32 per cent. of the total allocation.

Further details of the full capital package and the allocation of resources to individual authorities have been placed in the Library of the House.

The proposals I have set out today will enable local government to maintain services and deliver them to the communities that they serve at a reasonable cost. Local taxpapers can be assured that I am determined to protect them from unreasonable levels of council tax, through recourse to my capping powers if necessary. My proposals also encourage local authorities to invest in capital projects that will improve the infrastructure of Wales, promote economic growth and create jobs. I commend them to the House.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I thank the Secretary of State for delivering his statement. However, I express my firm disapproval of its timing. The Secretary of State knows full well that the Public Accounts Committee is sitting at this precise moment, and is questioning the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency. Therefore, three of my colleagues, my right hon. Friends the Members for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) and for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) and my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) are unable to be here to question the Secretary of State on the financing of their respective local authorities.

Despite the gloss that the Secretary of State puts on the statement, it will mean job losses and cuts in essential services in Wales, and will directly undermine the ability of Welsh local authorities to cope with the tragic consequences of his Government's economic failures. Despite the fact that the statement is supposed to be on the revenue settlement, the Secretary of State took half his allotted time to refer to capital works that he has approved in Wales. He is up to the old tricks of his predecessors —he has rejigged the capital programme and presented it as a new programme.

The detail of what the Secretary of State has done, has three elements. First, he will allow local authorities to borrow money so that they can take advantage of any ERDF grants they get as a result of their own initiative. That is not a Welsh Office programme. Secondly, he is taking credit for allowing local authorities to proceed with schemes that they have developed on their own initiative. Thirdly, he has rejigged the urban programme and presented it as a new programme with increased resources. If one compares last year's urban programme with this year's urban programme, one sees that he has cut it by 8 per cent.

We have massive problems in Wales which the statement should have addressed, but does not. Let me give two examples. First, at present there are nearly 10,000 homeless families in Wales. For the children of 600 families, Christmas this year will be spent in the back room of bed-and-breakfast accommodation or in a hostel for the homeless. Can the Secretary of State confirm that the statement will do nothing to enable local authorities to tackle that problem?

Secondly, 24 per cent. of 16-year-old school leavers in Mid Glamorgan leave school with no qualifications. The Secretary of State is keen on comparative tables for exam results. Let me offer him a comparison. The figure for Mid Glamorgan is the worst in the United Kingdom, and the figure for Gwent is the second worst in the United Kingdom. The Secretary of State's response has been to reduce in real terms the money available to those counties by giving a disproportionate share of the budget to further education colleges to sweeten their privatisation. In effect, the Government are stealing £14 million from Welsh local authorities.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that both the Council of Welsh Districts and the Association of Welsh Counties claimed in their submission to him that there was major underfunding of local authorities? They estimated that an increase of some 7·5 per cent. was required over last year's budget to meet inflation and their new statutory responsibilities. Will the Secretary of State explain how an increase of only 0·2 per cent. over the 1992-93 adjusted budgets for revenue expenditure provides resources to deal with the £70 million cost of last year's pay award for police and fire services, let alone the new responsibilities: the new national insurance increases, new pension costs, the Children Act 1989, the national curriculum, waste management and unforeseen emergencies such as the recent flooding, for which the Bellwin formula is entirely outdated?

The Secretary of State has previously announced the headline figures for the new council tax. Will he confirm that those figures are based on the assumption of a 100 per cent. collection rate and that the inflated house valuations on which the tax is based are not subject to widespread successful appeals? Does he accept that the new tax will be just as unfair as the poll tax and just as capricious and arbitrary in its application? Does not the fact that the Secretary of State is so adamant in his determination to press ahead with capping give the lie to his claim that he has developed a consensual relationship with Welsh councils?

This is a black day for democracy in Wales. It demonstrates clearly the clash between the aspirations of Welsh councils, which know and understand the needs of their communities, and those of a Secretary of State who does not share our concerns, is unaccountable and is hostile to our values. The only way in which he can achieve his objectives is by direction. The wishes of the people of Wales are being overridden. More than 90 per cent. of local authority expenditure is now determined by the Secretary of State. Will he accept his full responsibility for the job losses, declining services and hardships that the settlement will create? If he does not accept responsibility for that, the people of Wales will certainly know whom to blame.

Mr. Hunt: First, timing of statements is not a matter for me, as the hon. Gentleman knows. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman seeks to drive a wedge between the Welsh Office and local authorities, but he will not succeed. One of the most important features of Wales is that, rather than leaving matters to the initiative of one or the other, the Welsh Office and local authorities work closely together in a positive partnership. That is why I hope very much that I shall not have to use my capping powers. I have not had to do so until now. By announcing the detailed provisional capping criteria, I hope that local authorities will know exactly where they stand and will be able to budget accordingly.

The hon. Gentleman referred to children leaving school without qualifications. We inherited a position which was far worse, as the hon. Gentleman will know from the statistics. We are increasing the opportunities all the time through my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education. The number of people receiving higher education has increased substantially.

As for further education, I was advised by my officials and I carefully examined the figures and concluded that the appropriate deduction was the figure that I announced. The hon. Gentleman will have to await my decision on funding for further education next year to find out whether the figure that has been transferred is the appropriate one. That announcement will be made in due course. I have met representatives of the relevant counties. They expressed anxieties about the size of the sum to be transferred. However, I believe that it will be justified by the announcement that is to be made in due course.

The settlement is a 3·1 per cent. increase in total standard spending for local authorities, following a 25 per cent. increase over the previous two years. In the present economic circumstances, it is a reasonable settlement, although I recognise that the figure that the hon. Gentleman used was for budgets. I am giving the appropriate figure compared to the figure that I announced this time last year.

The hon. Gentleman asked about collection rates. If he recalls, many dire predictions were made about collection of the community charge. They proved to be incorrect in Wales, because Labour Members underestimated the dedication and industry of all those involved in local government, who ensured that there was full collection. Of course, it is up to local authorities to predict the rate that they will collect, but many parts of Wales achieved 100 per cent. of what they budgeted to collect. Local authorities must make their own decisions on the anticipated collection rate.

As for inflated housing values, all the homes in Wales were valued on the same day. There may have been a fall in values in some parts of Wales, but that will apply to all properties in the area. It is unlikely that a property will move from one band to another. However, there is, of course, an opportunity to appeal.

The hon. Gentleman said that it was a black day for local government. I could hardly describe a record level of gross capital spending in times of economic crisis as a black day. I acknowledge that local authorities in Wales will have to make difficult choices about spending priorities and pursue efficiency savings to stay within my expenditure plans, but I believe that the settlement is realistic in the current economic climate.

The hon. Gentleman criticised the Government for funding 90 per cent. of local authority spending through aggregate external finance towards total standard spending. At the same time, he says that I am not giving enough money and that I am giving too much. It is about time that he got the message right.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Madam Speaker: Order. Before we proceed further, I regret the need to inform the House that what we originally heard from the Secretary of State was a statement. This is not a debate. It is a statement following which questions must be asked. I want to call as many Members as possible, but I can do that only if questions are brief. I am sure that we shall receive brief answers from the Secretary of State.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the statement, which is clear and well thought through. It must have been gratifying for him to be described by the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies)—*[Interruption.]*—as up to the old tricks of his predecessor, who secured a firm—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Other hon. Members have asked questions today. I expect a question from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Richards: Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement will be welcomed on two counts? First, it will be welcomed in my constituency in Clwyd for the urban programme funds which my right hon. Friend has announced for Rhyl, Rhos-on-Sea and Rhuddlan.

Secondly, the announcement of an additional £500,000 for crime prevention, which causes some anxiety in Wales, will be widely welcomed throughout the country.

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who recognises the significance of today's announcement. We have been able to support many projects throughout Wales in partnership with the relevant local authorities. That is good news for all of Wales and in particular for north Wales, as my hon. Friend says.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): For those who are not public finance accountants, will the Secretary of State confirm that the bell now tolls for small rural schools, many of which are excellent but have fewer than 50 pupils, especially as a result of the increase in the lower limit of pupils for the small schools allowance?

Although the £500,000 for crime prevention is welcome, as is any money for such initiatives, is it not pretty hollow when one sets it alongside the Home Secretary's refusal to allow any police force in Wales a single extra police constable in the next financial year?

Mr. Hunt: It is for the local education authorities to allocate the funding for small rural schools. However, such schools have opportunities to ensure that they can survive these difficult economic times by, for example, forming clusters.

I welcome what the hon. and learned Gentleman said about crime prevention schemes. Any money that I have allocated today is over and above what has already been announced by the Home Secretary.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): On transport grant, why is it that, in Wales, local authorities and claimants for local safety schemes cannot get a grant for traffic-calming measures unless the project costs more than £5 million? In England, one can get grants for schemes costing much less

[Mr. Gareth Wardell]

than that. Will the right hon. Gentleman consider the matter to find out whether we can take traffic-calming measures to reduce the number of deaths and the serious injuries on Welsh roads?

Mr. Hunt: I have a great deal of sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's remarks, but the £5 million cut-off has been agreed with local authorities. It is for them to advise me whether they would like the limit to be reviewed. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will pursue with the local authorities his concerns and their advice to me, but in the meantime I shall consider the matter.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his references to the River Dee crossing. Bearing in mind the fact that there is almost total traffic chaos in industrial Deeside, when will the project be completed—indeed, when will engineering work begin—and what will be the cost? Does the statement mean that Llay Park primary school and Penylag large school will be rebuilt and that Hope high school will be extended?

Mr. Hunt: That was quite a package of questions.

Madam Speaker: Just answer two.

Mr. Hunt: Very well. I shall announce detailed funding of the third Dee crossing next year, but in the meantime I have allocated £2 million to Clwyd county council for further preparatory work. As I know the area well, I agree with the hon. Gentleman's remarks about congestion. The schools are a matter for the local authorities concerned.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Since the Minister said that a high level of investment is continuing in Wales, will he explain to the House why there are more potholes in the roads than there were under Labour, why InterCity services to north Wales are at their lowest level ever—a lot lower than under Labour—and, most important, why no council houses are being built? If no council houses are being built, that must be the lowest possible figure. Why are the Government doing so badly, yet the right hon. Gentleman pretends at the Dispatch Box that the figures are fantastic? Does he realise that the people were not born yesterday and that they proved that by not voting for him or his party in Wales at the last general election?

Mr. Hunt: I notice that the hon. Gentleman has not queried any of the gross figures that I announced. They stand up to close consideration because they are true. That is the level of gross spending next year and it is a record. In gross terms, there has never been such a large capital programme in Wales before. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman ought to pay tribute to that. I do not mind if he attacks his local authority through me, but the potholes are a matter for the authority. Under this Government, there has been record spending on roads in Wales, and we are continuing those record levels.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Why is there nothing in the statement to tackle the most serious threat to jobs in Wales—the threat caused by the changes in the defence industry? Jobs have already been lost at Trecwn, Brawdy and Caerwent, at Marconi in Newport and at Glascoed. If the Government are not prepared to set up a diversification agency, why does the Secretary of State not allow Welsh local authorities to take serious practical steps to find alternatives to present defence jobs in Wales?

Mr. Hunt: If the Opposition spent less time attacking the Welsh Development Agency, which I am very proud of —I have paid tribute to it on many occasions and it is the envy of many people in the United Kingdom—they would realise that it is a good diversification agency and that it is constantly looking out for opportunities for new investment. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the many announcements on new projects that I have been privileged to make in conjunction with local authorities and the WDA. I am delighted that Wales is winning record inward investment. I shall endeavour to ensure that we continue to do so. Am I wrong to look for a little more support from the Opposition?

Mr. Elfyn Lwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): While I welcome the initiatives that the Secretary of State referred to in Caernarfon, Ely, Barry and so forth, may I remind him of the terrible state of the A470 in Meirionnydd Nant Conwy? He was there in August. What priority, if any, will be given to that much-needed scheme? Secondly, it is the view of both borough councils in my constituencies that the capping proposals come at the wrong time, bearing in mind the fact that for some years there has been a great deal of belt tightening.

The Secretary of State is careful to say that he wants to prevent unreasonable levels of council tax. I regret that one must reach the inevitable conclusion that a bad level of services will be offered to the community, at a time when extra spending is necessary as care in the community is on the horizon. Will he rethink the whole matter? I heard him say that he is open to representation, but when local authorities make representations they feel that they are not listened to by the Welsh Office.

Mr. Hunt: Again, I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman asked a large number of questions, but I shall try to deal with a few of them. I announced local authority expenditure on roads today. I have not announced the Welsh Office programme; that announcement will come later. May I therefore place in context the hon. Gentleman's remarks? On finance, my announcement represents expenditure per head in Wales for 1993-94 of £901 for every man, woman and child in Wales. According to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), at 90 per cent. I am funding too high a level of support as, for spending of £901, I am providing aggregate external finance of £812 for every man, woman and child in Wales. From whatever direction the figures are viewed, they represent a reasonable deal for the people of Wales.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Does the Secretary of State appreciate that our local authorities play a major part in attracting new industries to their areas, and that that has been the case in Newport and Gwent in particular? Does he not feel that those efforts need to be stepped up, especially in view of the major Marconi closure in Newport? Yet, under his proposals, our local authority is faced with no growth. How can the borough council be expected to regenerate the town with such a limitation?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman's first point echoes the remarks of his hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies). I announced gross funding for the industry

programme. I recognise the significant role played by local authorities, in particular in winning the QPL investment, which was the good result of a positive partnership with Newport borough council. I recognise that and constantly pay tribute to it, although hon. Gentlemen sometimes pretend that I do not. I take every opportunity to pay tribute to the efforts of Gwent county council and Newport borough council in winning investment, and, of course, I want that to continue.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The hon. Gentleman referred to schemes of regional significance. May I draw his attention to two schemes of considerable significance to the heads of the valleys? The first is the beginning of a dual carriageway over the heads of the valleys, and the second is the beginning of the missing link in the A465. Both schemes have considerable regional signficance and would secure vitally important jobs at both Vaynor and Penderyn quarries. Can he make an announcement as quickly as possible on the start of both schemes?

Mr. Hunt: As I made clear to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd), I am not announcing Welsh Office schemes today. That announcement will come. Today I announced transport grant-supported schemes. I shall bear in mind the matters that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned, but I ask him to understand that there has been record spending by the Welsh Office on roads, and it is not always possible to give priority to schemes favoured by individual Members.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): The Secretary of State will be aware that European funding was set in April at 1·43 ecu to the pound and is now 1·24 ecu to the pound, which means that the Government received a windfall of some 17 per cent., amounting to £260,000 in social fund spending in Clwyd alone. Will the Secretary of State assure the House that he will allow Clwyd to spend some of that money, or will it be used merely to reduce the public sector borrowing requirement for the United Kingdom as a whole?

Mr. Hunt: On the hon. Gentleman's direct question, I have made provision of £70·6 million, which is my forecast of the receipts likely to be forthcoming this financial year from the European regional development fund. However, it is now up to local authorities to put forward schemes —some have already done so—and see whether they are successful in their bids for ERDF grants. I have made it clear that they can expect to receive matching supplementary credit approvals in addition to those that I have announced in the local authority capital settlement.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): Will the Secretary of State confirm that his figure for total standard spending next year is a 3·1 per cent. increase on the TSS last year, but that local authorities spent 2·5 per cent. above their TSS figure this year? That 3 per cent. increase is, therefore, nowhere near enough for local authorities simply to maintain existing services. Does it not mean that they will have to make cuts or find their money from poll tax payers?

Mr. Hunt: Yes, I confirm the figures quoted by the hon. Gentleman, but that increase has been made against a difficult economic background. An increase in TSS of 3·1 per cent. is reasonable, bearing in mind that the figure has gone up by 25 per cent. in the past two years.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Why does not the Secretary of State admit that, through his underfunding and cutting, he is instructing West Glamorgan county council, Clwyd borough council and Neath borough council to cut services, school provision and jobs? I am disappointed that he has made no announcement about the future of Cwmtawe school, which is a crucial project dependent on Welsh Office capital funding. I am also disappointed that he has not announced when he will proceed with the A465 missing link construction.

Mr. Hunt: On the A465 construction, I thought that I had made it sufficiently clear earlier that we are dealing today with local authority transport grant-supported schemes, not Welsh Office road schemes.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): Is the Secretary of State aware that, irrespective of his feeling that he has a positive partnership with local government in Wales, the county councils are extremely angry with the formula that he has devised for transferring further education colleges to the independent sector? Will he confirm that that formula is based on assumed rather than actual expenditure and that, in the case of Dyfed county council, it will cost the general education budget £2 million? Will he also explain why, although he has a task force in place in west Wales, he has announced no specific capital allocation for Preseli Pembrokeshire district council?

Mr. Hunt: Again, the hon. Gentleman has asked a number of questions. On his first point about the further education allocation, I had to make a decision with the best advice available to me on the appropriate transfer of funds to meet the needs of further education colleges. I am not sure whether he has consulted the further education colleges—he may have consulted only local authorities —but I do not believe that the further education colleges regard that amount as sufficient. I must now consider adding to that figure to allocate proper resources for further education next year.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): In welcoming the Secretary of State's statement about the new strategy, which includes Caernarfon and four other locations, I notice that the total sum earmarked is £2·5 million. Does he recall that, when he visited Caernarfon a few weeks ago there was talk of a package of £8 million for regenerating Caernarfon? Will he assure me that there has been no slippage from that and that the other moneys will arise from other programmes or be made available in the subsequent financial year?

Mr. Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the detail of my announcement which is only part of the package for regenerating Caernarfon. Other partners are making contributions. However, I shall look into the point that he raises.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): Will the Secretary of State confirm that, when he visited my constituency just a week or so ago, he witnessed the fact that our bus service, bus depot and shopping complex had gone into receivership and that there was bad housing, record unemployment, low wages and under-investment in education? Although we welcome investment in the

[Mr. Llew Smith]

Tredegar bypass road and congratulate the local authorities and action committee on their support, does he accept that all the other measures that he mentioned are utterly irrelevant to the unemployed, those in bad housing and those suffering many other forms of deprivation?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman was with me in Tredegar when we were presented with a regeneration strategy, which has only just arrived at the Welsh Office. I regard today's announcement as demonstrating that the Tredegar bypass is high on the list of Welsh Office priorities, as it was on Gwent county council's list of priorities. I hope that the £300,000 for the regeneration of Tredegar will be regarded by everyone in Tredegar as a down payment showing our good will, because those are the properly costed schemes that have been put to us so far. We shall now respond to the strategy that has just been received and shall consider it in consultation with the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The Secretary of State's statement will be viewed with great dismay in the valley communities, because no substantial money is being made available for council and ordinary house repair and improvement grants. At the beginning of the 1980s, the Government poured a lot of money into those grants and it made a substantial difference to our communities. Unless they embark on a repair and improvement grant system to that extent, houses in the valleys will decay yet again.

Mr. Hunt: The sums that I have announced for home renovation grants are extremely sizeable. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement that I made earlier about the allocation being made to the valleys. Although the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) tried to portray the urban programme as a cut, failing to take account of the special consideration of the national garden festival at Ebbw Vale and some other considerations, I ask the House to consider the package as a whole and recognise that it represents record gross spending in Wales. It is about time that the Labour party paid tribute to that. Although I recognise that the hon. Gentleman has done so, he will acknowledge that several Opposition Members have not been as generous in their praise. I hope that he has set an example. I remind the House that we are dealing with record capital growth spending in Wales and I am delighted to have been able to announce that today.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Despite everything that the Secretary of State says about the amount of Government support for local authorities in Wales, because of the dispute over further education and the money already committed for the police and the fire service, little extra money will flow from local government coffers in Wales to support the services they provide. Will the Secretary of State make a special effort this year to look into the money being spent by local authorities to provide conversions or new central heating for old age pensioners and to provide money for disabled people who need their houses adapted? In many parts of Wales, the time that pensioners and disabled people must wait for those conversions to be undertaken is scandalous. I hope that he will look into the matter and provide extra money if the need for it can be shown.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the substantial additional funds that I have put into the programme during the three-year period that I announced last year. It is a matter for local authorities, but I will check on the issue that he raised. However, he should see the matter against the background of the greatly increased level of funding.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): Does the Secretary of State recall that only two hours ago he was praising local authorities in Wales and talking of co-operation? How is it that he is now introducing for the first time in Wales the most detailed and draconian capping criteria, which must severely restrict council spending? Does he not realise that the quality of life of hundreds of thousands of Welsh men and women will be profoundly affected by the revenue settlement and capping criteria? Is it not ironic that, while the Secretary of State's appointed quangos can apparently spend as they wish, our democratically elected councils have to cut, cut and cut? Is that not a case of double standards?

Mr. Hunt: No, it is not. The hon. Gentleman has failed to recognise that we are talking against a background of an increase in total standard spending over the previous two years of 25 per cent. and, in addition, I am allocating 3·1 per cent. I thought that I had made it clear earlier that I regard the settlement as being difficult for local authorities, just as the overall settlement is difficult for central Government. However, I believe that it strikes the right balance. I repeat that the £2,599·8 million is a substantial settlement, which represents £901 of spending next year by local authorities for every man, woman and child, towards which central Government will be funding, through aggregate external finance, £812. I believe, when the hon. Gentleman examines the figures, he will see that they are reasonable, bearing in mind the present economic background.

Points of Order

5.22 pm

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This is a genuine point of order——

Madam Speaker: I only hear genuine points of order.

Mr. Davies: This is a particularly genuine point of order —as you would expect, Madam Speaker. I understand that Ministers make statements on the basis of permission granted from the Chair. I wonder whether you would be prepared to consider expressing to Ministers your reluctance to grant such permission for non-emergency statements that are made on Fridays, such as the significant statement on arts funding which was made to a limited House last Friday? It caught many of us entirely unawares, despite the fact that the statement's gestation period was almost as long as that of an elephant; it was certainly not an emergency statement. For those of us who had important constituency commitments—I was travelling north to meet——

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that I can deal with the point of order.

I assure the hon. Gentleman and the House that the phrase "with permission" used by Ministers is simply a matter of courtesy. The Minister involved certainly does not need the permission of the Speaker of the House and can make statements to the House at the appropriate time—3.30 pm or 11 am on Fridays. It has nothing to do with the Speaker or the Office of Speaker. I hope that that makes it clear to hon. Members in the Chamber and those who may not be present.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. When a large number of right hon. and hon. Members are rising to speak and you come to the conclusion that it is not possible to continue with the exchanges due to other pressing parliamentary business, do you keep some sort of list of those who are not called so that they may have an opportunity to catch your eye during the following exchanges? I seem to be particularly unlucky.

Madam Speaker: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has always been unlucky, but I know full well that he was unlucky today. I assure hon. Members that I keep a full list of those who are not called, not only on what might be called important statements, but on all statements.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): On a different point of order, Madam Speaker. It was widely reported in the press in Wales this weekend that the long-awaited Welsh Language Bill, which the Government have been studying for the past six years and promised in the Queen's Speech, is to have its First Reading—after which it is printed—on Thursday.

It is extremely inconvenient for the House, and raises questions about the Government's motives, for the Bill to be introduced on the last day of the parliamentary Session so that it will be available in the Vote Office in printed form only after hon. Members have returned to their constituencies. That cuts across the opportunities to discuss the contents of such legislation, and, given the inordinately long period that the Government took to get the Bill that far, appears to be an abuse of the House.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that that is not a matter for the Chair, as it involves no breach of Standing Orders or procedures. Those on the Treasury Bench will have heard what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Mon): On a different point of order, Madam Speaker. You have often deprecated the practice whereby Ministers make important statements behind the curtain of written questions. That happened on Thursday, when an important statement was made stating that £20 million had been cut from the budget of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments for farmers, with great consequences for farmers in all parts of the United Kingdom. That is the sort of statement that should be made on the Floor of the House so that the Minister can be challenged from all sides on the nature of that drastic cut. Have you had a request for a statement today?

Madam Speaker: The answer to the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question is no. Let me make it absolutely clear that I have never deprecated the fact that the Government issue statements in the form of answers to written questions. That has always been the procedure in the House, whatever the complexion of the Government. I deprecate the practice of a Government making a statement outside the House to organisations outside the House before doing so in the Chamber.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. There can be nothing further to that point of order. I answered the hon. Gentleman's last question and clearly dealt with the procedures on written questions and statements made outside the House.

BILL PRESENTED

Commonwealth of Britain

Mr. Tony Benn presented a Bill to establish a democratic, federal and secular Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Wales dedicated to the welfare of all its citizens; to establish fundamental human rights within that Commonwealth; to lower the voting age to 16 years and to make other provision with respect to elections, including equal representation for women; to prescribe a constitutional oath; to establish a Commonwealth Parliament consisting of the House of Commons and the House of the People and to make provision for the term of a Parliament and for legislative and other procedure; to establish the office of President, and a Council of State, and to prescribe the powers of each; to provide for the formation of governments; to amend the law relating to official information, the armed forces and the security services; to make fresh provision for the participation of Britain in the United Nations Organisation and the European Communities; to make the basing of foreign forces in Britain dependent upon the approval of the House of Commons; to make new provision with respect to the judicial system and to establish a National Legal Service; to set up national Parliaments for England, Scotland and Wales; to amend the law relating to local government, the district auditor

and the accountability of police forces; to end the constitutional status of the Crown and to make certain consequential provision; to abolish the House of Lords and the Privy Council, to end the recognition in law of personal titles, and to provide for the acknowledgement of service to the community; to disestablish the Church of England, abolish the offence of blasphemy, and to provide for equality under the law for all religions and beliefs; to end British jurisdiction in Northern Ireland; to provide for a Constitution and for constitutional amendment; and to make transitional and related provision: And the same was read the First time, and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 January; and to be printed. [Bill 103.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

SAVINGS BANKS

That the National Savings Bank (Amendment) Regulations 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 2892) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

Adjournment (Christmas)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House, at its rising on Thursday, 17th December, do adjourn until Monday 11th January.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

5.27 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for calling me at the beginning of the debate.

In 22 years in the House, I have never before felt genuinely angry about the House adjourning, but today I do. It is appalling that the House should adjourn this week without devoting a full day to debating the terrible situation in the Balkans. As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House well knows, I have asked him on successive Thursdays to change the business of the House so that we can have a debate on the Adjournment to discuss the position in Bosnia. He has politely but firmly refused, and on two or three occasions he has urged me to use the opportunity presented by the Christmas Adjournment and I am grateful to Madam Speaker for calling me now. I have a high regard for my right hon. Friend and am glad to count him as a genuine right hon. Friend, but I do not think that it is good enough.

The most appalling atrocities since those of the second world war are being committed in the heart of our continent. The crisis—it is no less than that—in the Balkans, presents the world with its greatest post-war crisis. Unless firm action is taken in the next three or four weeks, we could be moving towards a European Armageddon—and so far, such action has not been taken. We could find ourselves with a full-scale Balkan war involving not only Bosnia but Kosovo and Macedonia, and erupting to such a degree that Bulgaria and Albania would be drawn in—not to mention Greece and Turkey, both NATO members, with all the ghastly implications of that.

In a moment, I should like to spell out some of the possible consequences of such a holocaust. Last week I had the privilege of taking part in the launch of a new venture, Action for Bosnia, embracing all political parties. I was delighted to see the right hon. Michael Foot there. All political parties and all shades of religious opinion were brought together by a common horror at the atrocities and a common concern for what might follow. Later that day, I had the privilege of receiving in my room here two Bosnian Members of Parliament, one a Serb and the other a Muslim. Although of different political persuasions, they were united in their grief and in their pleas that something be done.

Later that day, one of these Bosnian Members of Parliament, Professor Filipovic, sent me a fax from Geneva, where he is taking part in the talks. He was a professor of philosophy at the university of Sarajevo. I have never met a more cultivated, gentle, widely read or deeply compassionate man. If he sat in this House, we would all be proud to call him a colleague.

Professor Filpovic sent me a fax with details of the casualties up to 23 November—some three weeks ago. Between the beginning of May and 23 November—the figures have not been disputed—128,000 people were killed in Bosnia: 59,000 of them by arms and explosions, 10,000 by cutting tools and sharp weapons, 2,500 by

drowning and 30,000 by unidentified objects. It is a grisly and ghastly catalogue—a catalogue which is an indictment of those of us who have stood by while it has grown.

On Friday, I abandoned my constituency engagements and went up to Edinburgh to take part in a conference deliberately organised to coincide with the summit. The first day of the conference was given over to the delivery of papers by academics from Europe and the United States—papers in which the rich cultural history and heritage of Bosnia were movingly and graphically described.

On Saturday, we concentrated on the politics. I contacted the Foreign Office to ask that a Foreign Office Minister meet the Bosnian Foreign Minister who had come over specially for the conference. I pay tribute and am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), who left Holyrood house and the summit, came to our conference and spent almost an hour with the Bosnian Foreign Minister and me discussing the problems. I am also grateful to the Foreign Secretary for making the meeting possible.

As a privileged participant in the discussions between two Foreign Ministers, I cannot possibly repeat what was said between them. What I can say is what Mr. Silajdzic told me and told the conference later that afternoon. I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) in his place, because he too was a participant in the conference, as was the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald).

The Bosnian Foreign Minister said a number of things which I believe we all need to take carefully into account. First, he made it plain that this is not a civil war—a point that many of us have made in the past. This is a war in an ancient country with ancient borders; a country that has in the past been a shining example of what a multi-ethnic, multicultural country should be. Christians of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic persuasions and Muslims have lived happily side by side, intermarrying and weaving a rich tapestry of civilisation in that part of Europe.

As Mr. Silajdzik said, this is not really a war at all. A war implies a conflict or contest between two parties who go to war for particular reasons. This is not war: it is a slaughter of an innocent population, in the numbers to which I have referred, with all sorts of attendant atrocities. The phrase "ethnic cleansing" ought to make the flesh of every hon. Member creep. The things that are being done to enforce ethnic cleansing are barbaric beyond belief.

As Mr. Silajdzic told me, there can be no worse crime than the killing of a child—but there can be: the killing of a child following its torture. There can be no worse crime against a woman than rape—but there can be, he said: it is when those women are put into rape camps. In one motel—there may be more—in Bosnia, young girls and women are taken and ravished by soldiers and others and then killed. One man has publicly admitted to killing 200 of them in this manner.

This is what is going on as we debate our Christmas Adjournment. Winter is gripping Bosnia; it is a real winter there, not the sort of white Christmas for which we might fondly hope, but a winter when the temperatures can sink to 32 below, and beyond. In Sarajevo last week, there were five days without electricity or water. I have arranged for Mr. Silajdzik to come and address hon. Members in a Committee Room two days after we return. I hope that Members will come and listen to him—if he is still alive, because he is going home during the Christmas recess.

Mr. Silajdzik is also a highly civilised, cultured man. Although Bosnia is a small country, it has people of great quality. I was enormously impressed by the quality of its Foreign Minister—a professor of history, a man who had devoted his life to scholarly pursuits before serving what he thought would be a newly independent nation. He spoke graphically and chilllingly of what was happening to his country.

What struck me most was that his concern was not just for Bosnia. He said that he had been accused the previous day by a Foreign Office official—not, I hasten to add, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford, who could not have been more concerned—of being emotional. Who would not be emotional, given the circumstances? Despite the emotion, the Foreign Minister was concerned about the wider issue and the wider view.

He told me, as he told the conference later, that, if the Balkans erupt into full-scale war, he was fearful of two consequences above all. The first—I totally agree—is that the spectre of Muslim fundamentalism or extremism would rear its head. Mujaheddin are already fighting in Bosnia—not because they were invited, but because they went there. The leaders of the Arab world met in Riyadh 10 days ago. They told the international community that something must be done by 15 January, or else—that, from the responsible leaders of the Arab world.

Behind them are those whose representatives howled me down in Trafalgar square in August when they called for a jihad—a holy war. Just imagine what would happen—this is not impossible—if Muslim extremists took power in the key nations of the Arab world and in Turkey. Could there be a greater destabilising of our world? That prospect should make us all pause.

The second consequence that concerned Mr. Silajdzic and which concerns me is that the validity of the world order—the United Nations itself—is on trial. If we fail to deal with what is happening, what example is that to those who would foment trouble in other newly emerging countries? You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I do, that, in parts of the former Soviet Union, peace is fragile and brittle, and in other parts it has already been broken—Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia. What is happening in Kazakhstan—a nuclear power?

If we do not exert some real world leadership through the United Nations, what sort of signals will we send? This is a terrible crisis, and I infinitely regret that we have not done more already. I urged for many months—in fact, for a year—that we should do more. I repeat my belief that, had we taken firmer action when Dubrovnik and Bukovar were bombed and shelled, the Bosnian atrocities might never have happened.

We have not only failed to exert any force but said that we would not do so. We ruled out the doctrine of the deterrent. That was a serious mistake. We must do something now. If we do not, we could all be parties to a great crime. Edmund Burke, one of the greatest orators ever to command the House, said:

> "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

I do not suggest for a moment that the good men who sit on both Front Benches—and they do—have done nothing. I do not suggest that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Government have done nothing. But what they have tried to do was not enough, and was not successful.

[Mr. Patrick Cormack]

The sanctions have not worked. The shuttle diplomacy has not worked. The killing has continued, is continuing, and will continue. There is no point in dismissing the situation and saying, "It's too difficult." There will be risks whatever we do, and there are certainly risks in doing nothing. I do not pretend that surgical air strikes are necessarily easy—although precision bombing seemed to work in Iraq. I do not pretend that, if we put more troops on the ground, the terrain will be easy—although I have never advocated massive ground involvement.

I feel rather ashamed of my country when the faint-hearted view seems to prevail that, because a certain number of German divisions were required to keep the population down during the past world war, we should be reluctant now. That has been proved to be something of a myth. There were not a great number of divisions, and those that were there, were for the most part, "Dad's Army" divisions—reserves.

I believe that this crisis is of the gravest magnitude and that the House should have been given a full day to debate it. The Government should have gone forth, reinforced by a mandate from the House—as they did at the time of the Falklands war, which was another rather tricky operation —and tabled resolutions at the United Nations.

I am glad that the communiqué issued at Edinburgh on Saturday was much tougher and less ambiguous and equivocal than previous communiqués. We now need action and the United Nations should be activated quickly. The air exclusion zone must be enforced, and the killing of innocent civilians stopped. I want proper peace and prosperity throughout the whole of the former Yugoslavia. I am not anti-Serb as such, although I am very much anti the aggressive dictator who rules in Belgrade currently, and what many of his henchmen have done. I am glad that Saturday's communiqué was unequivocal in its condemnation of them.

If the House is to adjourn without debating Bosnia, let the message go to the Government that we expect no rest during the recess that will take Ministers away from seeking to play a part in solving that great problem. If the House returns and nothing is done by 15 January, if the Arab world decides to take this one on itself and outside the umbrella of the United Nations, we will have begun to go down a very slippery slope.

It is an urgent matter. I know that I have gone on about it at some length, and that I have raised it many times in the House. I hope that my colleagues will forgive me, but I feel deeply about the matter—so deeply that I must tell my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that the Government cannot be sure of my vote on anything if something is not done about Bosnia.

5.47 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): We have heard a moving and persuasive speech by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) on a grave crisis of universal concern. For my part, I want briefly to raise three urgent and highly important issues about which, demonstrably, there ought to be at least oral ministerial statements before the House rises for the Christmas recess.

The first is that of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council's report on chronic bronchitis and emphysema in coal miners and metal production workers. The IIAC report recommends, on page 7, that both conditions should be prescribed as industrial injuries in relation to current and past miners who have worked underground. The need for a definitive statement of the Government's position is made all the more urgent by the high death rate among miners whose work has led to serious respiratory illnesses which, as the Lord President knows, often leave their victims struggling to breathe.

The right hon. Gentleman is also aware of a leaked internal memorandum to the President of the Board of Trade, in which it was pointed out that, because of the high death rate among miners with chronic bronchitis and emphysema, the longer the Government delay the less they pay. That appalling cynicism deeply shocked public opinion. Given that the report went to the Government as long ago as 17 August, surely it is high time now for a clear statement of their response.

The second issue that I want to raise is the smallness and lack of clarity of the monetary figures and words on the new Bank of England notes, the E series, and the similarity of the print colours used for the £10 and £20 notes. It is widely reported that that lack of clarity has caused distress to cashiers and shoppers alike, more especially to large numbers of people with impaired eyesight. Lord Henley, a Treasury spokesman in another place, was told there on 5 November that, if he ever stood at the head of a long queue in a supermarket and said that he must spend time looking closely to examine bank notes, he would be "howled down".

That was put to Lord Henley by my good friend Lady Llewellyn-Davies, in response to his statement that the new bank notes had been deliberately printed with figures that were hard to read to encourage people to examine them closely and thus combat forgery. Lady Oppenheim-Barnes, who formerly chaired the National Consumer Council, was not amused. She told Lord Henley:

> "Most people do not have the time to give a minute examination to every note when passing them during the day";

while Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, a former Chancellor, said that it was

> "totally out of proportion that the possibility of forgery should take precedence over whether notes are easily identifiable."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 5 November 1992]

It is now clearly important that the Bank of England should be asked urgently to pay due attention to the widespread and increasing criticism of the new series—not least among people with visual impairments—and that a Treasury Minister should respond to public concern in a statement to the House. The other place has been able to debate the issue, and it must be right for this House at least to be able to question a Minister.

My third issue concerns the future of the independent living fund, whose help for very severely disabled people can mean all the difference between their living independently in their own homes and being shut away in long-stay institutions, almost certainly at far higher cost to the taxpayer than that of an adequate ILF grant. The Alzheimer's Disease Society, in which I take pride in holding honorary office, says:

> "The sudden announcement that the Fund would stop receiving applications after 25 November was a major shock".

The gap between closure of the fund and the launching successor body will, says the society,

"entail great hardship for prospective applicants who contact us daily about the demands of caring for a person with Alzheimer's disease".

The society wants clarification in regard to people over working age. We know that the successor body will not accept such people: that much is already clear, and it is seen as discrimination against elderly people of high dependency. Will people accepted by the new agency continue to receive help when they are above working age? Will the definition of "working age" be the same for men and women—that is, between 16 and 65?

What is to happen in cases where the ILF is asked to help between now and April 1993? Delays in the Benefits Agency's processing of claims for the higher rates of disability living allowance and attendance allowance have effectively disqualified many people claiming from the ILF. How is it proposed to help those victims of the Government's own failure? Again, what procedures are there for consulting carers and their voluntary groups about the new arrangements?

As Ministers know, the Spinal Injuries Association is very anxious for local authorities to be given powers to make direct payments to severely disabled people to make their own arrangements for personal assistance. Such payments give them choice and control over their own lives; at the same time, good-quality services are provided with minimal bureaucracy, thus giving value for money. Will the local authorities that now make direct payments to severely disabled people be allowed to continue doing so? Direct payments provide all that the Government claim they want to see from their community care policy; so why are Ministers opposing the call for statutory powers to enable local authorities to make such payments to severely disabled people?

While welcoming the Government's acceptance that the successor body must be one that will make direct payments to individual disabled people, Peter Large, than whom no one has more experience of the ILF's work, states that lack of information about it leaves severely disabled people "seriously worried about their futures".

Will the successor body be run by the same staff as those who now run the ILF?

The fund now makes awards averaging £105 a week to more than 18,000 severely disabled people. The budget for 1992-93 is £97 million. It is understood that the budget next year—1993-94—for carrying the existing ILF's case load will be £117 million. Given the current backlog of 6,500 applications, will £117 million be sufficient to ensure that any existing beneficiary whose condition deteriorates, or whose costs increase, will be able to receive increased payments to cover the increased costs from the successor body to the ILF?

What will happen if the £117 million is insufficient? Will beneficiaries whose costs increase have to wait for other beneficiaries to die in order to secure increased payments from the fund to cover their higher costs? By any standards, that would be a total scandal.

I understand from a parliamentary reply given on 2 December that the budget for the successor body is only £4 million. Can this be correct? How will severely disabled people secure payments from the new agency, and how many will it help? Will anyone be able to insist that a local authority makes a contribution? After April 1993, when a local authority assesses a person's ability to pay for personal assistance, will the mobility allowance, the DLA care component and the severe disability allowance be taken into account? Will the money given to local authorities in consequence of the changes to the ILF be specially earmarked for the purpose of financing independent living, as it would have been by the ILF?

This issue, and the questions I have posed, are of considerable importance to right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. I implore the Lord President not to leave the severely disabled people on whose behalf I appeal to him still worrying about their futures when the House rises for the Christmas recess.

5.59 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to make a brief contribution to this important Christmas Adjournment debate.

I wish to direct my remarks to recent developments in Macclesfield health authority. I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) in her place. She certainly has an interest in what I am about to say because her health authority is also involved. I know of her interest because she has signed one of the early-day motions that I have tabled, and I know that she strongly supports the sentiments that I have expressed on behalf of the people of Macclesfield about the unfortunate developments that are being initiated by the chairman of the regional health authority, Sir Donald Wilson.

In July, Sir Donald Wilson gave me a firm assurance, in the presence of the then chairman of the Macclesfield health authority, Mr. Peter Hayes—who has now taken over as chairman of the East Cheshire NHS trust—that there would be no merger of the Macclesfield and Crewe health authorities unless the communities and the two authorities were in favour of such a step.

I took that assurance at face value. What has happened subsequently? Sir Donald Wilson is well known to me and to those who come from Merseyside. He is a man who always has a hidden agenda and who will never share it with those who represent the people of the area. He is determined, come hell or high water, to get his way, riding roughshod over the people of the area, their health provision and health services.

I suspect that, because I no longer serve on the Select Committee on Health, Sir Donald has felt it appropriate to strike. Macclesfield has a wealth of talent—numerous able business people who for many years have given immense service to the national health service in a voluntary or other capacity. But in recent times, Sir Donald has brought in from outside the health authority area a chairman—County Councillor Simon Cussons—who, quite by chance, happens to be the leader of the Conservative group on Cheshire county council.

Mr. Cussons has no connection at all with Macclesfield, except that, for a relatively short period, he was chairman of the family health services authority for the whole of Cheshire, which clearly involves my constituency and that of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich, as well as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton).

Sir Donald had appointed by the Government a man who has no knowledge or experience of Macclesfield, and the method of that appointment left much to be desired. I was not advised of the appointment until some days after it had taken place. I may say that I regard it as most discourteous not to notify the hon. Member concerned of

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those who are to be appointed until some days after the appointment has been made. I say that not least because the House knows of my considerable interest in health matters. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich—if not the Minister—knows of my deep involvement in health provision and care in my constituency throughout my 21 years as Member of Parliament for Macclesfield.

I repeat that the method of Mr. Cusson's appointment left a great deal to be desired. The acting chairman of the health authority, Mrs. Morven Sowerbutts, who has given many years of devoted and committed service to Macclesfield, was unseated without even being notified of the fact. She arrived to chair a selection panel to select the chief executive of the authority, only to be told that a new chairman had been appointed. Without any knowledge of the area, Mr. Cussons immediately decided to chair the meeting, even though Mrs. Morven Sowerbutts had been with the authority for many years, had studied all the papers, and was fully prepared to take the meeting and would have done an excellent job.

As I said, I have tabled an early-day motion expressing my concern about the appointment of Mr. Cussons. I emphasise that I have no argument with Mr. Cussons himself. I merely feel that he has been used by Sir Donald Wilson to deprive Macclesfield of the opportunity to have a chairman who can stand up for the interests of the area and its people.

I am supported in the views that I have expressed by the Secretary of State herself, who has admitted that the way in which Mrs. Morven Sowerbutts was treated was thoroughly unsatisfactory. My right hon. Friend wrote to me:

"Turning to the way in which Mrs. Sowerbutts was informed of the appointment of Mr. Cussons as chairman of Macclesfield HA, I can only agree that someone who has given such excellent service to the NHS deserved better."

She did indeed deserve better. I am concerned that Mrs. Sowerbutts should continue to serve on the health authority, although she will clearly have to review her position in the light of the treatment that she has received.

That is not the worst of the matter. We now come to the appointment of Mrs. Chris Hannah as chief executive of the health authority, the circumstances of which are extremely interesting. Before Mrs. Hannah was appointed chief executive of Macclesfield health authority, she happened to be the personnel manager of the Mersey regional health authority—one of Sir Donald Wilson's chosen people. Did she get the job in a way that was fair and above board? Oh no, she did not. She was responsible for advertising the position of chief executive of Macclesfield health authority. She was the one to whom applications came. Having sorted them, she no doubt handed them to Mr. Geoffrey Scaife, the regional general manager, another hatchet man for Sir Donald Wilson—who, interestingly, believed that the number of applications to be considered by Macclesfield health authority was less than adequate, and that their quality was rather weak.

What did Mr. Scaife do? He went to the personnel manager, Mrs. Chris Hannah, and said, "Wouldn't you like to put your name forward for the position?" The day before the interviews were to take place in Macclesfield, Mrs. Chris Hannah's name was put on the list. Again, I am supported in my concern by the Secretary of State, who said in her letter to me:

"I appreciate why the circumstances of the appointment led you to raise this matter. Adding Mrs. Hannah's name to the shortlist the day before the interview, after she had been involved in the shortlisting for the post, was bound to lead to questions about the fairness of the . . . exercise."

Does the House think that what happened should have been tolerated? My right hon. Friend's letter dated 7 December accepts that best practice was not followed and that the appointment had the appearance of being unfair. I would go further: it had the appearance of being corrupt, politically opportunistic and profoundly unethical.

But I have not finished. Who is Mrs. Chris Hannah? She happens to be the daughter-in-law of Mr. Dan Hannah, the chairman of Warrington health authority, and not only that but the daughter-in-law of Mr. Dan Hannah who was appointed by Sir Donald Wilson as the chairman of the Wirral and Cheshire purchasing agency with which Macclesfield will be doing business. The health authority is now the purchasing unit—the purchaser—so it will be doing business with the Wirral and Cheshire purchasing agency. There clearly must be a definite conflict of interest there.

The interests of the national health service and the people of Macclesfield have been subordinated by those Machiavellian developments to the career ambitions of self-serving administrators and a dictatorial and domineering regional authority chairman whose time, I believe, is up. His sell-by date has passed. He is now 71. He has been in the position for 11 years. He is riding roughshod over the people of my area, and is no longer serving the health needs of the area. If anything, he is working against the best interests of the reforms of the health service in Mersey, and particularly in my authority. Despite what he said to me in July and subsequently, he has a dogmatic desire to merge, amalgamate and otherwise to neuter any health authority that is run, as Macclesfield has been for so long, by local people with a commitment to and a real interest in the local community.

To say a little more about the hidden agenda, Sir Donald Wilson gave me the assurance in July that there would be no merger, but the position of chief executive is not, as the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich knows —if she wishes to intervene, I shall be happy to give way —as the chief executive of the Macclesfield health authority; it is a joint appointment. It is the chief executive of Macclesfield and Crewe, as a result of which the authorities are building for the merger which Sir Donald has told me will not take place unless the communities and the health authorities want it. If he can take over the health authority and annex it with his own placemen and placewomen, he will at least be able to carry the health authority with him, but he will not carry the community.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is that not a continuing pattern? Has not Sir Donald done that before? In fact, is it not the habit that people actually set up trusts and then themselves take over the jobs? This is not the first time that Sir Donald has connived at appointments which are clearly, in the smallest sense of the word, political. Is it not time that we had an open investigation of the whole working of that regional health authority?

Mr. Winterton: I would most certainly be happy to support that. I have been increasingly concerned over recent times about what is happening in Mersey. It has apparently become the individual fiefdom of Sir Donald Wilson. I believe that he even frightens Ministers.

Mr. Alfred Morris: I have been following the hon. Gentleman very closely. He has made deeply disturbing disclosures to the House, but am not clear what solution he proposes. Is he asking for a public inquiry urgently to consider what sounds like a considerable scandal?

Mr. Winterton: I believe that it is an absolute scandal, and a scandal which is not serving the best interests of the people whom I represent or those in the constituencies adjoining my own.

I sought to do things the right way. As soon as the matter occurred, I contacted the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State referred me to the Minister for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney). He was not able to see me for some days. I was rather disappointed about that, but he at last saw me and gave me generously of his time when I outlined my concern in detail. He took almost a further fortnight to investigate the allegations, as a result of which I then received the letter from the Secretary of State. The matter was clearly so serious that the Minister for Health believed that the matter should be dealt with by the Secretary of State. I have quoted in part the letter that was sent to me by the Secretary of State herself in reply to the concern that I expressed. I am deeply concerned that she has not felt able to intervene in this scandalous matter—she should.

Although I am most unhappy about the appointment of Simon Cussons—that can be excused and explained, although I do not accept the explanation—but the appointment of that chief executive cannot be allowed to go ahead. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) asked me what I was seeking. I am seeking to have the appointment not confirmed, and I am looking for the apppintment to be readvertised and a proper ethical selection procedure adopted to chose a new chief executive for Macclesfield. I am not saying that Mrs. Chris Hannah cannot again have her name put in on her behalf if she is not prepared to put it in herself and not prepared to respond to the advertisement which went out in the first instance.

Finally, I have sought to raise this matter in the most responsible way. When that responsible way is blocked and no action is taken, I have no alternative but to bring the matter before the House, initially through the early-day motions that I have tabled. Perhaps I should also mention early-day motion 1044 that was subsequently tabled by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden). That motion has been signed by a large number of hon. Members from Merseyside. Clearly, they have considered the action that I have taken as reflecting their worry about the way in which Sir Donald Wilson is blustering his way through health matters in the Mersey region. I do not say it very easily—I am choosing to say it here, I agree—but the man is a bully not only to his staff but to those who are appointed to health authorities in his region. It is a very sad state of affairs when one man can do so much damage within an area.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will give me an assurance that the Government will seek to discuss the matter with Sir Donald Wilson and with the chairman of the Macclesfield health authority, County Councillor Simon Cussons, have the appointment of Mrs. Chris Hannah annulled—not confirmed—ensure that arrangements are made to readvertise the position, and have a proper ethical procedure for the selection of a chief executive for the Macclesfield health authority.

I do not make those comments easily. I have sought to work with Sir Donald Wilson. I have sought to work with Ministers in the Department of Health, and I am sure that they will admit that. I have always gone to them prior to taking action such as I am taking on the Floor of the House. The matter is of such importance that it had to be put to the House to try to bring additional pressure to get action so that the people of my area will know that democracy still has some value in this country. I want an assurance from my right hon. Friend that the appointment will be rescinded, that it will not be confirmed, and that a new selection procedure will be allowed to go ahead and fresh advertising undertaken, so that we will know that we have the best candidate, not the one who is most suitable to Sir Donald Wilson.

I make a final plea. I know that it is expecting rather too much of my right hon. Friend, but I mean it. In the past, Sir Donald has done some good work, but he has run out of time and he is now counter-productive to the best interests of health care and to the reforms which are so dear to the Government of the day. I am committed to serving my constituents, and I am today reflecting the concern that they have expressed to me. I am speaking not only for myself but on behalf of the chairman of the Macclesfield community health council and the council as a whole, which has written to the local health authority saying that it is strongly opposed to the merger of the two authorities.

That is, perhaps, an indication that Sir Donald Wilson is seeking to ride roughshod over people and to roll them into the dirt to get his own way, whatever the arguments of the issue. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to give me some assurance about this matter when he replies.

6.19 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The House has been riveted by a tale of Byzantine intrigue and nepotism in Macclesfield. I even forgive the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) for saying "finally" three times in the past five minutes. Obviously, I cannot speak about his problems, but I promise the hon. Gentleman that I shall sign his early-day motion. When he was deposed from the chairmanship of the Select Committee on Health, I took that as a sign that the one thing the Government did not like about those Committees was a robust, firm and vigorous criticism of their policies.

I should like to discuss Bosnia, which has already been raised by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). The part of the Prime Minister's statement on the Edinburgh summit that referred to the situation in Bosnia was inadequate, as was his response to specific questions about that region.

I should be in favour of delaying the Adjournment of the House so that we could at least have a debate on Bosnia. I accept that that might be difficult to arrange, but

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the least to which we should have a right is a statement tomorrow on why direct action is still ruled out. I believe that that action is essential.

The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South mentioned a meeting with the Bosnian Foreign Minister, Mr. Silajdzic, in Edinburgh on Saturday. Mr. Silajdzic also gave a lengthy interview to *The Herald* on Saturday in which he said:

"My God. My God. Anybody with the smallest intelligence can see there has to be intervention. It should have happened months ago. Please listen to me. They have already killed 100,000 of my countrymen . . . And yet still they say we must talk, talk, talk, and the slaughter is only just starting. What must I say? What must I do? I keep travelling all over Europe. To speak to leaders. I go to the USA . . . I speak to everyone. To John Major at the London conference. That was three months ago and even though every accord has been broken they still do nothing."

That is what the man at the centre of the situation believes. I, too, believe that we must act.

The Ministry of Defence, official governmental and European Community line is that intervention is impossible. On the radio this morning, the Secretary of State for Defence repeated the same things that he has said before—that intervention would involve an intolerably large number of troops. In tonight's edition of the *Evening Standard*, in an article headed "Ashdown escapes in mortar bombing", the Secretary of State says:

"The reality is that if the UN wanted to intervene in a military sense it would have to contemplate a commitment for many years involving perhaps, more than 100,000 troops. The likelihood is of very large numbers of casualties, and with no certainty that the war would be brought to an end."

That is the official line. That article also quotes from the American Vice-President-elect, Al Gore, who says that more should be done to enforce the flying ban. He is directly quoted as saying:

"The resistance and reluctance that has been coming from our European allies I frankly find hard to understand."

On the radio this morning, the Secretary of State was pressed to respond to that charge, and he did not make a good one. The only thing he said was that it was all very well for Senator Al Gore to say that when there were no American troops in Bosnia. There are no British troops in Somalia, as far as I know, but that does not mean that we are not giving warm support to what the Americans are doing there. We should bear in mind that it is inevitable that the Americans will say to the Europeans that America will not be our nanny all the time. It is inevitable that they believe that we must do some things ourselves and that it is our responsibility in the first instance to respond to the situation in Bosnia.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that many of the British soldiers now in former Yugoslavia, including those of the Cheshire and Staffordshire Regiments, are being issued with notices of termination of their contracts with the British Army? Does he agree that that hardly seems a sensible way in which to treat British regiments?

Sir Russell Johnston: I take note of what the hon. Lady has said, as has, I am sure, the Leader of the House. I hope that he will respond to that point.

Wider questions arise about the defence review, which is obviously affected by the demands put upon us in former Yugoslavia, but, if hon. Members will forgive me, I shall not enter into that discussion now.

The argument against intervention is that it would require an enormous number of troops. Those who argue against intervention often cite what happened to the Germans in the second world war—the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South also touched on that. Some people have said that 30 German divisions were deployed in Yugoslavia during the war, but I believe that, at the maximum, there were seven. Certainly there were more divisions in Yugoslavia when the Germans were retreating from Greece, but during the occupation there were just seven. One should remember that those divisions dealt with all of Yugoslavia, not just Bosnia. One should also remember that every man's hands were turned against the Germans—when they were not turned against each other.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): That was not very often.

Sir Russell Johnston: No, there is no doubt that every man's hands were turned against the Germans.

What did the Germans lack? First, they did not have any helicopters; if they had, I am quite sure that, considering the efficiency of the German army, they would have sorted out Tito in double quick time. Secondly, the Germans did not have modern sophisticated weapons, such as heat-seeking weapons, or modern sophisticated aircraft. To make comparisons with the German occupation is unrealistic.

A year ago in a letter to *The Times* I argued that we should have used air power on the Serbs as they were encircling Osijek. A year later, the argument in favour of air power is becoming more difficult because things are much messier, but I still think that it stands. Air power could be used in Sarajevo, which is a bowl aurrounded by clearly definable military targets. It could also be used to deal with the advancing Bosnian Serbs in the northern part of Bosnia.

The use of air power would have not only a military effect on the Bosnian Serbs but an enormous psychological effect, because it would demonstrate that the Europeans, or the west, will not allow the Serbian attack to go on any longer. One should also remember that because of the alliance between the Croats and the Muslims, one would have to deal with the Bosnian Serbs alone. At the moment we should aim for a ceasefire—the one thing that endless talks have failed to produce.

The line taken by the new Yugoslavia, if I can call it that—Serbia and Montenegro—is that it has fulfilled all the United Nations demands set out in resolution 752. It has produced a note to that effect, stating:

"The last 92 Yugoslav soldiers were withdrawn on 19 June 1992"

from Bosnia. It goes on to say that no military interference has taken place since.

I was informed at the weekend of aerial photographs showing quite large numbers of tanks crossing from new Yugoslavia into Bosnia. Is any information available about that? One presumes that there is continual surveillance by American satellites. Given the political argument that is raging, it is important that people know the facts; there is no security reason for concealing such

matters. The effect of air strikes would be considerable, and if there were military intervention on the ground, the demand would be far less than has been suggested.

Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley wrote a long article in *The Independent on Sunday* in which he spoke of some

"30,000 troops plus naval and air support."

I am not a military expert, but as a highly respected senior British general, his views should be taken into account.

I object to the repeated suggestion that this is a civil war. An advertisement to that effect on behalf of the new Yugoslavia appeared in, I think, *The Independent*, referring to the Yugoslav civil war. In Bosnia, we are talking not about a civil war but about the activities of one group against both the others. In the context of Yugoslavia as a whole, this has not been civil war. The Foreign Minister of Bosnia admits that there have been atrocities on both sides—not just the Serbs have been guilty of atrocities. He said:

"there have been atrocities on both sides, but what do I expect? Kill a man's son, then rape his wife and he is no longer a man. You have stolen his humanity. There is a difference, you know, between active and reactive crime."

That is an interesting statement: the difference between active and reactive crime. The contention in this conflict has been that, although horrible things have been done by both sides, the main weight has been the continual aggressive action by the Bosnian Serbs in Bosnia, which has produced the horrible prison camps and the allegations—which have been confirmed, or surely the summit in Edinburgh would not have referred to them —of rape camps. The weight of responsibility clearly rests on the one side.

As the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South said, a threat exists to Kosovo and Macedonia, which should have been recognised by the summit. The fact that Greece is able to stop this and simultaneously break the sanctions embargoes by supplying oil should not have been permitted by other Community countries. The hon. Gentleman referred to the Jeddah conference, which said that it expected some action by the 15th, which is tomorrow.

Mr. Cormack: Of January.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am sorry; I meant January. It is a generous time scale, but it is also a short time. *[Interruption.]* I thought that the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) wanted to intervene, but she was merely doing natural things; I am sorry.

What is happening in Bosnia is terrible and it is getting steadily worse. The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South is right to fear that it might produce an extraordinary explosion among Muslims in other parts of the world. A serious British Muslim asked me, "How would the west respond if the Turks took things into their own hands and unilaterally took out the guns around Sarajevo?" What could I say? That risk exists. The least the House should do is debate these matters before we rise.

6.34 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): I make no apology for returning to the subject of Bosnia, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) spoke. One must agree with the hon. Gentleman's references to the terrible events in Bosnia.

The subject was raised in the Christmas Adjournment debate a year ago by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and I recall commenting on the terrible seiges at Osijek and Vukovar. It was bad enough then. Perhaps it was predictable that it would get worse, but the reality of how much worse it has become was forcefully struck home in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South. He rightly said that there is every chance, unless good sense prevails, that in a year's time we may be dealing with what he described as a holocaust—very much worse than even the terrible events that are unfolding before us.

I am glad to say that, notwithstanding the terrible reports that have emerged from the former Yugoslavia, our Government have not been quite as inactive as is sometimes suggested. I am far from sanguine about how successful active military intervention would be. It is easy for us, without having to confront the reality of the terrain and conflict in Yugoslavia, to forecast how simple it would be to resolve the matter, but surely we have enough experience of Northern Ireland to realise that military intervention does not necessarily solve problems as easily as those who enter into such engagements might imagine. We have surely enough experience of Northern Ireland to know that the difficulties of reconciling what appear to outsiders to be irreconcilable divisions are considerable.

I hope that the House will not allow itself to be talked too easily into believing how easy a military solution for Yugoslavia might be. I am glad that this summer and autumn my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and members of the Government have responded actively to many of the reports.

I want to talk principally about war crimes. War crimes are war crimes, and although the events that are occurring in Yugoslavia can easily be overlooked by many people in the horrid rush of extra events that pile one on top of another, it lies with us to assert some fundamental moral principles. The fundamental moral principle that we must assert more than any other is that these crimes against humanity are outlawed under international law. We should send a message to every single person in Yugoslavia who is committing crimes against humanity or who may do so in the weeks and months ahead that their names are being taken and their crimes catalogued and that, if it is possible for them to be brought to account and stand trial before a tribunal, that is exactly the fate which will befall them. The civilised international community will have details of their names, the allegations made against them and evidence of the outrages that have been perpetrated. If those people seek to travel abroad, they will be arrested when they arrive at the frontiers of civilised countries. There will be no hiding place for them.

One issue about which I feel most strongly is that too many people may have allowed their moral senses to become numbed to Yugoslavia and have overlooked the fact that crimes are crimes however they are committed. The evidence is accumulating. Sir John Thompson went to Yugoslavia and compiled a report in late summer this year; my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister presided over the London conference; and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe was asked to examine whether there was evidence on which people might be prosecuted.

A special rapporteur, the former Prime Minister of Poland, Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, was appointed. He investigated the issue of human rights between 21 and 26

[Mr. William Powell]

August and his conclusions were published in a United Nations document on 3 September this year. The House will bear it in mind that we are dealing with a man of considerable distinction. His main conclusions were that massive and grave violation of human rights were occurring throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina and that such violations were being perpetrated by all parties, but, in describing what was happening to the Muslim population, he used the phrase "particularly tragic". He also said that the violence was being tolerated and even encouraged by the responsible authorities. He said that there was an immediate need for concerted action. The report was available at the London conference.

In moderate but nevertheless very clear terms, that man of distinction was making it perfectly plain that crimes against humanity were being committed. Such crimes are outlawed under international law, but were being encouraged by persons in responsible positions. That is unacceptable. Mr. Mazowiecki went on to say that the heavy weaponry on the territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina should immediately be neutralised and placed under the supervision of the United Nations protection force, and that the United Nations should continue to call on the competent authorities to abandon the policy of ethnic cleansing in all its forms, a policy which has caused so much outrage in the rest of the world.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South that the initiatives must come above all else from the United Nations. If that is not possible for any reason, the CSCE also has a leading role to play. The report also stated that the United Nations should without delay issue a peremptory warning to the authorities controlling the different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina that, with respect to their duty to safeguard the security of civilian populations, they may, in accordance with the norm and standards of international law, be brought to justice, for not only the direct perpetration but the toleration of acts of atrocity, violence and other violations of human rights.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he referred specifically to Mazowiecki's suggestion of putting heavy weapons under the control of the United Nations. How is that to be done, other than by some form of military intervention? How are war criminals to be brought to court unless we bring about the cessation of hostilities? I raised the issue of war crimes in a debate on 16 November, but the Government made no response.

Mr. Powell: I shall say something in due course about the trial of those responsible for war crimes, because the main burden of my remarks involves the establishment of a tribunal to deal with such matters.

At the London conference it was decided to send a party of what can only be described as three wise men, although one turned out to be a lady, to investigate further the matters which were raised by Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki. On the initiative of the United Kingdom they asked Ambassador Correl, the chief legal adviser to the Swedish Foreign Office, to go to Croatia to investigate further. He selected Ambassador Turk of Austria and Ambassador Thune of Norway to go with him. They were in Croatia from 30 September to 5 October. They concluded that there were numerous reports of atrocities against unarmed civilians as well as the practice of ethnic cleansing in Croatia and, that, while such reports could be attributed to both parties to the conflict, it appeared that the scale and gravity of the crimes committed by the Yugoslav national army, the Serbian paramilitary groups and the police forces in the Knim authorities were by far the most serious.

They also stated that they had received sufficient evidence to establish a legal basis for international prosecution, that an expert committee should be convened immediately to arrange a system for the collection of information, that an expert committee should be formed to prepare a treaty establishing an ad hoc tribunal to hear the allegations of crimes and that an international forensic expert group should be sent immediately to investigate the evidence of mass graves. If that is not completed before the coming winter, there is a real danger that the evidence itself might be destroyed because of the extraordinarily low temperatures which can be experienced in that region, as my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South mentioned.

That report from the three rapporteurs led by Ambassador Correl from Sweden was available in October. The matter was then handed to the United Nations. Of course, we are aware that the United Nations passed resolution 780 on 6 October. It established an expert group to collect and analyse the information submitted to it with a view to providing the Secretary-General of the United Nations with its conclusions on the evidence of grave breaches of the Geneva convention and other violations of international humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia.

Five people were appointed to examine the issue. Fortunately for the world, one of those five was none other than the redoubtable Professor M. Cherif Bassiouni, of De Paul university in Chicago, who is recognised throughout the world as a leading authority on international law and who is the author of the standard textbook about crimes against humanity which was recently published on all continents.

Unfortunately, no budget was given to the five men and there were no satisfactory conditions for them to carry out their work. I do not expect my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council and the Leader of the House of Commons to coment in detail this evening, but I should be grateful if he would draw my remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, from whom I should like to know in due course the state of the financial assistance provided to the five men, how many staff they will have and what opportunities they are being given.

I am told by the redoubtable Professor Bassiouni that the group has met only once. In other words, although the world community recognises that something is very wrong and that something must be done, efforts to put right the problems are so far desperately inadequate. That must now change. The message must go out that all those responsible for crimes against humanity in Yugoslavia can expect to have to account for themselves not only in the celestial heavens to which they, like the rest of us, will go in due course, but in this world.

What is now required is the establishment under international authority of an ad hoc tribunal to set about the task of collecting the evidence and ensuring that it is possible to place on trial those responsible for the most outrageous criminal acts. If possible, that should be done

under the authority of the United Nations. The United Nations should be asked to move not some time well into next year, but before Christmas.

If it is not possible because of the internal workings of the UN—I know that a number of people are concerned about the attitude of the People's Republic of China in this respect—for such action to be taken under the authority of the UN, it should be taken under the authority of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. I know that the CSCE is concerned about whether its authority might be undermined by an unsuccessful attempt to intervene in this way, but now is a time when we simply must be bold. What is happening is too wrong and such wrong cannot be allowed to prevail.

I welcome the fact that Dame Anne Warburton is going out to Yugoslavia to investigate the terrible news we have heard about the rape camps, which my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South mentioned. The story that appeared in *The Times* today seemed simply too appalling to be true, but all of us know that it may well be true. Such atrocities cannot be allowed to prevail.

I have asked again and again in the House for an international court or international tribunal to deal with international crimes against humanity. If ever there was a case for the world community establishing such a tribunal, this is the case.

I raised the matter with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 27 October. I asked him to persuade his colleagues in the Government to adopt a much

"more constructive approach towards establishing such permanent machinery"

for the trial of such crimes.

My right hon. Friend replied:

"I am certainly content to give my hon. Friend that assurance."—[*Official Report*, 27 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 862.]

I welcome that reply. I am convinced that our Government are trying to make some progress on the matter, although I do not underestimate how difficult it is to secure the agreement of the others who must be involved.

Mr. Cormack: My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. If the international community is to will those ends, it must also will the means by which to bring the people concerned to trial.

Mr. Powell: Indeed, that is the case. It is perfectly possible to proceed. There is a draft convention which was discussed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in the autumn. Our country, on behalf of the European Community and the sixth committee, gave a most positive statement in October about the European Community's intent. It is perfectly possible for us to proceed quite quickly. The draft exists. It would be possible to table any necessary amendments, to debate them and to decide on them quickly if there were a will.

I believe that there is a growing will in the Government to make some progress. I want to encourage the Government to go further. Above all else, I want everyone in the House and in the country yet again to assert that what is happening is wrong, to say that it cannot be allowed to prevail and to say that the civilised thing to do is to try to bring to justice, if not now, then as soon as we can, those who carry responsibility for the outrages.

6.52 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I do not intend to follow the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) in discussing the troubles of the former Yugoslavia, but I, too, want to raise a matter of considerable importance before the House rises for the Christmas recess.

Last Friday, my constituency and much of south Wales were shocked by the announcement by Marconi that it was to close its remaining factory in Newport, with the loss of more than 400 jobs. That was a shattering blow to the town and to the surrounding area. The workers there have nowhere else to go.

I want the House to be clear that the works is not what might be called a doll's eye factory. There are many in south Wales which were established to try to compensate for the loss of jobs in coal mining and in steel. Marconi Underwater Systems Ltd., to give the company its official title, employs many highly skilled design engineers.

In October, the company announced the closure of its Corporation road factory, with the loss of more than 100 jobs. The works formerly employed 700 people, but it had been progressively run down. Now the second factory is to close, making a total of more than 500 jobs lost, many of them highly skilled. There is, of course, the multiplier effect, which brings the figure to approximately 1,500 when one takes into consideration the ancillary concerns linked to and dependent on the two factories.

We know that the name "Marconi" is merely a trade name. The company is really the General Electric Company Ltd., GEC, which is presided over by the well-known predator, Lord Weinstock. The Spytty road factory in Newport opened approximately 17 years ago and it is very modern. It is well situated because it is close to the M4, to the dual carriageway and to motorway links to Birmingham and the midlands. Until three years ago, the factory was part of the Plessey empire; but for many years, the company was pursued by Lord Weinstock, who was most anxious to take it over.

With several colleagues, I worked with Sir John Clarke, the then chairman of Plessey, and his executive team. When the first GEC bid was made, it was warded off. On the second occasion, some three years ago, Lord Weinstock's attempt was successful. By 14 September 1989, GEC owned 76 per cent. of the Plessey shares. The takeover was heralded as the dawn of a new era. It was to be rationalisation, from which all manner of benefits were supposed to flow.

The outcome, as I said, was rather different and both factories are now to close. All that the highly trained, highly skilled labour force have got is a Christmas redundancy package. The works is quickly to be run down from March 1993, with the gates finally closing in September.

From all reports, it is a poor redundancy package. The pay-out will be the state minimum. The closure procedure and the dates which I have mentioned apparently have that factor very much in mind. There has been concern locally about the way in which the closure announcement was made. The workers first heard that the factory was to close on the television news on the night of Thursday 10 December. It was as if the management were allowing the media to do their dirty work for them.

I can confirm at first hand the botched way in which the matter was handled by the company. On Saturday 12 December, I received a letter, dated 14 December, from a

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Mr. M. J. Shaw who was referred to as the divisional director sonar, Marconi Underwater Systems Ltd. The letter told me that the closure announcement was to be made to the staff on Monday 14 December and that there was to be the eventual loss of all 400 jobs. What a way for a firm of this size, with an international reputation to uphold, to carry on. Is it any wonder that the workers are expressing anger and astonishment?

I appreciate the changed circumstances of the past few years, with the cut in defence procurement following the end of east-west confrontation and the virtual disintegration of the Soviet Union. There is now a crying need to reorganise the defence industry for peaceful production. One would have thought that GEC was in an ideal position to play a major part in that kind of development. According to an article by Andrew Lorenz in the *Sunday Times* on 6 December, Lord Weinstock is quoted as saying that he has £1·8 billion to invest. That is profit generated by the efforts of the employees. I contrast that massive surplus with the mean, parsimonious attitude which the company seems to be adopting towards its workpeople, who are now considered surplus to requirements.

With all those millions of pounds in GEC's coffers ready for investment, the company is said to be in preliminary discussions about becoming a partner in power station projects in Indonesia and southern Europe and in power station and road schemes in China. That kind of investment will not help to save jobs in that factory in Newport.

Lord Weinstock is also said to be contemplating investing in road and rail in the United Kingdom. I would be the first to applaud investment in our infrastructure, as I have been calling for an increase in that sector for years. Nevertheless, it is state investment that should go into infrastructure; I am thinking of the billions of pounds that are raised each year in motor taxation, less than a quarter of which is spent on roads.

The millions of Lord Weinstock should go back into manufacturing industry, from where they were generated, to make Britain more competitive in world markets so that we as a country can cut imports, thereby improving our trade balance which has been so deeply in the red for so long. In doing that, Lord Weinstock would also provide jobs for his existing work force instead of making them redundant.

The Government do not appear to have grasped the need for a change in our industrial production following the end of the cold war. There are immense opportunities, but a non-interventionist approach is not needed.

The President of the Board of Trade seemed to be on the right lines when he told the Conservative party conference recently that he was prepared to intervene

"before breakfast, before lunch, before tea and before dinner on behalf of British industry."

Mrs. Dunwoody: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for hon. Members to sit in the Chamber and do their correspondence? Hon. Members have come here to debate matters of considerable importance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I thought that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) had acknowledged me when I nodded to her and I know that the point was made to her by the Whips. There are facilities in this place to deal with one's correspondence. The place to do so is not in the Chamber.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): May I point out that I am perfectly capable of listening to what is happening and doing my local work at the same time? Unlike most hon. Members, I do not employ a secretary in London. I wish to know what is going on because, as the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said, these matters are important. If I wish to take up a point that is being made, I am perfectly capable of doing that and of doing my correspondence at the same time. I did bow to your wishes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by ceasing to use a pair of scissors. However, I must say that I think the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich is more than somewhat narrow-minded.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Recently, I have noticed that many of the courtesies of the Chamber seem to have been put on one side, probably as a result of ignorance on the part of new hon. Members, for example, when leaving the Chamber after making a speech before the next speaker has spoken. It is not proper to do one's correspondence in the Chamber. There are facilities to do that elsewhere. I should be obliged if the hon. Member for Lancaster would refrain from doing so.

Mr. Hughes: Before that interruption, I was referring to the speech of the President of the Board of Trade to the Conservative party conference when he said that he was prepared to intervene at any time on the part of British industry. However, we have not seen much evidence of that resolve. Perhaps the President of the Board of Trade has been too busy closing our very efficient coal industry.

The message crying out from the GEC-Marconi situation has been known for more than 2,000 years. I took the trouble of looking up Isaiah chapter 2, verse 4 which is about settling disputes between great nations. It states:

"They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks".

It is surely not too difficult to put that biblical message into a modern context.

I conclude by repeating the proposal that I made earlier today to the Secretary of State for Wales during Welsh questions. I called on him and the Secretary of State for Defence and the President of the Board of Trade to intervene to stop the closure in that vital works in Newport. Why pick on south Wales in that way? It has faced enough problems with coal and steel redundancies and closures. I plead with the Government to give our area a break. It has suffered enough.

7.6 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I declare an interest as chairman of the Falkland Islands group of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. I want to raise a matter which is of great importance to the people of the Falkland Islands which I believe should be debated in the House before we rise for the Christmas recess—that is, the unilateral decision of the Republic of Argentina to invite applications to fish in its waters in the south-west Atlantic from countries which have, until recently, been fishing in Falkland Islands waters.

The Argentines are offering cheaper licences for longer periods, thus attracting trawlers away from the Falklands. Not only will that pose a severe threat to the economy of

the Falklands; it is also likely to decimate the stocks of ilex squid. The economy of the Falkland Islands depends on the population of ilex squid.

The Argentine action has been taken without prior consultation with either the British or Falkland Island Governments. It pays no regard to the need to conserve the stocks of ilex squid, and it will lead to its rapid depletion. It is likely to cost the Falkland Islands between £8 million and £16 million a year, which will seriously affect the ability of the islands to remain self-sufficient.

To put those figures in perspective, one must realise that the total income of the Falkland Islands from those and other activities is about £30 million a year. The cost of the action represents a drop of anything up to 50 per cent. in the islands' income. In short, it represents a serious crisis which requires firm action from the British Government without delay.

Of course, as the House would expect, discussions have taken place between officials. Every effort has been made to resolve the problem. However, the discussions, which included proposals to limit the amount of squid that can be caught in Argentine waters, broke down at the weekend. We are therefore today faced with a very serious situation—indeed, one of the most serious situations since the conflict that occurred between the Falkland Islands and Argentina. Argentina has made it clear that it will allow trawlers which fish for ilex squid to catch between 200,000 and 300,000 tonnes. If that happens, it will be a disaster for the Falkland islanders and the conservation of fish stock which feeds millions of people around the world.

I am sure that my colleagues in the House who have visited the Falkland Islands will have been as impressed as I was to see the size of the fish when they are eventually caught and realise how vital they are in feeding so many people. Therefore, it is not simply an Argentine matter; it affects many people who live in the less developed countries of the world.

It is possible that the Argentine decision could wipe out the ilex squid in a few years. The reason is that the life cycle of the fish is only one year. The fish which are caught in Argentine waters will be small and at the beginning of their life cycle. They are usually a good size by the time they reach Falkland waters.

Why is Argentina taking this unilateral action? The House may agree that it looks like a rather hostile political decision, intended to threaten the economy of the Falklands. The action is not necessary to Argentina or its economy. I believe that it is a most unfriendly act, to say the very least, by a country which wants to develop its trade with Britain and the Community and put recent events behind it. I say that because imports from Argentina in the 12 months to September 1992 were worth £122·3 million. British exports to Argentina for the same period were £103·4 million so we have a trade deficit with that country.

Argentina also seeks something else. It wants a fishery agreement with the European Community which will enable surplus European Community fishing vessels, mainly from Spain and Portugal, to fish in south-west Atlantic waters. To that end, the Community will contribute 28 million ecu—about $35 million—during the validity of the agreement, which has been initialled but not signed. That means that the Exchequer and the people of Britain will contribute to that money which is intended to enable the accord to come into force. It also means that the European Community is positively encouraging vessels to fish in the Falkland waters, and is providing financial aid to Argentina to develop its fishery.

Argentina constantly stresses to the Falkland islanders that contact is needed with them so that the two countries can share research and technology. The Falklands have frequently tried to share information with the Argentines. It has urged the Argentines that the stocks will be depleted if unrestricted fishing is allowed and fishing vessels will move to other fishing grounds. Both countries will suffer revenue loss.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: As a fellow officer of the all-party Falkland Islands group, I am delighted that my hon. Friend has raised the issue. Can he explain that the Falkland Islands Government operates a most responsible conservation policy? In the past, it has limited the licences it issues and the size of catch that a fishing boat can bring in to the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Shersby: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I visited the Falkland Islands fishery in August and was able to see the policy which was being pursued. The policy is very responsible, designed to conserve fish stocks to the benefit of all concerned.

The problem is that, despite what the Argentines have said, so far they have taken little notice of approaches from the Falkland islanders and no action to give effect to their words. If the fishery grounds are carefully managed, there is no reason why the fishery should not last for many years to come, to the benefit of both countries. However, that simply has not happened.

As we sit here a few days before the Christmas recess, what can be done to make it clear to our fellow citizens in the Falklands and the Argentine Government that the British Government is not prepared to accept the decision? First, I believe that urgent action must be taken at senior ministerial level to make Argentina aware that Britain regards its action as likely to cause a major crisis. Secondly, it should be made clear to Argentina that the United Kingdom will veto the proposed fishing accord by using the Luxembourg compromise of saying that vital national interests are involved. We could do that because at present the United Kingdom is considering the accord, especially its effect on the Falklands.

I should like to say this in the spirit of Christmas. I hope that none of those actions will be necessary. I hope that Argentina will re-examine the serious problem and recognise that, if it wishes to trade with our country and the European Community and be accepted, and if we are to put behind us the recent unhappy events, hostile action of this sort against small islands and a small population is simply unacceptable to the people of the United Kingdom and those who live in western Europe. I hope that Argentina will give thought to those matters and resume talks as quickly as possible.

7.18 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): This debate gives hon. Members the opportunity to raise issues which they believe should be urgently debated, and that is what I intend to do in the short time that I wish to detain the House.

Last Thursday, hundreds of men and women from many parts of the country who have links with Kashmir lobbied Members of Parliament. Many hon. Members not only met those men and women, but spoke at the meeting

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that took place in the campaign that has been conducted for many years to give the people of Kashmir the right to decide how they wish their future to be developed.

The sad tragedy of Kashmir is one of continuing suffering to men and women of all ages, from the very young to the very old. For more than 45 years, part of Kashmir has been occupied by the Indian army, under the direct control of the Indian Government. It has been a rule of oppression and brutality. Many organisations have requested permission to visit the Indian-controlled area of Kashmir to see what conditions are like. Many hon. Members have made similar requests. Those continual requests are always refused, yet no reason whatever is given by the Indian authorities for such refusals.

Last year, the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), the former Member for Ilford, South, Mr. Neil Thorne, and I visited Pakistan. I pay the warmest tribute to Pakistan, not only for its commitment to Kashmir, but also for the care that it shows to the refugees who have fled the Indian-occupied area of their country. I saw with my own eyes the brutality that has been inflicted on men and women who had escaped from the Indian-controlled area of Kashmir. Horrendous and sordid injuries had been inflicted on those people.

We visited the area of Kashmir which is now the responsibility of Pakistan. We were allowed to go anywhere we wished, and we were allowed to speak to anyone to whom we wished to speak.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): The hon. Gentleman speaks highly of Pakistan. Does he recall that, soon after he and I entered the House in 1970, wicked and atrociously cruel oppression was perpetrated by the Pakistan army on the people of East Pakistan and East Bengal, now Bangladesh? Is he aware that the Pakistanis now give aid and comfort to terrorists in Kashmir?

Mr. Cox: I take the gravest exception to the hon. Gentleman's last comment about terrorists of Kashmir, as indeed will people who are citizens of Great Britain. They are men and women fighting for their freedom. If the Indian Government allowed those so-called terrorists the opportunity freely to decide their future, they would decide it. The hon. Gentleman should know as well as I do that the great tragedy of Kashmir is that freedom and opportunity are being denied.

I return to the comments that I wish to make. I saw the most horrendous and sordid injuries that had been inflicted on people. I shall give just one example. We saw a young boy of 16 who was picked up by the Indian army and accused of being a terrorist. He denied it. He was taken into a room and tied down on a table. His clothes were pulled open and kerosene oil was poured all over his chest and set alight. The burning that one saw on his body was one of the most sickening sights that anyone could see.

That example is not something we were just told about. I and two other Members of Parliament, one who is still a Conservative Member and the other who lost his seat at the election, saw the young boy. I could give many other examples of such injuries which we were not told about but which we saw for ourselves. People of all ages had suffered such brutal action.

Since 1948, many attempts have been made to solve the Kashmiri issue by means of the United Nations resolution. Such efforts go back many years. The obstacle to progress is the lack of any real commitment on the part of the Indian Government. When it suits them, the Indian Government will say that India is the largest democracy in the world. The key to democracy is to allow people their freedom and allow them to decide how they wish their future to develop. That is what the people of Kashmir want: they want to decide whether they wish to be linked to India or Pakistan, or whether they want to be an independent country.

This afternoon and this evening, we have heard some moving debates on issues that concern all of us, such as the former Yugoslavia. Britain becomes involved in many issues. I do not criticise that. I am sure that we are deeply concerned about the former Yugoslavia on humanitarian grounds and because we are horrified at the appalling suffering that many men and women are enduring there. However, we do not have any real links with Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia does not have the history which Kashmir has.

If the Leader of the House or any hon. Member doubts that the Kashmiri people look to Britain to play an active role, they need only read the commitments given by the last Viceroy of India, Lord Mountbatten, to Kashmir and its people. I believe, as do hon. Members on both sides of the House who support the efforts of the Kashmiri people to decide what their rights should be, that the Government must take some steps of paramount importance.

I hope that the Leader of the House will take note of my points and use his influence or that of his right hon. Friends to make those points to the relevant people. The British Government should immediately make it clear to the Indian Government that the brutal treatment and oppression of Kashmiri men and women must be stopped immediately, and full and free access to the Indian-controlled area of Kashmir given to organisations. There are many highly reputable organisations in Britain and throughout the world which could play that role, see what the conditions are and meet whomever they wish, so that they can form a judgment.

Many Members of Parliament would also like to have the opportunity to go to the Indian-controlled area of Kashmir and see what conditions are really like; but, despite enormous numbers of such requests, visits have not been allowed. There is always a reason why it is not convenient for us to go. If there is nothing to hide, why are groups not allowed to go? Why are Members of Parliament, irrespective of party, not allowed to go? The Government must seek via the United Nations a full debate on Kashmir. I hope that the United Kingdom will initiate that debate.

We want the Government to initiate a debate on Kashmir in Parliament in their own time early in the new year. Many men and women in Britain have links with Kashmir but are citizens of Great Britain. They believe that we should debate the issue in the House. As Members of Parliament who represent those people, we have a duty to allow them to hear the views of Parliament on that country.

The British Government should bring together the two Commonwealth countries which are deeply involved in Kashmir—Pakistan and India—at the Commonwealth conference next year and persuade them to agree to a debate on Kashmir at the conference.

Kashmir and its people want one thing: the freedom to decide their future. Every Member of Parliament, irrespective of party, has a duty to help those people and that country to achieve that objective.

7.28 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): Before the House adjourns for the Christmas recess, I wish to raise three matters. They are hospital radio broadcasting, pets and Basildon.

I have the honour to be the unpaid parliamentary spokesman for Hospital Radio Broadcasting. As many hon. Members will know, it is the largest team of volunteers in Britain without any paid officers. One part of the organisation is Radio Lollipop, which operates in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman). That radio station is dedicated to broadcasting to children. I am pleased to announce that it is organising a fax-a-joke project this Christmas, and hopes to broadcast it throughout the country to cheer up sick children in hospital.

On a serious note, I have probably been failing the organisation for the past five years. Hospital radio is merely asking for its own frequency. Often people visiting hospitals ask whether they can tune in to the hospital radio station on their own headsets. The benefits of FM broadcasting are that hospitals would not have to spend as much money on maintaining hardware systems and that our programmes would be heard more easily by the audience at which they are aimed.

Our programmes are generated by more than 15,000 volunteers within the 320 member stations in hospitals throughout the country, at an annual cost of £7 million. The aim of our organisation has never been to broaden the audience outside the homes and hospitals that we serve, but we want to get the programmes to the audience for which they are intended.

A recent test at Redhill hospital was a great disappointment. All the members are so enthusiastic about broadcasting. I broadcast from a hospital at Bow for a short time. Hospital radio is supposed to cheer up sick patients and I was told firmly that my voice was not therapeutic, but I took no offence and decided to work quietly behind the scenes.

On behalf of all the members of that organisation, which I am privileged to represent, I must say that it is churlish of the Broadcasting Authority to have shilly-shallied for five years. We still do not have our own frequency. I hope that the authority does not think that our organisation is not worth a frequency, and I hope that hon. Members throughout the House will support our initiative to get one.

The second issue is pets. Many hon. Members are keen on keeping pets, as is my household. I have it on good authority that Father Christmas will be delivering a canary to one of our children this Christmas. During times of great difficulty in the economy animals have suffered to some extent. I wonder how many hon. Members realise that the Act that controls the maintenance of pet shops is 41 years old—the Shops Act 1951.

Last year I tried to amend the 1951 Act. My simple Bill set out regulations for the care of pet animals, inspection of pet shops by veterinary surgeons, the keeping of records and, most important of all, regulations on the sale of animals to children under 16.

I do not wish to be a spoilsport at Christmas, but it is just not good enough for a child to be allowed, without the parents' permission, to purchase a puppy, a kitten or an exotic reptile from a pet shop. All those animals need a great deal of care and it is incumbent upon pet shop owners to make certain that children's parents have given permission for their purchase. I know that the Leader of the House has a busy schedule in 1993, but I hope that he will find time for a short piece of legislation to amend the 1951 Act.

I shall end my speech on the subject of Basildon. The constituency has attracted some attention during the past year. One reason was that it was one of the first marginal constituences to show that there would once again be a Conservative Government. I am the only Member of Parliament that Basildon has had. We have gone to the good people of Basildon three times and been elected three times. On every occasion the media and other interested parties, including one or two Opposition Members, have forecast that a Conservative Member would not be re-elected.

It is no secret that the former rotten socialist council was one reason for my re-election in April, as it was an absolute disgrace. On 7 May, 15 Conservative candidates stood for election and were elected, with swings of between 20 and 50 per cent. from the socialists to the Conservatives.

In May, my poor, excellent, Conservative council was left with hardly enough money to collect the refuse—we were left with only £0·5 million in the reserves. The former socialist council wanted to spend £28 million. Of that, £14 million was to go in wages and £7 million towards capital and interest payments on loans. My excellent Conservative councillors were left to grapple with that scandalous state of affairs. They have done a sterling job during the past five months and have pledged that next year, for the first time ever, Basildon will not be capped, and that it will not be capped again as long as it has a Conservative council.

During the past year, much has been written and said about Basildon and much has been heard about the town on television and radio. However, much of it has been written by people who have no knowledge of my constituency. They pop in and out with their teams and write stories with no meaning. It is about time that the truth was heard and that is why I hope that next Christmas hon. Members will purchase for their stockings a book called "The Road to Basildon", of which I am the author. On that note, I wish everyone a happy Christmas and I hope that they will enjoy good health and prosperity in 1993.

7.37 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) ended on a happy note with some self-congratulation and wished us all a merry Christmas, but anyone who has sat through the debate will realise that it will not be merry in many parts of the world. We have heard speeches about the gravest matters and no doubt many hon. Members will wish to follow them.

Today we have come here to comment briefly on matters of concern to our constituents, and I shall deal with the methods and policy of the Northern Ireland

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Housing Executive in regard to the grants that it pays for private housing. The grants run at about £32 million a year and have done an enormous amount of good in the past. In 1984, about 27,000 properties benefited from the grants, but by last year the figure had fallen to 5,748. That fall reflects two things: first, that restrictions are placed on those who can get a grant; and, secondly, that there has been a general improvement in the housing stock. However, there have been problems and setbacks. For example, replacement grants seemed suddenly to vanish; no one seems to be able to get one. Also, people were offered a grant and spent money on having plans drawn up, only to discover that the grant was withdrawn at the last minute. That is a scandal.

I have long preached in the House that it is often better to replace a poor house than to spend a lot of good money to repair it. If people were offered less for replacing than repairing, we would have a much better housing stock throughout the United Kingdom, not just in Northern Ireland.

Because of the present financial circumstances, the Housing Executive grant system was changed and a new system came into operation on 1 October. I appreciate the fact that the Government wish to means-test everything, but I do not know whether it is wise to apply it to housing. However, that has happened and I am not sure whether much saving has resulted. Although the change was unwelcome, I understand it, given the philosophy that lies behind the Government's action.

My constituents and I cannot understand the Housing Executive grant form. The first 12 questions on the form are perfectly straightforward and resemble those found on any Government form. However, we take grave exception to question 13, which states:

"It is Executive Policy to direct grant aid regardless of the political affiliation or religious belief of the applicant."

The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) should listen carefully to this because it applies to what he was saying. The question goes on:

"In pursuit of this Policy the Executive strives to ensure fairness in the treatment of all households and individuals. To help us achieve this aim it is important that we collect basic information on the religious denomination of applicants. Please tick which of the following best describes the religious composition of your household."

It then gives the choice between Protestant, Roman Catholic, mixed Protestant and Roman Catholic, or other.

I find that scandalous and do not see what on earth an individual's religious affiliation has to do with whether his house needs repair: either it needs repair or it does not; either it falls within the legislation or it does not. In all the years that I have been a Member, many applications for grants have passed across my desk. I have received many complaints about how the grants have been administered, but I have never received a complaint from an applicant who has been refused a grant saying that it was refused on the grounds that he was a Protestant or a Roman Catholic. He may have been refused for many other reasons and may have had difficulties with the reasons given for refusal, but he never said, "I was refused because of the house of worship that I attend on a Sunday morning or evening."

The position is now different. We have never had the problem before, but the mere asking of that question makes it an issue. Since I first raised the question in Northern Ireland, the Housing Executive has said that applicants need not answer that question. Why ask it, then? If it is not filled in, it will soon make an utter nonsense of the statistics. Experience of fair employment legislation has already shown us that, although it is not obligatory to answer the question now, the next step is that it will have to be answered. The matter will go on and on and great efforts will be made to find out exactly what an individual's religious affiliations are.

Because the question of religion is now being asked, the executive will have to publish statistics on who has replied and who has received and been refused grants. They will then have to stop assistance to decide how grants can be allocated fairly. Will it be by the sums allocated to the religious group in question, by the number of grants made or by area? Will the applicant need to be visited by different grants officers—two sets of them—or will there be two sets of administrative staff just to determine whether the grants are being allocated fairly?

The matter will not end with Housing Executive repair grants. One thinks of all the ramifications such a policy will cause in terms of the grants that farmers receive. There are big farmers, little farmers, dairy farmers, pig farmers, poultry farmers, sheep farmers, beef farmers, potato farmers and less-favoured areas. Each will be able to complain of discrimination. In industry, the Local Enterprise Development Unit in Northern Ireland, the industrial development boards and other groups will claim discrimination. The issue may also apply to social security benefits. I do not know where it will end, but I wonder where it comes from.

The Belfast *News Letter* editorial of 7 December, when I raised the question, said:

"The Northern Ireland Housing Executive appears to be indoctrinated with the pontifical, and at times absurd, policy-speak of the Fair Employment Commission, if the questionnaire on its grants form is anything to go by."

I share that view and believe that the form should be withdrawn. It is another mistake as it asks a irrelevant question. That offensive question should be removed and, while the Housing Executive is at it, it should also withdraw the earlier form that it produced for the housing selection scheme, which apparently asks the same question. I was not aware of that until now. It used to be illegal in Northern Ireland to ask the religious denomination of anyone applying for a job or anything else. It is not a requirement. The Housing Executive must face a lot of questions from me about who has received a grant.

7.45 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I always enjoy these debates, particularly the one at Christmas. Faced with Christmas shopping, writing Christmas cards or the opportunity to raise an issue about which I feel strongly on the Floor of the House, I feel that there is no choice. We have heard some emotional speeches so far and, although my speech will be on a completely different topic, it will none the less be extremely strong stuff.

We should not adjourn for the Christmas recess until we have had a thorough debate on the prospects for Britain's hill farmers. Last Thursday, without any warning or discussion, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced the outcome of the autumn review on hill farming. He reported that there had been a recovery of hill farm incomes. Although that is acknowledged, the recovery is nothing like as good

as he suggested. As a consequence of that recovery, he announced a 26 per cent. cut in hill livestock compensation paid to sheep farmers in less-favoured areas.

My hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) has already said that that is disgraceful. I propose to use the two adjectives "shabby" and "despicable". Not only does it threaten to put hill farmers out of business but it threatens the future of our upland landscape, much of which lies in national parks. No one should doubt the seriousness of the situation.

If one tours our upland areas, one sees empty farms and farm properties where farmers and their families have given up because they cannot make a living. The proposed cut is unprecedented. It will return hill farmers' incomes to those of 10 years ago. A typical hill farmer in my constituency—I dare say that it applies right across the country—with some 750 ewes would lose £1,500. Farms with larger flocks are already curbed by unfavourable treatment from the European Community because they suffer from headage limits.

There have been some encouraging signs of income recovery. The prices paid for store lambs went up this year and a little last year but that must be put in perspective. The recovery is from incomes that were at their lowest since the war. In real terms, incomes are still significantly less than they were five or six years ago when I was first elected to the House, and we thought that they were in crisis then. They remain in crisis and will be in even bigger crisis if the cuts go ahead.

Many hill farmers are struggling to survive. They have been holding on, hoping for better times. Now, just as matters look a little brighter, they face a cut in support that will knock them back to where they were just two years ago. It is extraordinary that Ministers recognised the fact that hill farmers needed help. Those farmers were grateful for much-needed increases in the ewe premium and the introduction of advance-stage payments of that premium.

At a stroke, all the good work of the past two or three years will be undermined, eroded, and wiped out. It is ludicrous that the cut in support proposed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food competes with schemes such as the Department of the Environment's stewardship scheme, which recognises how impossible it is for some farmers to make a decent living. Some two or three years ago, the North York Moors national park introduced a scheme based entirely on the fact that government at whatever level, whether local or national, recognised the severe difficulties of marginal hill farming and its importance to the fabric of the upland districts.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I am glad that my hon. Friend has been given the opportunity to raise an important issue that burst on us over this past weekend, after the leakage of an announcement that was intended to be made as we went away for the Christmas recess. Is my hon. Friend aware that Exmoor in my constituency is about to become or has become an environmentally sensitive area and that the Ministry's press release refers to over-grazing? Surely that is not the way to tackle the problem of over-grazing, if there is such a problem.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend makes a valid point and speaks of his experience, which is spot on and on which other hon. Members should reflect. In the press release announcing the cut in hill livestock compensatory allowance, the Ministry said that there would be further measures to prevent over-grazing. The combination of the two factors—the cut in hill livestock compensatory allowance and the measures to prevent over-grazing—will put out of business the very farmers whom we are supposed to be in the business of helping.

Let us be clear about the sort of people and families involved. We can forget the urban city dweller's view of the fat cat farmer. Families in such farms struggle to make ends meet. When I visited them, as I like to do during our recesses and intend to do over the Christmas recess, I am always deeply moved at the way in which they go about their business. They do not expect much out of life, and they look on hill farming as a way of life. Anyone who knows the North York Moors national park will know that it is probably one of the most beautiful places in the world.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton *rose—*

Mr. Greenway: I see that my hon. Friend wants to tell us about the Peak district.

Mr. Winterton: I come from Cheshire, where the Peak park plays a major role. My constituency includes many hill farmers who cannot make an income from their farming, so they take on outside activities such as contract work and driving to make ends meet and to keep their families.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. Many farmers exist by successfully claiming family income supplement. if the HLCA payments are reduced, the social security budget will rise—it will rise even more if farms are put out of business as a result of the cuts.

I believe that the decision must be reconsidered. What future can there be for hill farmers if, every time things get better, the Ministry says, "Now things look brighter we shall cut the special help that we have always recognised you need and knock you back on the floor"? What a prospect for the farmers—the proposal will mean kicking men who are struggling to get off the floor, which is precisely how hill farmers in my constituency are viewing it.

How much money will the proposal save? I am told that the mean decision will save £20 million. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced a £1 billion package for the coal mining districts a few weeks ago, which I fully support. However, hill farming is in just as much of a crisis as the coal industry. It is time that we had a thorough, open review, not a behind-closed-doors decision by the Minister whereby he issues a press release stating that he has had a review and made a decision.

We should consider the figures. What sort of income levels should we expect hill farmers to achieve? What sort of reasonable income should they be able to earn from hill farming? What is the importance of hill farming to the overall structure of the sheep industry, one of the more successful parts of British agriculture—with 27 per cent. of the EC regime in sheep meat and an increasing volume of exports? Farmers are doing better, partly because of that increase in exports. We want to improve our balance of trade in food and foodstuffs, and the sheep industry is already helping us to do so.

A recovery in prices has helped the entire sheep sector. If the cuts go ahead, the gap between the hard-pressed hill farmer and the rest of the specialist sheep sector will widen. However, the Minister concluded that the HLCA rates are

[Mr. Greenway]

now greater than necessary to compensate for the permanent natural handicaps of farming in those regions. That is totally illogical. Those permanent handicaps have not altered simply because there has been an improvement in the cycle. All agriculture sectors are cyclical, and the cycle of sheep prices will again turn down. If it does so this winter, and the cuts go ahead, how on earth will some of our sheep farmers be able to afford to feed their sheep flocks throughout what is already proving to be a wet and expensive winter?

I have represented the constituency of Ryedale in the House for the past five and a half years and, when it comes to issues relating to the local economy, I can think of nothing that has been of greater on-going concern to me than the future of hill farmers. They need extra support, not cuts. It is time that we had a thorough debate on their future so that we can press my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to come to the House and to tell us why the Ministry is going ahead with such a mean and spiteful cut in support at such a difficult time.

7.57 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I do not intend to detain the House long. When the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and I make common cause, it should at least attract the attention of most other hon. Members. We do not normally find ourselves in the same lobby, but what is happening now with the proposed merger of the Crewe and Macclesfield health authorities is totally unacceptable.

It is important to realise that Sir Donald Wilson was a political appointment. Despite the clear views of my constituents, the creation of health trusts has been pushed ahead, with little concern for the interests of either the patients or those working in the national health service. Now, Sir Donald Wilson has gone too far. It is not in his control to appoint whomever he wishes, when he wishes, where he wishes, irrespective of the interests of those who will be affected, without the Secretary of State taking a clear and firm line. There should be an immediate declaration from the Department of Health that there is to be an independent inquiry into the management of our regional hospital authority.

For far too long, the creation of trusts has meant that employees have created trusts and not only laid down the terms and conditions of the new trusts but often determined the budgets and then gone on to become chief officers of the trusts that they were, supposedly, setting up. We now have a plain case of someone overriding all the interests of open government—of which this Government are so proud—and blatantly appointing someone within the organisation who was herself in the process of creating a short list. She added her own name to it and became the chief executive.

That is not a matter of party politics—it is unacceptable for anyone to behave in that way. That is certainly not in the interests of the NHS or of a Government who think that they want these crazy trusts. It is impossible to obtain accurate information from the trust in my area, but we know that it is overspent every year. Coopers and Lybrand has prepared internal reports which have not been released, and the trust is to be £1·29 million overspent again this year—it will have to fiddle the figures to make them look good.

We also know that certain people have lost their tenure of office and have gone off having been paid large sums as compensation. In an open inquiry, many facts would come out—for instance, about the way the region is run—and those facts would give pause to many, including many Conservative Members.

I speak with real feeling about what is happening. No public office should be run as the fiefdom of one political party or one political master, yet that is what is happening in the Crewe and Nantwich and Macclesfield area, and it is wholly unacceptable.

8 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I believe that we should scrutinise the governance of Scotland in some depth before the House rises for the Christmas recess. The Maastricht treaty, when linked to the Single European Act and the treaty of Rome, will have given away massive powers to Europe—away from this Westminster Parliament—and will have created a legal unitary structure known as the union. That means that this Parliament will have many areas of responsibility removed from it. In other words, it will be bypassed.

The consequence for Scotland will be that the cement that binds the United Kingdom together will be fatally weakened. That, I fear, will lead to the break-up of the United Kingdom. I suggest that the cement that binds the United Kingdom consists of the monarchy, the Westminster Parliament, the unwritten constitution and British citizenship. Sad to say, because of recent events the monarchy is under great strain and has been badly weakened; while the giving away of real powers, financial and political, to Europe means that Westminster Members will not be able to ask questions on behalf of their constituents about matters that will be dealt with by unelected bankers or the people of Brussels.

The free-to-constituents-service given by Members of this Parliament—the cornerstone of the United Kingdom's unwritten constitution—and the right of constituency Members to have questions on behalf of their constituents answered will have been bypassed. For many Scots, redress in the future will be via the European Court, where only the wealthy can be sure of justice. In time, I believe that the Westminster Parliament will be reduced to the administrative and executive level of a medium-sized state in the United States. How long will the Scots tolerate that, and what will they feel about what has been done to the Union established in 1707?

I remind the House that Maastricht creates a legal entity, a unitary European state called the union. Everyone will be a citizen of that union, and the citizen's duty to the union is to be reviewed and revised every three years. That could mean that young Scots can look forward to the possibility, under European foreign and defence policy, of conscription into a future European army. All that makes me believe that following a Conservative victory at the next general election—I expect there to be one—all it will take is for 37 of Scotland's nationalist and crypto-nationalist Opposition Members, many of whom paraded in Edinburgh on Saturday last, to decide to sit in Edinburgh and call themselves the Scottish parliament. Their legal right to do that is sustainable, because

Scotland's parliament was not dissolved in 1707: it was merely prorogued. No constitutional Act on the statute book provides for the means to break up the United Kingdom, and I suggest that in the absence of such an Act those 37 Members will be in a strong position.

I also suggest that the weakening of Westminster's powers in favour of Europe's powers will make Scottish independence, inside or outside Europe, a real possibility —perhaps even a probability—because Scots will quite properly question the wisdom of remaining within a union that can no longer deliver the benefits of the Union. As a Unionist, I want that Union to continue. I articulate my concerns tonight because while we have been concentrating on making Europe work we may well have been taking actions that mean that the United Kingdom will no longer work.

This is why I shall continue to oppose the Maastricht Bill. We urgently need a debate in Government time in which we may discuss the governance of Scotland.

8.5 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I will not follow the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) except to tell him that, in the 16th century, Wales was savagely annexed. There was no Parliament then, and it was not prorogued.

There is a gathering crisis in the steel industry in Europe, and the Government appear not to wish to know about it. It is already affecting Britain and British Steel. The former communist states of eastern Europe, in a desperate search for currency, are efficiently dumping the steel that they make in western Europe. British Steel has already cut its production targets by 20 per cent. and has signalled a £51 million loss. That shows how serious the situation is. I want the Government to do something about it and to give a lead.

I should also like to mention the aerospace industry. The European airbus project received a severe blow last week, when an order for 74 aircraft was cancelled. That means that, throughout western Europe, there are likely to be grave employment consequences. I should like the Government to come to the House and explain what they believe the consequences for Britain will be; 7,000 workers here are engaged in making the airbus.

Workers in my constituency make steel, and they make the wings of the airbus. I am proud of Shotton steelworks and its contribution. It is world class. The aerospace factory at Broughton employs 4,000 and has a magnificent record too. I should like to hear some clear answers from the Government tonight about these two industries.

In my constituency, 3,000 people are out of work. More than 700 of them are long-term unemployed. I am deeply worried about the Government's review of the assisted area status map of Britain. I believe that the Government plan to take assisted status away from my constituency. I warn them not to do so. The unemployment figures there are serious, and the long-term implications for steel and aerospace could be even more serious. The Government must promise not to tamper with the assisted area map.

8.8 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Because of the pressure of time, I shall confine the bulk of my remarks to topics raised by my right hon. and hon. Friends. I hope that Conservative Members will realise that I intend them no discourtesy by so doing.

I should like, however, to refer briefly first to the speeches by the hon. Members for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) and for Corby (Mr. Powell). They spoke for the whole House when they described the terrible plight of the people of the former Yugoslavia and asked us to consider not just what more we can do to help but the position of our own troops, who are currently doing their best in that area. Committing troops to any conflict is, of course, a serious step, and the whole House will be mindful of the welfare of British service men this Christmas, the task that we have set them, and the difficult circumstances in which they are expected to undertake it.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of the speech made by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). Does he share my anger at the written response by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, which clearly stated and placed on record that our troops are to receive a cut in their allowances while on active service under the United Nations in Bosnia?

Mr. Brown: The thoughts of us all are with our service personnel this Christmas. No one wants to see them done an injustice—particularly not at this time, and in the very difficult circumstances that the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South clearly described. I hope that the Leader of the House will have something satisfactory to say on my hon. Friend's point.

The hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) also commands widespread support for his remarks about war crimes, not just in the House but throughout the country and the international community. Similar points are made on the other side of the Atlantic, and I hope that the Serbs will take careful note of the direction and speed in which international opinion is moving.

I thought that the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) would also secure widespread support in all parts of the House. As we have come to expect, my right hon. Friend spoke for the disabled and for the severely disabled, and raised the issue of the independent living fund and its successor funding arrangements. Fortunately, the Leader of the House has some specific expertise in that matter, and I hope that, when he sums up, he will be able to say something that satisfies my right hon. Friend.

It is Christmas, and it is nice to see parties on both sides of the House coming together to raise important matters. Although I am summing up for the Official Opposition, perhaps the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) will not find it entirely inappropriate if I speak on his behalf as well. He has made common cause with my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) in describing the regime now operated by Sir Donald Wilson—himself a political appointee—in the areas in which both the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend have their constituencies.

The hon. Member for Macclesfield outlined, and my hon. Friend confirmed, that Sir Donald has been behaving in an arbitrary manner. My hon. Friend specifically called

[Mr. Brown]

for an independent inquiry into the management of trusts in the area, and I formally support that request from this Dispatch Box. The circumstances outlined are clearly unacceptable in any form of public administration. It is not a question of party politics but a straightforward stand against corruption. I hope that the call for an independent inquiry into the affairs of the health authority in question will be carefully noted by the Leader of the House, and that he will draw it to the attention of the Secretary of State for Health.

It will not come as a surprise to anyone who follows the affairs of the House that Labour Members have spoken about employment in their constituencies. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Flynn) raised the question of job losses at Marconi, which is now a wholly owned subsidiary of GEC. He commands my sympathy, because I witnessed a similar closure—that of the Marconi factory in Gateshead, next to my own constituency—in similar circumstances only a few years ago. GEC operates in a ruthless way in such matters. I, like many others, would like to see some of the huge surpluses over which GEC's management preside put back into British industry, just as my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East suggested.

My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), in a brief intervention, declared his support for the 4,000 airbus workers in his constituency, who could not be better represented in the House. My hon. Friend spoke also of the Shotton steelworks and of its high quality products. He referred to assisted area status. In the circumstances that currently obtain in this country, the Government are wrong to consider removing assisted area status from any community.

One of the great tragedies of the current slump is that, when recovery eventually occurs, our manufacturing base may be so eroded that we are unable to take advantage of it. At the depth of the present slump, we still have a balance of payments deficit rather than a surplus, which suggests a fundamental weakness with the British economy. The Government should be trying to address that problem rather than hope that, sooner or later, we will float through the slump thanks to market forces and world circumstances alone.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) rightly and movingly described the plight of the people of Kashmir. He called for self-determination, and graphically outlined the unsuitability of military occupation as a form of government for that area. I took his remarks very much to heart; they as much as any will condition my thoughts over Christmas. I am looking forward to Christmas, as I am sure other right hon. and hon. Members are, but this evening we learned of some very sombre causes for concern from right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. There is much for us to reflect upon, and for the Government to respond to.

8.16 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The House will understand when I say at once that it is unlikely that in the 10 minutes left to me I shall be able to comment fully and in detail on every speech. I begin by making it clear to those right hon. and hon. Members to whom I am unable to respond as fully as I should like this evening, or who asked for specific answers for which I shall have to draw on information that I may not have with me, that I will ensure, in one way or another, that their concerns are reflected in my communications to my right hon. and hon. Friends, and that I will endeavour to make a specific response in writing or in some other appropriate way.

I acknowledge the points made by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), to whom I hope to address some points before I sit down, the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Flynn), concerning the employment situation in his constituency, my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), who spoke about Argentina and the Falklands fisheries, the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), who made an impassioned speech about his experiences in Kashmir, which I carefully noted, and by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess), whose constituency is not far from my own frontiers, and which I visited during my hon. Friend's successful general election campaign.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) expressed concern about the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I shall bring the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) firmly to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—although my hon. Friend will know that my right hon. Friend sought to address many of those concerns in his recent statement, a copy of which I have with me.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) joined my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield and we heard also the interesting constitutional observations—as I think I might most safely describe them—of my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). Finally, we return to the perceived economic concerns of parts of Wales with the remarks of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) about steel and assisted area status—which were echoed by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) speaking from the Labour Front Bench. I hope to return to some of those issues; first, however, let me deal with a subject that I have not yet mentioned.

Adjournment debates are often light-hearted, and today's debate has had its light-hearted moments. More often than not, however, such debates consist of a succession of constituency problems which, although important to the areas involved, do not give rise to discussions as wide ranging as some of those in which we engage. Perhaps the most striking single feature of today's debate has been the impressive quality of the speeches—particularly, but by no means only, those dealing with Bosnia. Another striking feature has been the fact that almost 50 per cent. of the debate has concerned important issues of foreign affairs. My hon. Friends the Members for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) and for Corby (Mr. Powell), and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir. R. Johnston), made especially striking speeches about Bosnia.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby was kind enough to acknowledge that I would be unlikely to be able to respond in detail to some of the points that he raised. I shall, however, undertake specifically to seek from my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary the information for which my hon. Friend asked about the commission of

United Nations experts appointed to deal with war crimes. As my hon. Friend will know, the British Government strongly share his concern, and deplore and condemn both ethnic cleansing and the other atrocities that are being alleged. The conclusions of the Edinburgh Council state, clearly and categorically:

"Those responsible for all these crimes against humanitarian law by the different sides will be held personally accountable and brought to justice."

I accept that hon. Members on both sides of the House have sought today to establish how that can be done. No doubt the questions that they have raised will be dealt with in other ways, not least by the United Nations. I hope, however, that we can all agree that that is a very clear-cut statement about the Community's attitude—an attitude which the British Government fully share.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby for acknowledging, in a speech that in other respects had a good deal in common with those of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, that the question of involvement could not be approached quite as sanguinely as some—including the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber—appeared to suggest. He indicated, at the very least, some hesitation, and—like my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South—he seemed to recognise that the terms of the presidency's conclusions generally from the Edinburgh Council represented a clear and striking statement of the vigour with which the problem is being approached by the British Government and, indeed, the Community as a whole. He also recognised that we are seeking to impose further pressure.

As the statement is long, I shall not quote all of it. It begins by acknowledging—as did my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South—that

"the tragedy in former Yugoslavia constitutes a serious threat to peace and stability in the region . . . the international community will not accept the acquisition of territory by force, nor accept the partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina . . . the Community and its member states will take further steps to assist in tightening sanctions on the Danube, and cause for the rapid despatch of observers to the border between Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina . . . states its belief that the United Nations Security Council should examine the situation in respect of the United Nations Security Council resolution 786, the no fly zone resolution, that the UN security council should examine the situation in the light of operative paragraph 6 of that resolution."

After referring to the ministerial-level meeting of the steering committee of the international conference—the follow-up to the London conference—which is due to take place on 16 December, and which will be attended by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, the statement continues:

"The European Council, which brings together the Heads of State and of Government of countries which are profoundly peace loving, will continue to give priority to political means in order to resolve the crisis in Yugoslavia. But, given the gravity of this tragic situation, it has no choice but to promote and participate in further initiatives which the international community may be obliged to undertake."

My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber made it clear that they would have liked the statement to go further. Nevertheless, it is a firm and clear statement that the problem is not being ignored by either the British Government or the Community as a whole. The Government and the Community are not refusing to consider other action if the difficulties are not resolved in a way that the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend would like. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for acknowledging that the terms of the statement have given him some encouragement during the week.

Sir Russell Johnston: None of that enables anything to be done to stop the acquisition of land in Bosnia, by force, by Bosnian Serbs.

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 22 (Periodic Adjournments).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising on Thursday 17th December, do adjourn until Monday 11th January.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

WORKS INTERFERING WITH NAVIGATION

That the draft Transport and Works (Descriptions of Works Interfering with Navigation) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 9th November, be approved.

GUIDED TRANSPORT MODES

That the draft Transport and Works (Guided Transport Modes) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 2nd November, be approved.

ROAD TRAFFIC

That the draft Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (Amendment) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 23rd November, be approved.

EDUCATION SUPPORT GRANTS

That the draft Education Support Grants Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 24th November, be approved.

COMPUTER PROGRAMS (COPYRIGHT)

That the draft Copyright (Computer Programs) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 25th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to European Community documents.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees.).

BANANAS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8372/92, relating to organisation of the market in bananas; and supports the Government in its intention to secure measures which enable the Community to fulfil all its international trading commitments, whilst also taking account of consumer interests, the need for budgetary restraint, and the protection of access by ACP and EC producers to European Community markets.

DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION POLICY

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 6718/92 + COR 1 and the supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Overseas Development Administration on 4th December, relating to

development co-operation policy in the run-up to the year 2000; and welcomes the declaration made at the Development Council on 18th November, which takes full account of United Kingdom interests in this field.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

CONSOLIDATED FUND BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Motion made, and Question proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Nuclear Power (North-west)

8.28 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I am grateful for this opportunity to discuss the nuclear industry and its importance to the north-west. It is timely, not only because of the current energy review but because my hon. Friend the Minister visited Sellafield today. I trust that his visit was successful and was not completely curtailed by the need to return to the debate; I hope that we will soon see the start of the operation at the thermal oxide reprocessing plant as that plant is vital to employment in Cumbria and will make an important contribution to our balance of payments over the next 10 years. It cost £1·85 billion to build, and £1·6 billion of that money came from abroad. When it is up and running, it will result in 2,000 jobs, either directly or indirectly.

Until now, much of the public debate on the energy review has been about coal, with only passing references to gas and nuclear power, most of which have not been complimentary. Those who want to see more coal and less gas burnt use the limited nature of gas reserves as a reason, forgetting, in the process, that coal reserves, too, are finite and will become increasingly more expensive to mine as time goes on. That contrasts with the plentiful supplies of nuclear fuel available in Britain into the next century and beyond. We have rightly invested considerable sums in recycling schemes to ensure that that will be the case. Strangely, though, schemes that, if applied to any other industrial process, would be widely applauded by environmentalists are condemned by them in this case. The debate associated with the review has also involved grossly inflated costings for nuclear energy.

It is of considerable concern to many in the north-west that the review has taken the course that it has. The north-west can claim to have been involved at the start of the nuclear age in the early 1950s and now, 40 years later, the region still employs the vast majority of people involved in the nuclear industry. Well over 100,000 people in the north-west are involved, either directly or indirectly, in the region's four nuclear power stations—which have a generating capacity of more than 3,000 MW each year —in its production and reprocessing installations for nuclear fuel and in its research and development activities. Many of the jobs are highly skilled and the technology is very advanced.

In my opinion, those facts alone warrant a closer look at the industry than has so far been evident in the review. If employment is one of the criteria for deciding the number of coal mines that will remain open, we must remember that any resulting redundancies in the nuclear industry will simply transfer unemployment from one region to another. If that happens, it is likely that the redundancy payments provided to those involved in the nuclear industry will be less than those provided to coal miners—to say nothing of the difficulty that former nuclear workers will have in finding employment in some of the more remote locations in the north-west which have nuclear installations, such as Sellafield.

If the development of more efficient and cleaner technology for generating electricity is an important consideration for the review, the nuclear industry's record is impressive. It would be a grave error if we reduced our commitment to the nuclear industry—one of our remaining world-class industries—as the loss of engineering skills alone would be most damaging.

Those arguments, compelling in themselves, essentially support the main economic argument for nuclear power. Those who use jobs, rather than economics, as their leading argument, including some—I stress "some"—in the coal mining industry, make people highly suspicious about the true cost of coal. No one denies that the cheapest electricity on the grid today is nuclear power, at between 1·2p and 1·4p per kWh. Similarly, no one denies that, despite its previous problems, the industry's nuclear power stations now produce a larger contribution to our energy needs—at around 22 per cent. of electricity generated—than ever before. Last week was a record week in itself for the production of electricity by the nuclear industry. For the first time, more than 8,100 MW was produced, and our power stations are now some of the most efficient in the world when it comes to load factors.

The real argument is not about running costs but about the other costs of nuclear power. Although the cost of building nuclear power stations is high, much of that cost has already been written off because of the length of time for which Magnox stations have been operating; that applies equally to coal-fired power stations. Therefore, the fairest way of comparing the two is through their running costs. As I said, at 1·2p to 1·4p per kWh, nuclear power is almost twice as cheap as coal, at between 2·8p and 3p per kWh.

If capital costs are taken into account, as they will be with electricity from Sizewell B and, it is to be hoped, Sizewell C, the figure will be between 3p per kWh and 3·9p per kWh for nuclear stations, which compares favourably with that for the new combined cycle gas-powered stations, in respect of which capital costs are taken into account at the outset. The figure for new coal-fired power stations with flue gas desulphurisation equipment fitted is well above those figures. Indeed, retrofitting existing coal-fired power stations with FGD equipment makes coal even more uncompetitive, adding 0·5p per kWh to the cost.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): On four occasions, the hon. Gentleman has referred to the coal industry and its effects on power generation. The last thing that I want to do is to cross swords with him over the coal and nuclear industries, but will he explain what the cost will be of demolishing and clearing away nuclear power stations that no longer serve any useful purpose? Will he deal with that in his speech?

Mr. Mans: I most certainly will; I am coming to that very point now.

The real problem over costs arises when one is discussing the non-fossil fuel levy. I hope that what I have to say will answer the question asked by the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien). First, that levy is not solely for the nuclear industry. It can be used in respect of renewables too, and could be regarded as a first stab at a carbon tax. In the case of nuclear power, it is used to offset decommissioning costs or, more specifically, the rather vague estimates of what they are likely to be.

It is becoming clear that those costs are not likely to be as great as first thought. The experience of Berkeley—the first Magnox station to initiate decommissioning—shows that the estimates were rather higher than the actual costs.

[Mr. Mans]

Whatever the costs turn out to be, however, it makes a great deal of economic sense to spread them over as long a period as possible by keeping Magnox stations operating for as long as possible. If the Magnox stations are shut down prematurely, there will be less money in the reserves to cater for their decommissioning. If we keep them going for longer, we shall not only get cheaper power on to the grid but make better provision for decommissioning costs.

What is debatable, however, is whether nuclear generators should be saddled with the costs at all. None of the fossil fuel generators have to make provision for their back-end costs—clearing up contaminated land and slag heaps, as well as meeting subsidence claims in the case of coal and dismantling redundant rigs around our coasts in the case of gas, all of which are highly expensive operations. Surely it is only fair——

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): The hon. Gentleman has just mentioned gas for the first time in his remarks. Perhaps we are having an unrealistic battle between the nuclear and coal industries. Gas has a role to play, and it would be less than fair if he ignored that fact or failed to pay attention to the fact that, in the calculation of coal prices for the grid, many of the start-up costs for gas are not being properly addressed. Does the hon. Gentleman intend to refer to that or does he intend to restrict the debate to the relative merits of the nuclear and coal industries? If the latter is the case, he will render rather arid and narrow a debate that could have provided the north-west with a crucible in which to melt a number of materials.

Mr. Mans: The hon. Gentleman may have heard me refer to gas on two previous occasions; but the majority of my remarks will be aimed at the nuclear industry, simply because I feel that, in the debate on the review so far, an awful lot of attention has been paid to the coal industry and not enough to the nuclear industry. I sincerely hope that other contributions will include further references to the gas industry. I shall refer to gas generation on a couple of occasions but not at great length.

Surely it is only fair that, if Nuclear Electric is to provide for its decommissioning costs, as I have already said, so should everyone else. If there was ever an unlevel playing field, this must be it. Indeed, it is made even more unlevel by the fact that Nuclear Electric inherited from the Central Electricity Generating Board £10·5 billion-worth of liabilities whereas, since 1982, the coal industry has received £14·5 billion of subsidy from the taxpayer.

I have left until last the oddest aspect of the debate. It could be termed the dog that did not bark—namely, the environmental aspects of generating electricity. As a former member of the Select Committee on the Environment, I am, to say the least, surprised at the lack of concern shown by organisations such as Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and, indeed, the Campaign for Clean Air at the prospect of continuing use of coal-fired power stations and the huge environmental damage that that could inflict on the atmosphere through acid rain and carbon dioxide. The high sulphur content of British coal makes the former a particular problem, and I have already mentioned the high cost of fitting FGD devices.

Coal produces millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide a year. Indeed, we find a fair amount of carbon dioxide emissions coming from gas-fired power stations as well. Nuclear installations, however, produce hardly any carbon dioxide at all. If the industry is having to pay for the possible future environmental problems posed by decommissioning nuclear power stations, surely it should also pay for the environmental damage being done by coal and gas-fired power stations right now.

The only explanation for the uncharacteristic low-key response of environmental groups on the subject is either that they have been nobbled by Arthur Scargill and place the preservation of coal-miners' jobs above the need to improve the environment and above the jobs of workers in the nuclear industry or that they have allowed their anti-nuclear prejudice to override their desire to cut air pollution. Those organisations must come clean and decide whether they exist to destroy the nuclear industry because of its past association with nuclear weapons or whether they are genuine in their wish to improve the environment above all else. Perhaps people such as Jonathan Porritt should consider more closely the views of probably the most respected environmentalist alive today, Professor James Lovelock, who points out that carbon dioxide produced from coal in gas-fired stations is a real environmental problem, whereas nuclear energy is only a perceived one.

One distortion that is repeated by Greenpeace and others is the hazard to health posed by radiation from nuclear plants when people experience more than 10 times the maximum permitted level in nuclear installations if they live in an area which has high levels of radon from underlying rocks. Even more ironic is that if British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. wished to replace its power station at Calder Hall on the Sellafield nuclear site with a coal-fired one, it would not be permitted to do so by the nuclear inspectorate because of the higher than permitted levels of radiation in coal-fired power stations. Indeed, if the nuclear inspectorate were empowered to control levels of radiation in coal-fired power stations that are not on nuclear sites as well as those that are on nuclear sites, it might have to order the immediate shutting down of every coal-fired power station in the country.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am following my hon. Friend's argument very closely and I find myself in considerable sympathy with much of what he is saying. However, is he not going for overkill in his support for nuclear power and his hostility to coal in particular and, perhaps to a lesser extent, to gas? Is it not vital that we have a long-term secure energy policy in which nuclear power and coal have a major part to play? Does my hon. Friend also concede that gas burnt in power stations is very inefficient and, in the long term, quite expensive? We are depleting a finite resource, and we are not sure how much gas we have available.

Mr. Mans: I am in considerable agreement with my hon. Friend. I believe in a balanced energy policy. We have to gain our electricity from many different sources. Indeed, even under the original proposals that the Government put forward for the use of coal, we would still end up in 1995 producing 45 per cent. of our electricity from coal, 20 per cent. from gas and about 22 per cent. from nuclear power. I would certainly regard that as a balanced energy policy. However, we are discussing the review itself, and the review will obviously consider an increased coalburn.

We have to look very closely at the effects, both environmental and in terms of cost and jobs, of running down the nuclear industry when we do not need to do so. That 22 per cent. of the total nuclear energy consumed provides a fair amount—perhaps it might go up by a few more per cent.—and it provides an important contribution to a balanced energy programme.

My hon. Friend's final point related to the supply of gas, the supply of coal and, indeed, nuclear fuel. Coal, as well as gas, is finite. We have a considerably greater quantity of available nuclear fuel, and that gives us considerable security of supply. If I have over-emphasised the nuclear case, it is only to try to get the balance right as a result of the over-emphasis on coal in the debate and in the energy review to date.

Returning to what I was saying about the environmental effects of coal-fired power stations, particularly in relation to radiation discharges, Greenpeace and others must either admit that they have either over-emphasised the radiation risk in nuclear power plants or pay equal attention to the higher levels of radiation elsewhere.

Many of us in the north-west have no wish to see miners made redundant, but we do not want nuclear power workers to lose their jobs because of the present problems in the coal industry. It is important that the energy review clearly states the relative costs of different sources of energy in a fair way and fully takes into account the environmental benefits and disbenefits of nuclear energy, gas and coal. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy will deal with the point that has already been made a couple of times in the past few weeks about our commitment to reducing carbon dioxide emissions and stabilising them to a specific figure by the year 2000, and that he will say whether the energy review will be carried out within those parameters. I hope that we will not be unable to meet those targets as a result of the energy review.

In the north-west, we believe that, if that is done and if there is a fair review, the nuclear industry will have a bright future, producing cheap clean power. I hope that, as a result of the debate, its case will not go unheard during the present energy review.

8.48 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I thank the hon. Member for Wye (Mr. Mans) for his well-constructed, well-informed speech and for taking the trouble to telephone me at home on Friday, after learning of his luck in the ballot, to invite me to contribute.

I shall concentrate on THORP in the light of a four-hour visit last year and in the light of seven official visits to Sellafield, an area in which I spent five years at a small school at Gosforth, when the parents of many of my friends worked at Drigg. I have real concern for the area. I should also like to associate my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) in every sense with much of what I shall say.

I should like to speak well of the Minister. He will recollect that, this year, he came to the annual dinner of Trade Unionists for Safe Nuclear Energy—TUSNE. He made what I described, moving the vote of thanks, as an excellent speech, and I am happy to repeat that praise in the House tonight. That speech greatly pleased Bill Morgan of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, and Gordon Lee, the Minister's hosts and the trade union leaders who have done so much to change attitudes towards nuclear power in my party. I pay a public tribute to TUSNE.

The Minister will recollect that, during his speech, he pointed out that THORP was seen as crucial to the overall commercial relationship between Britain and Japan. That struck me in a most forceful way. THORP has made BNFL one of Britain's biggest yen earners. THORP already has secure orders worth £9 billion—more than half from overseas—and it is expected to attract a further £3 billion of foreign earnings, if overseas confidence is retained.

Even in a worst case scenario, THORP will make a £500 million profit in its first 10 years. If the Minister disagrees with any of those figures, he should say so in the House, because I believe that THORP will provide an economic benefit to the United Kingdom that is conservatively estimated at £900 million in 1992 money values, using an 8 per cent. discount rate.

The leading independent accountancy firm, Touche Ross, has examined with BNFL the economic value of THORP to the United Kingdom and it supports the estimate of £900 million.

Mr. William O'Brien: Rumours have been circulating about THORP. Are we assured that it will operate in the future? There has been some rumour that it will not provide the necessary facility for the disposal of waste as planned. Has my hon. Friend any information on that?

Mr. Dalyell: I heard the same rumours as my hon. Friend and, bluntly, I cancelled engagements in Scotland in order to be present at this debate, because I am greatly alarmed at them.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) has many connections with the Yorkshire coalfield, and in no sense do I see this as a coal *v.* nuclear issue. I believe it involves the question of gas; here, I am in what Mill called the

"deep slumber of a decided opinion."

I am against the use of gas, full stop, on the grounds that it represents the worst kind of short-termism and takes up the chemical feedstock of the future. I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) will go into those effects in more detail.

I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton that, if THORP were delayed for nine months before starting up, it would result in an overall loss of profit to BNFL of £108 million during its operational lifetime.

If THORP did not operate at all, there would be a potential loss of profits of more than £1 billion. THORP has cost £1·85 billion to build, around 90 per cent. of which was spent with British companies. It has been supported by £1·6 billion of inward investment from overseas customers. Do the Minister and his advisers accept that those figures are roughly right?

I have scrambled over much of that engineering marvel —for that is what it is—and any layman would be extremely impressed by the safety-conscious engineering that went into THORP.

It is also important to consider that THORP has employed 5,000 workers directly and sustained 10,000 jobs at the peak of construction. About 3,000 workers are currently employed in THORP, many in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member of Copeland, who has done so much to support the nuclear industry in Labour party circles and elsewhere.

[Mr. Dalyell]

I understand that THORP will directly employ 1,200 when operational for a minimum of 10 years, and probably for several decades. If THORP is given the go-ahead, it will directly sustain a further 900 jobs at Sellafield and 800 jobs, at least, in supplier companies. Are those figures acceptable to the Minister?

The supposedly difficult issue relates to the environment. The new discharge authorisation proposed by the Department of the Environment for the Sellafield site, and not just for THORP, is more restrictive than the existing one. That is completely contrary to the impression given by Greenpeace. The new authorisation will introduce a lower radiation dose limit for the critical group, those who are living near Sellafield who are most affected.

In its campaign, Greenpeace has singled out krypton 85 as its principle environmental argument to stop THORP from operating. Krypton 85 is an inert gas, mildly radioactive, which does not accumulate in the body or enter the food chain. In radiological terms, the annual effect of Krypton 85 emissions on the critical group is equivalent to drinking a glassful of mineral water a day, or eating a small packet of Brazil nuts once a year or spending an hour in Cornwall—a dangerous thing to do—where there are higher levels of natural background radiation.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): The hon. Gentleman has emphasised the employment implications. Will he confirm that krypton does not harm sheep, which are another important source of employment in my area?

Mr. Dalyell: I spoke briefly on the telephone not only to BNFL but to a number of independent people, and my understanding is that krypton has no effect on what one might call the general Chernobyl problem.

I am not complacent about nuclear matters, because there is the enormous problem of what happens to ill-maintained power stations, which is why it is so important to have twinning arrangements with Kosloduy in Bulgaria, Smolensk and elsewhere. I pay tribute to James Hann, Robin Jeffrey and others in Scottish Nuclear who have developed such links, and to English Nuclear companies.

The maximum radiation dose to any member of the critical group of krypton 85 is one thousandth of the average dose to the individual in the United Kingdom from natural radiation. Claims by Greenpeace that krypton 85 will have a major effect on the climate have been dismissed by leading independent scientists.

The krypton 85 issue was dealt with fully at the THORP public inquiry. There is no new evidence to justify delay. The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) will recollect from our mutual happy days in the European Parliament—particularly, in my case, from my days on the Energy Committee—that these inquiries go into matters in great detail. It is frivolous to say that the inquiry does not matter.

On the contrary, the critical group will receive a radiation dose from krypton 85 that is one thirtieth of that estimated at the time that evidence was given to the inquiry. Nevertheless, provision has been made in THORP for back-fitting krypton removal equipment should a viable technique become available. Those genuinely keen on the environment should oppose money being wasted on the phoney problem of krypton 85, and rather urge that it is spent on programmes that will genuinely help the environment and the community—energy efficiency, schools and hospitals. The plant would cost well over £50 million excluding operating costs.

Time is limited, and the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) has confined the debate to the north-west, but the Minister knows that no speech from me on the subject would be complete without deep criticism of the Government on a related matter—Dounreay. This is the worst example of short-termism. I gather from the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), following our recent interventions on the Minister's statement, that the industry would have been prepared to provide much more money if the Government had been prepared to ask. There seems to have been a negative reaction from the Government.

In 2020, when I shall probably be kicking up daisies but the Minister and others may be here, there will be a feeling that we made a terrible mistake in 1992, because the idea that development into physics can be mothballed is unrealistic. We shall have to go to the French or Japanese. I beg the Government to think that they might be wrong about Dounreay, and to think and think again.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Wyre for giving me the opportunity to speak.

9.2 pm

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) came first in the ballot, because it gives us an opportunity to air our views on the nuclear industry at a time when a general review of energy supplies is being conducted. So far, the whole debate has been unbalanced by the concentration on the coal industry, so it is useful for us to redress the balance.

Although I do not have a single mine in my constituency, when the announcement was made in October, I received more than 200 letters from constituents asking that the Government think again. When I heard the announcement, I thought that I would be inundated with letters, and I was not wrong. We all welcome the announcement of the review, and eagerly await its findings next year.

The Government's energy policy based on diversity and security of supply and economy of cost, has served the country well. It has directly benefited consumers in their own bills and indirectly benefited industry in the cheap supply of electricity. My plea is that the Government continue that policy, which has served us so well. The reason for that plea is that any change in energy policy will have its costs.

Some people argue that coal is more expensive. My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre stated that nuclear power is less expensive, but it depends on the side of the argument from which one sets out and the statistics one uses to back up one's case. I have heard various arguments in the past few months from people trying to convince me that their particular fuel—coal, gas or nuclear power—is cheaper than the others. I wish my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy well in the next few months as he reviews the case.

We need a balanced debate on a balanced fuel policy. A sudden move from nuclear-powered energy will prove extremely expensive. Let us consider the diversity argument alone. After the Organisation of Petroleum

Exporting Countries caused the price of oil to escalate in 1973, France reconsidered its fuel policy, and turned to nuclear power immediately. It now has 75 per cent. reliance on the nuclear power industry. Britain has also suffered from escalating prices and had difficulty in getting coal supplies, especially during the strikes of the 1970s, but not so much during the 1980s. We do not want to rely on a single source of fuel, whether it be coal, gas or nuclear power. We need a diverse supply of fuels.

If we continue the "dash for gas", we shall have a long time in which to regret that decision. Several questions need to be answered, such as, how long will the supplies of gas last? I have heard various estimates, ranging from 20 years upwards, but we do not know. Once we have started the dash for gas, the price of gas will escalate, which will put out of synch all the claims about how cheap gas is. There is only one way for the price of gas to go and that is up, as demand for it increases. We should also consider the future exploration and extraction costs of gas.

Several hon. Members have mentioned our skilled work force. My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre said that about 100,000 people in the north-west were associated within the nuclear industry, so we have many skilled people working at the frontiers of research and development. I believe that we would be loth to turn our backs on their skills. If we export their skills now, we shall import the fruits of that policy in the future, which would be extremely expensive.

It has been said that our becoming reliant on importing fuels from abroad will have a regrettable effect on our balance of payments. It has been estimated that the cost for 1993-94 might be about £800 million, so that figure must be put into the melting pot.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend is developing an excellent case for the nuclear industry. Can he say how much it is now costing us to import French nuclear fuel? Does he agree that it would be sensible for us to build on our existing nuclear industry and provide our own nuclear fuel instead of buying it from the French?

Mr. Evans: I am extremely grateful for my hon. Friend's question. I believe that it costs us about £450 million a year.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It is not only the cost of the fuel which is important. We have no control over the safety precautions of the French, but we have absolute control over our own, and the wind blows our way.

Mr. Evans: I am very grateful for my hon. Friend's contribution. When considering our energy policy, we must take both comments into account. We need diversity and security of supply. Our nuclear industry has an excellent safety record. As my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) has pointed out, if there is a problem in a nuclear plant in another country, we may suffer if the wind blows in our direction. We must have as much control as possible over our own destiny.

As other hon. Members have said, we must be extremely cautious about some of the environmental arguments against the nuclear industry. The industry seems to have had an extremely bad press. The advantage of the nuclear industry for the environment is that it produces no sulphur dioxide, no nitrogen oxide and no carbon dioxide. We must look at the other side of the equation as part of a balanced argument. We should not be wholly against gas or coal, and we should not be only pro-nuclear. We must widen the argument and realise that there are environmental factors on the side of the nuclear industry.

All the gases I mentioned contribute to acid rain and to the greenhouse effect. Worldwide, the nuclear industry has prevented more than 1·7 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide, which fossil fuel burning would have produced, from going into the atmosphere. That fact must also be recognised.

I said that the nuclear industry had had a bad press. That may be because of its defence uses and its military capability. It seems that the connotations of the word "nuclear" have made many people fearful, and I recognise that. However, the nuclear industry must be one of the most regulated industries in the country. It is not only self-regulated, but regulated by the Government at several levels. European directives and European legislation regulate the industry. The local authorities certainly regulate it, and several lobby groups watch carefully what goes on in the industry.

It seems that these days, anyone with a camcorder can make a programme. At present, two people are making a programme for Channel 4 on the nuclear industry in which they plan to say how bad and dangerous it is. We must consider the other side of the question. Good news means no news for television. A position is taken at the beginning to give the industry a bad name for ever.

We must have a balanced debate and we must give it more air. The nuclear industry has provided us with security, it has provided us with research and development, and it has provided us with high-technology jobs. It has provided us with competition which has had a downward pressure on prices.

I wish Labour Members well who support the nuclear industry and a balanced fuel approach to our energy needs in trying to persuade some of their hon. Friends to change Labour's policy on the nuclear industry. It is important that they are given as much support as possible so that we can carry on with a diversity of supply.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre has said that the nuclear industry has been important for the north-west, and he is right. It has also been important for the country generally. It is time that its importance was recognised, and it is time that the hard work of the dedicated people who work in the industry was given the recognition it deserves.

9.12 pm

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I am grateful to you for calling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It shows the impartiality of the Chair, in view of our exchanges during points of order last Friday.

I spent the first third of my working life in geology, albeit at a junior level, and I worked with radiation for a substantial period. I think that I have some expertise that it might be worth bringing to our debate.

I remind the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans), who argued in favour of a balanced energy policy —an argument with which the Opposition agree—of a point I made to the Minister a few days ago in the House. The workers in the nuclear industry and the trade unions on behalf of those workers have argued in favour of maintaining our coal mining industry. That is particularly

[Mr. Andrew Miller]

important, because everyone with practical experience of the energy industry realises the relevance of a balanced policy.

Reference has been made to coal, oil, gas and, fleetingly, renewables. Gas is a particularly interesting fuel. One aspect of its use which has not been referred to so far is its vital importance to the chemical sector as a feedstock. I have received a letter from the managing director of a major British company which manufactures fertiliser in my constituency. He pleaded with me to support the coal mining case. Quite simply, he argued that the Government's policy would drive up the price of gas, which would undermine his business, as it would drive up the price of its feedstock. He did not—and I would not—argue against the use of gas as part of a balanced policy because clearly, from time to time, gas could be extremely useful when there is a need to move very quickly from low levels of energy usage to high levels of energy usage.

In relation to the debate, there are some important employment aspects in the north-west. British Nuclear Fuels plc employs almost 16,000 people in the United Kingdom, all bar 650 of whom are located in the north-west of England. Seven thousand people and an equal number of contractors are employed at Sellafield, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) referred. Clearly, the nuclear industry generally and BNFL in particular ensure that the north-west is home to a large number of highly trained personnel.

Earlier this year, I raised the impact of the decision to split the business of BNFL in my constituency between a unit entitled URENCO and BNFL. The dominant part of BNFL's activity was the rundown of the acitivity on the site primarily engaged in the development of weapons grade material. Clearly all hon. Members welcome the fact that such material is no longer required.

However, the skill level on that site still runs the risk of being unnecessarily dissipated. There are enormous skills on the site. The hon. Member for Ribble Valley stressed the high level of engineering skills in the industry. It is a criminal waste of talent to allow those skills to be dissipated. Although I understand that the issue crosses ministerial responsibilities, I commend to the Minister for Energy the report about diversification produced by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology. That aspect of the nuclear industry must be considered in relation to the report.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if some of the skills were lost, they would not be lost just in the nuclear industry? Some of the skills would be exported abroad. While we would lose them, other countries—perhaps our competitors—would gain from those skills.

Mr. Miller: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. There is a brain drain, and we also lose a huge local engineering base.

In my constituency, which has a high concentration of petrochemical companies, there is a huge demand for welding skills. Hon. Members who are participating in the debate will be aware that the welding skills of British Nuclear Fuels are at a high level. It seems to be a criminal waste simply to dissipate those skills and not use them, crossing over the frontiers of the energy industry. We should not compartmentalise the debate or the industry.

The United Kingdom needs a balanced energy policy. The job losses that could occur, which have been referred to by my hon. Friends, and those which have occurred will have an enormous knock-on affect. Invariably, when job losses are associated with high skill activities, the knock-on impact to supply companies and through the chain in our economy is significant. I urge the Government to take urgent action to ensure that the changes which are currently taking place in the nuclear supply industry are dealt with in a way which ensures that there is no loss of our skill base, and which continues to promote the importance of gas in the context of a balanced policy.

Earlier in the debate, references were made to radon, and comparative arguments were made about safety in Cornwall and various other parts of the country. There are big gaps in our knowledge in some important fields. I urge the Government to undertake greater epidemiological studies so that debates about leukaemia clusters and the like can be conducted in a more rational environment—similarly, the debate about krypton, which was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). From time to time, I agree 100 per cent. with Greenpeace, but I fear that it is wrong on this issue. Its information is based on a misunderstanding of the particular isotopes.

We need a great deal more study and activity to ensure that public confidence is restored. We need a policy that takes into account the economics of such a policy, the environmental issues which have been referred to and other important aspects which are of national interest.

In considering this debate as part of the wider debate about future energy supply which is taking place in our society, I urge the Government to take cognisance of the view expressed—I come back to my first point—by the workers at British Nuclear Fuels. They support the continuation of the coal industry. They see it as part of a balanced supply debate, and that is in the best interests of the nation.

9.24 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): The United Kingdom is good at deep-mined coal, the technology involved in it and the supply of equipment to that industry. We are also good, in international terms, at the nuclear industry and nuclear reprocessing. We now get the maximum economic benefit from our nuclear plants. I think that one of the unexpected successes in the Government's policy on fuel industries and the electricity generating industry in the past few years has been the pressure put on all sorts of people to produce safe efficiencies.

I should like to add one point to what has been a rational debate—I pay tribute to both sides of the House for their contributions to it. It is not worth trying to save lives at high expense if those lives are not likely to be lost. I use an example that has nothing to do with the nuclear industry. A debate has been going on in the letters page of *The Economist*. Someone pointed out that, if every baby carried on an aeroplane had its own seat, the cost of saving a life would be $2,500 million.

I believe that, in the nuclear industry, mainly because of public fallacies, people have been required to spend hundreds of millions of pounds to save lives that are not

at risk. I do not know whether I exaggerate by saying that, if my body was a by-product of the nuclear industry, it would not be allowed out into the atmosphere. I suspect that my natural radioactivity is about 10 times the level of that of a nuclear plant. Greenpeace would probably say that that was not exactly right.

When I was at the Department of Employment and was responsible for health and safety at work, public demands were being made that the Government should set levels of radiation emissions which were so far below the level of natural emissions, not only from the sun but from natural products of our geology, that it was laughable. People gain prominence as environmental and health campaigners by promoting such a policy, yet we accept the much greater risk when we ride a bike or motor bike, go for a walk or drive a car or travel in an aeroplane or train, which is so much safer. The politician in me boggles at the duplicity of some of those who retail ideas and fantasies as if they were facts.

If we were having a full-scale debate on energy we would start with energy conservation. Reducing the waste of energy is the fastest and cheapest way of cutting the amount that we have to generate. However, the date is not about energy in general but about the effect of the nuclear industry in the north-west. I pay tribute to the people in the north-west for all that they have done.

I hope that the THORP reprocessing plant will open. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) put the point fairly. If any hon. Member has alternative views on the facts that the figures that he gave, I hope that he will give them to the House. On the facts and figures that the House has so far, there is every justification for THORP starting as soon as possible, fulfilling the contracts and turning nuclear reprocessing into a worthwhile industry for Britain, reprocessing both our own by-products of nuclear generation and those of others.

I should like to see Britain continue to produce between 20 and 40 per cent. of our electricity from coal. I cannot narrow it down much further, because we do not have sufficient information. I am not entirely against the use of gas for electricity generation. We must remember that during my lifetime the move from town gas to natural gas was associated with gas taking a dominant position in domestic heat generation. In effect, that is what a great deal of electricity generation is at second hand. The idea that we shall continue with the dash for gas and make it a stampede is false. I expect that in 25 years the known gas reserves will still be 25 years' supply. The regional electricity companies are not likely to put many more of their eggs into that basket because the effects of going for 15-year price contracts has had a sufficient impact on other sources of electricity.

I finish with a comment about not the north-west but south-east London. In a ward in my constituency I have unemployment running at about 60 per cent. If the cost of maintaining extra jobs in the mines runs at £100 million a month for 25,000 jobs I calculate that that is £4,000 per job per month.

In Woolwich, in the centre of the borough of Greenwich, £6 million a year for three years would make it possible to regenerate the royal arsenal site outside my constituency, where at one stage there were 70,000 jobs. That is now down to 1,000—equivalent to a pit. Those 1,000 jobs will be gone in one year. If we could have a tiny share of the money that is being discussed in the coal review, we could reduce unemployment to 15 or 12 per cent. or the national average of about 10 per cent. It would make a great deal of difference.

In my constituency I also have tower blocks which were built in the past 25 years. Individuals, many on income support, many elderly and some one-parent families, have to pay £20 a week——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I know that the hon. Gentleman produced an allusion in his first sentence, but he cannot continue to develop it.

Mr. Bottomley: If electricity from the nuclear plant in the north-west could be more competitive with gas, so that it costs my constituents about £4 per week to be warm, rather than £20 a week to be cold, the north-west will contribute to the welfare of people throughout the country. That is my second reason for contributing to the debate.

9.30 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I shall be brief, but I feel that I should contribute to the debate because the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) included in his remarks the present review of electricity generation and manning, and I appreciate the chance to make this brief intervention.

There has had to be an energy review because of the Government's policy of privatising electricity generation without making proper provision for all the means used to generate electricity and without establishing a fair playing field. Gas producers have a 15-year contract with the generators, but the coal industry has only a three to five-year contract, which makes it obvious that there is a difference between the treatment of the two contracts and some unfairness.

We have had to review the way in which electricity is produced because of the way in which the colleagues of the hon. Member for Wyre decided to close collieries. The announcement that 31 collieries would close immediately rightly generated the wrath of the people.

I wish that the hon. Member for Wyre had stayed on the subject of the impact of the nuclear industry in the north-west. He was the only Member to deride the coal industry. I would be prepared to listen to him if there were proof that electricity produced from nuclear power were cheaper than that produced from coal, but there has been no evidence of that. Coal prices have decreased during the past six or seven years, and there is evidence to show that the price of coal will continue to fall in coming years, so no one, either inside the House or outside it, can say that coal is not the cheapest way to provide energy in this country.

Mr. Mans: The hon. Gentleman says that coal is cheaper, but what are the prices? I suggested that electricity generated from nuclear power costs between 1·2p and 1·4p per kWh. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to give the figure for coal.

Mr. O'Brien: Reams of evidence have been produced in the House, outside it and in the Select Committee on Energy, and it is clear that in the long term, coal is the cheapest way to produce electricity in this country. Had the Government pursued the flue vent system being developed at Grimethorpe—a village that is being crucified because of colliery closure—energy could have been produced without resulting in emissions into the

[Mr. O'Brien]

atmosphere and the problems that they cause. We have to review energy production costs because the hon. Member for Wyre voted for the privatisation of electricity generation, which generated our problems. If he wants to search his conscience, he should think carefully about what he did in the past. We are in this position because of the Government's policy. Our coal is cheaper than the coal that we import and it will continue to be cheaper in the next century.

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister shakes his head, but I hope that he will take note of the evidence. We should support the coal industry, not kill it.

9.34 pm

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) had an opportunity to speak, because the debate would have been unbalanced had there not been a contribution from the voice of the coal industry. He made a number of points that needed to be made and I shall not go over them again.

It is customary to congratulate the hon. Member who is successful in securing a place in the Consolidated Fund Bill debate. If I congratulate the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) on nothing else, I must congratulate him on the time at which we started this debate. Bitter experience in the House has shown that nothing is more miserable than getting up at 2 am or 3 am for a Consolidated Fund Bill debate. This debate is important and I understand why anyone with nuclear concerns—few hon. Members in the north-west are not concerned about the nuclear industry—would wish to raise the matter in this evening's debate.

We are preoccupied about three aspects of the industry: first, employment; secondly, the important question of THORP at Sellafield; and thirdly, both the energy review, about which much has been said—I hope to hear from the Minister about it, if not tonight then not too late in the new year—and the nuclear review to take place in 1994. I imagine that there will be some difficulty in unscrambling one review from the other.

We talk in terms of some 30,000 people being directly employed "on site" in the nuclear industry in the north-west. That is roughly the number of miners presently in jeopardy in the coal industry. Purely by statistical chance, more than 100,000 people are engaged in the nuclear industry and its associated employment in the north-west and 100,000 people are engaged in mining and its related activities. It is not particularly helpful to such a debate to trade off one set of figures against another, because the orders of magnitude are roughly the same.

Monday seems to be the day when Members of Parliament go to Sellafield. I was there last Monday and the Minister was there today. I was greatly impressed by what I described to the local press as the paranoiac character of the preoccupation of the management of British Nuclear Fuels and the unions with safety at the plant. Perhaps because of years of misrepresentation or long periods of insecurity and uncertainty, they have been more than reasonably concerned with establishing safety and fail-safe procedures. Anyone who talks to them, listens and watches cannot but be impressed by that. We must recognise that the programme has been developed on a cushion of financing which most industrial developments would be happy to deal with. There has been a tremendous amount of cost-plus external finance.

Serious points must be made about how best to deal with nuclear waste and about the price of uranium. As the man asking the way to Cork was told, had we had another idea, we might not have started from here. However, the plant has 10 years' employment ready to be taken advantage of and a considerable amount of work beyond that, although it is not clear whether it will be at maximum capacity. Anyone who visits Sellafield and looks at the pond where nuclear waste is lying, waiting to be treated—there is about two years' worth of work already in situ—can see the attractiveness of the proposition to BNFL management.

I welcome the caution of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. It is a number of years since it carried out its lengthy and full inquiry, which need not be replicated unless there are good reasons for doing so. The Opposition will not advocate the blind replication of such an inquiry. We are happy to stand by the views of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on the matter, as we take it to be independent, rigorous and thorough. If something else is required, we shall support that, but at present I am not certain that such an option is either necessary or desirable. I speak as a layman and await with interest the outcome of the inspectorate's deliberations.

In the short term—in the nuclear time scale that is taken to be 50 years—there are alternative options for dealing with nuclear waste. Scottish Nuclear has said that it favours the dry storage option, but that can only be for 50 years, after which time it will have to reconsider the position.

THORP at Sellafield has important employment implications. My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is never slow to advocate the case of those employees. When considering employment, not just at Sellafield, but across the whole of the north-west, it is important to raise two issues: the tremendous number of jobs at stake and, equally important, the fact that the training programmes of so many of the companies and organisations involved in nuclear power are second to none in that region.

It is no accident that public enterprise has been the engine for training across the country. The importance of the training programmes can also be seen at Rosyth and Devonport dockyards. In both parts of the country, public money has been put behind young apprentices to create the skilled work force of today. When organisations are privatised, problems are created, as there is no will on the part of so many private companies to train people to the standard that BNFL and other firms in the north-west regard as central to their purpose.

The nuclear review could be prejudiced over the next few weeks by the handling of the so-called coal review. I say "so-called" because one cannot consider one element of the energy equation in isolation from another. It was unhelpful that the over-zealous nature of some hon. Members today when defending the nuclear industry meant that they dismissed the claim for coal. That claim is considerable because of its effect on the balance of payments and because, over the past five or six years, the coal industry—unlike any other—has not raised its prices, thus enabling the fledgling private electricity companies to

receive a bonus from one of their major energy sources which was far in excess of anything that they had anticipated.

The coal industry shows all the signs of being able to enter the next century while consistently reducing its prices. Therefore, the forecast of the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) that the coal industry's contribution will be 20 to 40 per cent. comes nowhere near the figure that the industry is capable of producing.

Mr. Mans: The Labour party agrees that we should stabilise CO_2 emissions by the year 2000. How does the hon. Gentleman propose to do that if he is advocating that more than 40 to 45 per cent. of our electricity needs should be met by coal?

Mr. O'Neill: The Government's own guidelines anticipate that it will be possible for the generating companies to emit levels of carbon dioxide compatible with the targets to which the Government have committed themselves internationally, to apply between now and the end of the century. Over the next few months the Government must invest in clean coal technologies, which are at the prototype stage. If the Government introduce those technologies they will be in a position greatly to improve environmental conditions.

There are downsides for the environment from all forms of energy generation. Even allowing for deep storage facilities there will be problems with the disposal of waste. Part of the problem arises from the nuclear industry's accounting-by-mirrors during the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. In other words, the industry is reaping the whirlwind of years of over-optimism. At the same time, a number of its plants are working efficiently. Only in the past week we learned that 22 per cent. of our electricity is now generated by nuclear means. That suggests that the industry has been able to come to terms with certain technological and environmental considerations, not to mention the vagaries of the coal regime.

The north-west makes a considerable contribution to the energy needs of this country. The industry there is a major employer and contributor to technological innovation and training. We pay tribute to the efforts of the many people engaged in it, and we hope that they will be able to continue those efforts for many years to come.

9.46 pm

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) for raising this important subject for debate. It has been a good debate, in which hon. Members have fully explored the issues.

Nuclear power is a significant component of the United Kingdom's generating mix and a major employer in the north-west. Nuclear power does not produce acid rain, and it can play a significant role in combating the greenhouse effect. I therefore suggest that, far from being part of the environmental problem, it is part of the solution to that problem.

The hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall), who briefly attended our debate, made a sedentary reference to Chernobyl. I remember it only too well because I had to come to the House and make a statement the day the news broke. So no one is more conscious than I am of the dangers that can be associated with improperly run and inspected nuclear plants.

There is no point in supporting nuclear power regardless of the costs of the power generated by nuclear means. For that and other reasons, we have made it clear that our support of nuclear power is conditional on the industry being economic and maintaining its already high safety standards. Areas such as these will be covered by the 1994 nuclear review.

There has been much reference, implicit and explicit, to the coal review. The House will understand that it would be wrong of me even to allow myself to be accused of prejudging the results of that review, but it should be borne in mind that closing down the nuclear Magnox stations would mean not only losing the revenue from electricity sales but bringing forward the decommissioning of the stations and hence the reprocessing of spent fuel. The cost to the public purse of any early end to the Magnox station operation could be heavy, and there would inevitably be redundancies in the nuclear industry.

BNFL, which makes the fuel for Magnox stations, has estimated that nearly 3,000 jobs would be lost within two years, principally at its own Magnox stations and at the Springfield plant in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre, where Magnox fuel is manufactured. The Government will take into account those and other factors when considering the review.

Much has been said in the debate about the relative costs of one means of generation as against another. It is generally recognised by the House that the calculations are complex and depend critically on the assumptions made and, not surprisingly, the proponents of each form of generation attempt to argue the case using statistics and assumptions that best suit their particular argument.

I make no criticism of that, but I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) for his sympathy as I seek to chart my way through the different arguments. I am not in any way seeking to be critical of other hon. Friends or of Opposition Members, but it is interesting that the only speaker to refer to the interests of the consumer was my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley). At the end of the day, we must conduct our examination of energy policy in the context of consumer benefits rather than in the context of benefits to different groups of producers. I am sure that the House will bear that in mind when it considers the review.

Lest the House or those outside reach the conclusion that I have joined the feeling running through speeches, that the solution to the review is to dump gas or squeeze it out of the equation, I do not want—any more than the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neil)—to anticipate any conclusion that might be reached on the role of gas. I simply note that the regulator has something to say about the economics of gas stations recently and that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley remarked, there is something to be said for providing and encouraging diversity of energy supply.

Calling a halt to the use of gas in electricity generation, as is sometimes suggested, would have serious consequences for the offshore oil and gas industry. More than 20 per cent. of all industrial investment last year was North sea-related. A considerable proportion of that investment was specifically in gas.

If the hon. Member for Clackmannan thinks that not proceeding with gas stations is a cost-free option, I urge him to study the employment consequences for the North

[Mr. Tim Eggar]

sea oil and gas industry in north-east Scotland and north-east England, and for the many companies that supply that industry.

A number of hon. Members referred to my visit to Sellafield today. I spent a lot of time discussing and visiting that plant, and endorse the remarks of the hon. Member for Clackmannan. We have heard a lot recently from environmental activists, who have been rolling out all the old arguments against the nuclear industry. In particular, they have concentrated them on their battle against the thermal oxide reprocessing plant. Their arguments carry no more weight now than they did in the original public inquiry some years ago. Many of the claims made by environmental groups have been, to put it mildly, terminologicaly inexact.

We have been told by those groups, for example, that THORP's economics have been threatened by an increase in projected decommissioning costs from £750 million to £900 million. They are wrong. The former figure was in 1989 money, the latter in today's money. The real cost, and the project's economics, are unaffected. We have been told that THORP will cost the electricity consumer a lot of money. Again, that is wrong. The nuclear price uplift is set by a fixed formula in the contracts, which last until 1998. The rest of the price is set in the competitive market. Nuclear Electric simply cannot pass on increases in the cost of reprocessing. Furthermore, Nuclear Electric made a commercial decision last year to contract for more reprocessing in THORP.

We have been told also that THORP will be uneconomic for the United Kingdom or the taxpayer. They are wrong again. According to the latest advice from BNFL, abandoning the project would cost the United Kingdom as a whole over £1 billion and 3,000 jobs, even if there were no requirement to repay overseas customers their investment.

The figures quoted by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) are familiar, and I believe that they reflect advice from BNFL. My officials have discussed them with BNFL; we cannot verify them in detail, but we have no reason to believe that they are inaccurate.

The outrageous allegation has been made that German customers of BNFL are ready to cancel their contracts. I understand that the two German companies specifically mentioned by Greenpeace have confirmed to BNFL that they intend to honour their contracts. The BBC has publicly withdrawn its comments about the contracts, and I find it inexplicable that Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth have not followed its example. If those organisations are serious environmental bodies and want to be treated as such, they must have some regard for the truth.

It has also been alleged that THORP has benefited from illegal EC state aid. There have been no secret subsidies and no cover-ups; no payments have been made or promised to BNFL under schedule 12 to the Electricity Act 1989. Loan guarantees for BNFL are made under the Nuclear Industry (Finance) Act 1977, which was promoted by the Labour party. The existing guaranteed loans to BNFL are from the European investment bank and Euratom. Hon. Members may find amusing, but somewhat far-fetched, the suggestion that the European Commission would itself have made illegal loans.

Mr. Mans: Will my hon. Friend answer my earlier question about whether the energy review will take account of the need to stabilise carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2000?

Mr. Eggar: I can assure my hon. Friend that environmental concerns will be taken into account. If he studies the evidence given by Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, he will observe that their arguments are extremely curious: for example, they want us to reduce greenhouse emissions, but they also want us to burn more coal. Those aims, surely, are mutually contradictory.

We have had a good debate. Let me say to the hon. Member for——

In accordance with Mr. Speaker's ruling—[Official Report, 31 January 1983; Vol. 36, c. 19*]—the debate was concluded.*

Pornographic Telephone Services

9.57 pm

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): I make no apology for returning to the subject of telephone premium-rate services. As hon. Members will recall, for seven years I have campaigned—along with others—to clean up what have now been dubbed sex lines or pornographic telephone services.

I have achieved one or two successes. The original group chat lines—which led young people to run up enormous bills for their parents to pay—have been discontinued. Following a tortuous process lasting a couple of years, the Independent Committee for the supervision of the Standards of Telephone Services—the supervisory body—came round to the view that there was something unwholesome about chat lines, and introduced a compensation scheme which had the long-term effect of pricing them out of the market. There was, however, no moral thrust in the attitude to the changes of either the committee or Ministers.

Another positive development is the availability of an opt-out, enabling subscribers to go on to digital exchanges. I believe that such exchanges now cover some 70 per cent. of the telephone network, and that by 1994 they will cover 100 per cent. That is fine, but it still does not go as far as I would wish. As I said as long ago as 1986, I think that we should move to an opt-in arrangement in respect of the services—including what I would regard as respectable, if costly, services.

The other recent positive move has been number separation, on which my view is somewhat ambivalent. I do not think that pornographic lines should exist in the first place, but if no one is moral enough to do anything about them, and if they are to remain, I accept that the separation of their numbers from those of the more respectable services to which I have referred is a positive move.

In spite of all that, these corrupting services have survived—indeed, because of the gap in the market, their number has increased in some parts of the country. I refer specifically to what are known as one-to-one services, by which young women—typically, and sadly, in our poorer areas—are engaged to do what they call "talking dirty" to a wide variety of sexual deviants and inadequate males who, phone in, all times of the night. That is one of the most corrupting aspects of the services, and I shall refer to it at greater length later in my speech.

What finally persuaded me to use my slot in the Consolidated Fund debate to raise this issue after so many years and after so many words uttered in the Chamber, were the recent events in Hillingdon, where a 17-year-old girl was raped. Those events reinforce my gut feeling about the whole business of pornographic telephone services. I hasten to add that I can produce no scientific or academic evidence to suggest a correlation between the growth in the services and the increase in crimes against women. It is a feeling that I have. If we in this place are about anything, we are about the feelings—things that we cannot touch, hold or prove, statistically or otherwise—that we get when we deal with people. I have such a feeling about these telephone services.

The lawyers among us would say, "Mr. Lewis has it wrong. Nothing was proved in the court case that followed the rape." What happened was that defence counsel—presumably seeking in some way to mitigate the problem that his client faced—told the court that his client had spent more than four hours on a chatline before committing the crime. That seems to me to point us firmly in the direction of the conclusion for which I have argued for some considerable time.

If defence counsel was correct, the Government and their creature, ICSTIS, stand condemned, and I am fortified in my belief that there is a correlation between crime and chatlines. It is time that Ministers took that correlation on board and commissioned the study that I believe is needed. That study, perhaps under the aegis of the Home Office, not the Department of Trade and Industry, could undertake academic work into the whole business and perhaps prove or disprove any of my theories, however important they might be for Ministers.

Looking through my files over the weekend before preparing my speech, I noted that, over the time to which I have referred, I have dealt directly with 27 Ministers of the present Government. There have always been good reasons—commercial, moral and others—why nothing could be done, and nothing has been done save to rely upon the Independent Committee for the supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services. The Government are in favour of self-regulation. Ministers believe in self-regulation throughout the range of our activities, but the time has come when something different has to be done. I hope that, by the time I reach the end of my speech, I will have proved that self-regulation certainly has not helped much in this case.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I have been in contact with British Telecom and ICSTIS on this issue. I was told that, in this country, although we have the technology to bar certain numbers, some people are getting around the rules by phoning the Dutch Antibes and thereby, totally out of the scope of this country, gaining access to such "services".

Does the hon. Gentleman think that action should be taken in respect of subsidiarity? We might be flouting European directives by using technology to bar those numbers. The laws of the European Community are far more liberal than in this country.

Mr. Lewis: The hon. Gentleman takes me into waters that I do not necessarily want to swim in at this stage. Call barring is effective, and it can be requested if one is on a digital exchange. Before we talk about the services that one can key into on the continent, we have to put our own house in order. I do not think that our house has been in order in any moral terms in the past seven years. We must put that right. Other hon. Members might want to go further and talk about the continental television programmes that can now be tuned into. It must be said that some are dubious. Indeed, it is now easy to transmit pornography on video screens. That is a whole new ball game. I should like to persuade Ministers to reconsider the arguments that I have been putting forward for, as I have repeated once or twice, seven long years.

I do not believe that self- regulation has worked. The problems that the hon. Gentleman and others have been drawing to our attention for some time reinforce that point. Also, some people tend to be blasé about the matter. They do not consider that it is as important as the problems of whole industries. That point was highlighted

[Mr. Lewis]

in a recent parliamentary answer to me by the Under-Secretary of State for Technology, the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh).

I asked what was happening about telephone information services, and I was told:

"The independent committee for the standards of telephone information services—ICSTIS—is an effective regulator of the premium rate telephone service industry. The ICSTIS code is kept continuously under review and it was further strengthened this year. Therefore, we believe adult premium rate telephone services are strictly controlled."—[*Official Report*, 2 December 1992; Vol. 215, c. *251*.]

That stretches credulity too far.

I know that you will frown upon me, Madam Speaker, if I use props, but I seek your indulgence for 30 seconds while I hold aloft a Sunday newspaper which offers thousands of adverts, page after page after page that leave nothing to be desired. I would not read out the worst titles because of your sensibilities, Madam Speaker, but there are one or two that I may just about get away with—for instant, "Instant arousal and quick relief"; or "Quickest instant relief"; or the very naughty one, "Try my knickers on."

They are not the worst, but they appear in a national newspaper that can be bought off the shelf alongside *The Independent on Sunday*, the *Sunday People*, the *Sunday Mirror* or *The Sunday Times*. If that does not represent ineffective control by ICSTIS, I do not know what does. I certainly do not accept the answer given to me by the Under-Secretary of State for Technology a few weeks ago.

I regret that ICSTIS appears, when challenged by hon. Members and by the public, to make excuses and to be an apologist for the telephone systems. It is also inadequate, physically, to do the job of monitoring when one considers the thousands of adverts that appear. It is funded to the tune of about £1·3 million a year, it has a staff of about 25, but it is supposed to deal with thousands and thousands of numbers and 350 operators. How can that organisation supervise and deal adequately with an industry that is worth £200 million?

What is ICSTIS about? Who funds it? It is funded by British Telecom, Racal-Vodac and Mercury—to Mercury's credit, it has backed out of all those pornographic services. BT tells us that it cannot, but Mercury has.

It is worth remembering what the chairman of ICSTIS said in the *Mail on Sunday* on 25 February 1990:

"I couldn't care a hoot. Why shouldn't people engage in private conversations about pornography?"

He said much the same thing last weekend on BBC Radio Leeds, when I challenged him on a down-the-line interview. The reason that there is no control, that the chairman of ICSTIS is an apologist for the services and why we need to address the problem rather than that voluntary organisation is that the systems are growing. The one-to-one services to which I have referred employ women in our poorer areas who daily verbally prostitute themselves on the altar of profit. The users, who abuse those women, are sexually inadequate men, typically, who use that service all hours of the day and night.

Another reason why the chairman of ICSTIS and his committee are wrong and should be doing something more positive is that section 43(1) of the Telecommunications Act 1984 specifically forbids talk that debases and demeans. That law is being broken every minute, hour and day of the week, yet the chairman of the supervisory body says that he does not give a hoot, and that he will supervise as best he can. I do not think that is acceptable. It should not be acceptable to the House, even if it is acceptable to Ministers.

Throughout the long period during which the campaign has been running, there has been little support from the Government. I regret that, just before the election, the Competition and Services (Utilities) Bill was allowed to pass through the House without tackling the abuses that I have described. I regret that hon. Members who told me, "We support you; it is right; we should not have these services," were in the wrong Lobby when the vote took place. I moved amendments in Committee that would have rendered tonight's debate unnecessary.

I regret that Ministers have failed to respond to the many organisations that have campaigned on the issue. I shall name a few. It is a terrible pity that the Minister is preoccupied at the moment, because one or two are near to home: Care Concern, the Conservative Party Family Association, the Salvation Army, Portsmouth Family Concern and Tatton Christian Concern, which is in the Minister's own constituency.

There have been times when I have thought that Labour Front-Bench spokesmen have been less than energetic in their support of the campaign, but at least our manifesto at the last election contained a commitment that we would properly tackle and control these services.

I do not want to pre-empt the Minister's speech, but he will probably repeat that Ministers have confidence in ICSTIS. Their confidence is misplaced. I have mentioned the newspaper adverts and have accurately described how the business is growing in a way that the House should be ashamed of.

Evidence has been given to ICSTIS and a previous Home Secretary by insiders—women who have worked on the one-to-ones and journalists who have taken jobs in order to gather stories. A little over 18 months ago, a journalist infiltrated a one-to-one chatline company in Manchester. His evidence was presented to the Department of Trade and Industry, the Home Office, ICSTIS and Oftel, but little was done to control the organisation. It was closed down for a short time, but then the principals moved somewhere else and continued to make their grubby money doing much the same thing in another part of town.

It is interesting to consider one or two extracts from the 13-page report. I shall read out four of them which I think hon. Ladies would be horrified to read, but I have cleaned up the quotations for the purposes of my speech.

The journalist said that, for the first shift, she reported to a supervisor, who handed her a notice which was given to all chatline operators. She was shown into a room of perhaps 26 young women around a wooden rail into which the telephones were plugged. She wrote:

"The first impression—how grubby, how filthy—what a hell hole—phones ringing everywhere. 'Pick'em up girls' is being shouted by a lady. In a funny way, it looks like a rundown schoolroom, with a bench full of pen scribbles and graffiti going around the room—dirty cups, overflowing ashtrays, milk, tea, papers. The walls are covered with what was a light blue carpet now veneered in heavy nicotine stain. Black stone grubby floor. Very seedy and mucky."

That is the description of the place in which the women were working.

She continued:

"The girl I sit next to says, 'Now we don't have any sex talk, drugs, foul language talk or anything racialist, tell them you can't put up with it.' That was the total sum of my training."

The latest code of practice to which the Minister will probably refer demands a grand total of four hours training, but that was all the training that the journalist received.

When she finally had to engage in the talk-dirty conversations, she queried with one supervisor why she had been given her previous instruction. The answer was that they had to be careful with newcomers because they might be journalists who had come to do a story.

The following extract is short. After she had taken about 30 calls in approximately six hours, she wrote:

"My mouth is permanently dry and I get a terrible stomach ache. By the end of the night, I feel that all my hair is being pulled out."

She goes to the toilet but that is filthy too, with

"no loo seat, cream walls splashed with brown and written on".

I have scored out the dirty words. She continues:

"'Today I hate phone perverts'"

has been scrawled on the wall. There is

"no soap or towel, paper and fag ends everywhere. A dog . . . howls outside. We are locked in . . . More explicit sex you couldn't wish to hear. I feel mentally screwed, talking dirty for men's pleasure . . . It can't be right.!"

This is from a hard-bitten journalist who has probably seen everything.

The final extract, written after four shifts, reads:

"I can't take any more . . . and as I leave at 9 o'clock I wonder if there is a normal world outside this seedy debauched hellhole. I thought I was fairly worldly wise, but after four nights at"

the company,

"I realise I know nothing about the perversions of sick men of all ages and walks of life. Will I ever be able to walk into a supermarket again, and look at those men doing their weekly shop without wondering if they were one of my callers?"

That was written by a hard-bitten journalist of mature years who has seen almost everything. As the extracts prove, even she was completely shocked by what she had to endure.

Let us consider the effect if she had been a woman—as most of them are—of less mature years, in economic difficulties, probably on the dole, probably a single parent and doing the work merely for money for her family. What I have read out is typical of the experience of women who work in such services and the places from where they are delivered.

It is a sad reflection on the moral standing of the Government that the services have so prospered since privatisation. It is doubly sad that many of the 27 Ministers about whom I have already spoken have teenage daughters. The Prime Minister has a teenage daughter. The Leader of the House, whom I tackled a week or two ago on the issue, has two teenage daughters. When Ministers next see those daughters, I want them to think of those young women, and especially of the Hillingdon girl to whom I referred. I want the worthy citizens who have been appointed to ICSTIS to think about those young women. More than anything, I want the Government, starting with the Minister tonight, to shoulder their responsibilities and to do something once and for all against these services.

10.25 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): I have listened with interest to the speech by the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis), whom I have heard speaking on this topic before. He addressed a meeting in my constituency on the same subject, with my full welcome. I understand the concern that has been expressed by hon. Members in the House and elsewhere for some time.

The Government agree that adult premium rate services need to be regulated. Despite the claims by the hon. Member for Worsley, I hope that I shall be able to demonstrate to the House that a system of regulation is in place which effectively controls adult premium rate services.

The issues raised by adult premium rate services come into two broad categories: first, the content of the message services; and, secondly, their accessibility. With regard to content, we have already made provision in the Telecommunications Act 1984 for dealing with the danger of obscenity over the telephone network. Section 43 states that it is a criminal offence to send by means of public telecommunications system messages that are

"grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character".

That law is reflected in the contracts that British Telecom has with the providers of premium rate services. These require the companies to operate within the code of practice drawn up by the Independent Committee for the supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services. Articles 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 of the code lay down that the services must not

"involve the use of foul language or debase, degrade or demean"

or

"cause grave offence by reason of their sexual, sadistic, violent or repulsive content."

If service providers breach the code of practice and therefore break their contract, they can be cut off. I shall explain in detail later how the controls are implemented and the roles of Oftel and ICSTIS.

For the moment, I emphasise that, as a result of the implementation of the controls, the content of adult premium rate services is, by generally accepted standards, fairly mild. It is certainly milder than that accepted in other media. The messages may be distasteful or banal, or in some instances laughable. We may be amazed that people are willing to spend so much money on them, but where no laws are being broken, it is not the inclination of the Government to tell people what they can or cannot spend their money on.

Mr. Lewis: The Minister spoke about people spending their money on these services. I think that he will agree that the bulk of the money is spent by people who use somebody else's telephone. If he were to listen to some of the wider range of services over a weekend, he would find that the callers are mostly security men working in other people's factories.

Mr. Hamilton: I know that the House authorities have already made it impossible for hon. Members to make use of the services from their telephones. I do not know what proportion was accounted for by telephone calls at the taxpayer's expense from here, but we have at least plugged that loophole.

[Mr. Hamilton]

The hon. Member for Worsley referred to a link between sexual crimes and pornography, and to a recent case in which a rapist was discovered to have made much use of adult telephone services. When we hear of sexual crime in which the perpetrator has been a user of pornographic materials, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that the materials in some way contributed to the crime.

The question of a link between pornography and sexual crime has been extensively researched. Certainly, in the case of soft pornography, no evidence has been found that there is a causative link. A more plausible explanation is that those likely to commit sexual crimes will find their excitement in one way or another and banning any particular form of pornography, or even all pornography, will make no difference. Clearly, the issue extends far beyond the availability of premium rate services to the general question of the balance between the freedom of expression and the avoidance of obscenity.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Is it not a fact that, although research in this country showed no direct link, a great volume of research elsewhere does show a direct link? Is it not also a fact that, whenever the police visit the homes of those suspected of or caught molesting children or raping women, they almost invariably find a collection of pornographic material? The great majority of people believe that pornographic material feeds perverts. The Government should tighten the Obscene Publications Act 1959 to remove some of the more obscene examples of pornographic material.

Mr. Hamilton: I fully accept that the point of view expressed by my hon. Friend is widely shared. In these chicken and egg cases, it is always difficult to know where the causative link lies or the direction in which it flows —if a causative link can flow.

I fully admit that there is room for argument. However, questions about obscene publications have traditionally been matters that the House has considered as conscience issues and the Government have not sought to impose their will on the House more generally. However, I fully accept that there is great concern about the issue, as my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) said, and there is certainly more than a small amount of room for arguing that a causative link can be found.

On behalf of the Government, all I can say is that, as it cannot be proved with the certainty that we think appropriate for legislation to be further tightened, more research needs to be carried out, especially as we will be legislating for this country and not for other countries.

The other broad area of concern with adult premium rate services is their accessibility, a point made by the hon. Member for Worsley in his intervention a moment ago. Perhaps the most worrying aspect is not their content per se, but the ease of access to the services for non-adults.

The vast majority of households have telephones. While parents can usually exercise control over their children's television watching beyond the 9 pm watershed, and there are point-of-sale controls over the purchase of published material by minors, it is more difficult to control access to the telephone.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Given the difficulties with such controls, why has the Minister not listened to the submission made by the Director General of Telecommunications in 1989 suggesting that premium rate telephone calls and phone lines should be subject to an opt-in principle? That would make control easy and would overcome the Minister's difficulties.

Mr. Hamilton: Every effort is made to advise customers of opting-out facilities, and BT sends out leaflets with its bills. The opting-out facility is provided free. It could hardly be easier to arrange opting out. In the circumstances, we believe that the law as it stands and the code of practice under it are sufficient for the time being.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): If I recall correctly, have not the Government proposed certain changed in legislation governing trade union contributions to the Labour party, stating that there should be an opt-in? Why should there not be a similar opting in for telephone customers? The trade is disgusting and nothing that the Minister says will convince me otherwise.

Mr. Hamilton: I do not seek to equate the two activities in relation to the degree of public esteem or probity and I accept the strength of feeling that the hon. Gentleman has expressed.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): Are the Government concerned about the number of crimes committed against women and children? Are they concerned that pornography in all its forms is much more accessible today? Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government have a responsibility to protect women and children and do something about the filthy material which is so readily available and on which a great and expensive industry is based? Will he join me in deploring newspapers that print advertisements of the sort to which the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) referred?

Mr. Hamilton: I know what a doughty fighter my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton, a neighbour of mine, has been for decency during the years that she has been a Member. I applaud her fight. I have much in common with what my hon. Friend has advocated for many years.

It is true that society has changed—in many respects, for the worse—and that includes its social morality. We must accept that not everyone agrees with our view of the world. I fully agree with my hon. Friend that soft pornography is much more freely available today than it was, certainly when I was at school in the 1960s. No one could view with equanimity the decline in standards which has taken place in society generally since that time and, indeed, since much earlier.

That brings me back to the question of the causative link between such publications and sexual crime. I deplore, as do the Government, offences against women and children which are especially revolting and which all sane and decent-thinking people will deplore as strongly as they possibly can. However, we must accept that times change, and society looks at publications today in a somewhat different way from the way in which it did 20 or 30 years ago. That is not to say that I condone or agree with that approach, but the Government are limited by what is generally acceptable in society. We have strongly taken the view that hard pornography and other forms of pornography should not be freely or legally imported into this country, even after the single market comes into effect on 1 January.

We take seriously the enforcement of the law tht exists at present. The question whether we should toughen the law in terms of the definition of obscenity or other matters arising out of the Obscene Publications Act takes us beyond the scope of this debate, which is about one particular form of activity that my hon. Friend and others find distasteful.

Mrs. Winterton: I should like briefly to correct my hon. Friend on one point, although it is outside the brief of this debate. It is legal to import into the United Kingdom hard pornography via satellite television. It is illegal for people in their own homes, who receive such pornography, to record it and use it again, but it is legal to import it. That is due to an agreement which was made within the European Community when one of our Ministers at some stage signed something, not understanding precisely the impact that it would have.

Mr. Hamilton: I cannot accept that one of my colleagues failed to understand what he was doing when negotiating in the European Community. I always avoid the difficulty by saying no whenever I go to the Council of Ministers, so I never get into such scrapes.

I assumed that my hon. Friend was talking about publications, magazines, videos and so on. I stand corrected if my hon. Friend is right about satellite broadcasts. Undoubtedly, we will return to that matter on another occasion.

I revert to my speech. The other broad cause of anxiety, to which I referred earlier, is the accessibility of adult premium rate services, which the hon. Member for Worsley mentioned. Perhaps the most worrying aspect of such services is the ease with which non-adults can acquire access to the service. I agree that it is more difficult to control access to the telephone than to other services. Nevertheless, I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that we have made some significant advances in recent months and years in controlling access.

Another problem of access applies not only to adult services but to all premium rate services. Someone other than the telephone account holder may run up large bills using the services without the knowledge of the account holder. However, technology is bringing the means to solve the problems. Call barring is now available to some 60 per cent. of BT customers. That makes it possible to bar calls from a line to particular numbers or classes of numbers. That simply means that if those numbers are called from the line, no connection is made.

As the modernisation of the BT network continues, the availability of call barring will increase. It should be available to virtually all BT customers by the end of 1996. BT recently mounted a campaign to bring the facility to the attention of its customers by enclosing a leaflet with all its quarterly bills. As the hon. Member for Worsley brought a crop of leaflets, I have also brought the one that BT issued. It contains important information about the call barring service and how people can avail themselves of it. It is too early to say what impact call barring will have and how many customers will take up the offer, but I am sure that the facility will ease the fears of many worried parents who have written to Oftel or my Department.

The precision of call barring has been improved by the decision to confine adult premium rate services to one prefix—0898 on the BT network. Other premium rate services such as information services can still be accessed via BT on 0891 if the account holder so wishes, so access to those services, which are a beneficial and innovative use of the telephone network, need not be lost.

Another facility which is of value in controlling access is itemised billing. By specifying the number called, the duration of the call and its cost, itemised billing gives account holders knowledge of any misuse of their lines. That facility is available to 85 per cent. of BT's customers and should be almost universally available by the end of 1995.

Let me now give some detail about how the controls on adult services are implemented. A key role is played by ICSTIS in this. That independent body was set up in 1986 by BT and a trade association of the service providers. It is funded by the network operators. ICSTIS drew up a code of practice for premium rate services. That code has been under continual review and has been amended several times. The current edition published in October 1992 is the fifth.

ICSTIS administers the code and adjudicates on breaches. As I explained earlier, these are in effect breaches of the contract that the service provider has with the network operator. If ICSTIS decides that there has been a breach, two possible actions follow. If the breach involves a recorded message service, ICSTIS recommends to the network operator what the sanction should be. The network operators have agreed to carry out ICSTIS recommendations. These can mean the disconnection of the service or, in more serious cases, banning the service provider from operating any premium rate services.

In cases involving line services, where the caller speaks to someone over the telephone, ICSTIS makes its recommendation to Oftel.

Mr. Nigel Evans: My hon. Friend spoke about the code of conduct that providers of services ought to observe. I am worried about several points. One is the list of advertisements which the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) read out. Either the people are not getting what they think that they are paying for, and therefore are being conned, or they are getting what they are paying for, so the services ought to be banned. There is an inconsistency there.

Mr. Hamilton: As I have never availed myself of any of these telephone services, I cannot speak from personal experience about whether one is more likely to be conned or to be gratified. The intervention by my hon. Friend is fair. My guess is that people are more likely to be conned —if the code is being observed, the caller will not get what he expects.

Mr. William Ross: Some months ago, I received through the post a formidable array of material complaining about such phone calls, so I took the precaution of ringing up some services. The first service that I rang sounded rather like a cow calving, with moaning and groaning, and I have had a fair experience of that in my life. Some of the others were more explicit and, as the father of teenage children, I was quite disgusted by them. If the Minister has not availed himself of such services, will he go home and ring one—he cannot do it from his office, because he cannot dial out of this place, even for a useful service—and see what he thinks? Then he can speak from experience, and there is nothing better than that.

Mr. Hamilton: As the hon. Gentleman is probably aware, the subject is not my responsibility within the Department, and I am filling in for my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Technology, who is attending the Telecommunications Council in Brussels. I shall not take up the hon. Gentleman's kind offer, but will leave it to my hon. Friend—who shares my views on many things—to give me a second-hand report.

The Director General of Telecommunications has a statutory duty to consider representations about telecommunications services. In 1988, the director general's concern about some aspects of premium rate services led him to refer them for investigation to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The MMC's report in 1989 led to certain premium rate services—including one-to-one adult services and chatlines—being made the subject of new conditions in BT's licence.

Conditions 33a and 33b state that BT may not allow service providers to provide any of those so-called "controlled services", unless the director general has recognised a code of practice regulating the provision of such services. The director general recognised the ICSTIS code for that purpose.

One of the conditions of the code is that all providers of controlled services should maintain an adequate compensation fund. The purpose is to compensate account holders whose lines are used without their permission by others to access the premium rate services and who find themselves liable for large bills. The failure to comply with that condition on the compensation fund led the director general to close down chatline services.

The fund for one-to-one services is administered by an independent adjudicator within ICSTIS. In 1991, it made 234 compensation awards to customers with a value of just under £135,000. The current system of regulation includes a code of practice administered by an independent self-regulatory body, with the Office of Telecommunications involved for one-to-one services.

The same sanctions apply in both cases. In the case of recorded messages, the operator acts on the recommended action of ICSTIS, while for one-to-one services, Oftel requires the operator to take action against the service provider, on the recommendation of ICSTIS. ICSTIS comprises 12 people, including lawyers, a doctor, a justice of the peace, a trade union leader and members with experience in consumer affairs, social work and telecommunications. The committee employs a full-time staff of about 40 to carry out monitoring and to take action on breaches of the code.

ICSTIS deals with all premium rate services, not merely adult services, which make up only 18 per cent. of the sector and generated revenue of about £36 million in 1991, out of a total of £200 million for all premium rate services. In 1991, of 6,753 complaints received by ICSTIS, 845 only—about 13 per cent.—related to adult services. ICSTIS made adjudications in that year which led to 689 services being removed from the public network and an additional 373 being amended. Those figures include other services as well as the adult services under consideration in this debate.

I am informed by ICSTIS that about one third of the disconnected services were adult message services. ICSTIS's code covers the content of the messages and that of advertisements for them. Article 5.6.4 of the code lays down that such services cannot be advertised in free publications and that in those that are generally available—other than so-called "top-shelf" publications—advertisements must not contain

"pictures or words of a sexually suggestive nature which are unacceptably offensive."

Since that article was introduced in the code in May 1991, ICSTIS has conducted four major surveys of all publications in the "generally available" category. Those surveys took place in May and October 1991 and February and July 1992. In total, 400 advertisements were considered, resulting in 178 adjudications, of which 80 per cent. were adverse. Those resulted in access being barred to nearly 500 services. Since then, there has been a distinct improvement in the content of advertisements.

It is due to ICSTIS's activities as well as pressure from readers that a number of tabloid newspapers that once carried advertisements for the services no longer do so.

Mr. Nigel Evans: I declare that I have not used those services either, but I have spoken to people who have. Is my hon. Friend aware that the first minute or so of some calls is used to provide the caller with other numbers, whereby the service provider may be able to get out of those rules and regulations? The caller can simply ring those numbers and reach other services which the provider would not dare advertise in the normal way.

Mr. Hamilton: I shall take my hon. Friend's word for it.

A criticism that has been made of ICSTIS in the past is that service providers who are disconnected can simply set up again with new services. ICSTIS has always had the power to seek an assurance from service providers that their services would adhere to the code in the future. It now also has the power to recommend that the network operators ban service providers from operating a specific type of service or any premium rate service.

ICSTIS does not just react to complaints but undertakes its own monitoring of the adult services. In the case of live one-to-one adult services where the code's provisions are generally tougher than for recorded message services, there is a requirement on the service providers to tape record all conversations and deliver the tapes on request to ICSTIS.

Mr. Lewis: On the advertisements and the trawl that ICSTIS carries out from time to time, I should be glad to give the Minister the newspaper that I brandished earlier if he will confirm that 90 per cent. of the advertisements in it fall foul of ICSTIS's code of practice and that he will wipe them out overnight.

Many of those involved in this long and arduous argument believe that ICSTIS, as constituted, is not adequate to the task. The Minister talks about tapes being delivered, but the people who operate many of the one-to-one services either border on or are very much part of the criminal fraternity. They boast that they can get around any of the strictures that ICSTIS places on them.

In the next few weeks, journalists on a number of newspapers will come together with some powerful evidence to prove my point. Their evidence will hit the news-stands in short order once the work is completed. The Minister must be extremely careful not to be cajoled and coerced by the fluid conversation of the chairman of ICSTIS or those who advise him about ICSTIS's efficacy.

Mr. Hamilton: I shall certainly draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Technology, who will be interested in pursuing the matter with him.

ICSTIS also has the right to visit the premises of one-to-one service providers at any time to ensure that the code is complied with.

The Government are alive to the dangers posed by adult services. We are satisfied that there is a system that monitors and controls those services. The system sets standards for the content of the services, which are stricter than for other media. The monitoring mechanism enables breaches of the guidelines to be picked up. There is a series of sanctions including, for persistent offenders, the possibility of being banned completely from operating the services. Access is dealt with through the widening availability of call barring, itemised billing and controls on where the services can be advertised. The system of control is effective and not static. As I have demonstrated, it has changed to counter new threats in the area of adult services. Both the Director General of Telecommunications and my Department keep the matter under constant review.

10.54 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis), who has assiduously pursued the porn lines and raised, both in the House and the country, people's concern about the nature of those lines. The Government seem incapable of providing any regulation in line with what my hon. Friend rightly calls for and the country demands.

We know the Government's philosophy on all services provided by the private sector—that the free market can do no wrong. That philosophy is no better exemplified than by the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs and the absent Minister to whom he frequently referred, the Under-Secretary of State for Technology. I believe that the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs finds himself isolated in the House tonight. My hon. Friend the Member for Worsley rightly asked him questions, as he has done in previous debates over the years, about whether people should opt in and about the nature of the regulation. Sadly, those questions remain unanswered.

The Minister made a telling contribution on the nature of the Government's policy of opting in or opting out. It appears that it is in order for the Government to make trade union members opt in to ballots for trade unions and membership of trade unions, but it is wrong for the Government to force householders, home owners and others with telephones to opt in to services—obviously not porn services—but others that cost them much money. The line is drawn between what the Government want to force trade unions to do and what it wants to force on the free market, no matter how dubious the activities.

Mr. Nigel Evans: The hon. Member must accept that there is a distinct difference between having the choice of telephoning the numbers—which subscribers can do through their current lines—and forcing somebody to become a trade union member so that he has to opt out of that service.

Mr. Griffiths: We are talking about choice in both cases: the choice of people to opt in to trade unions and the choice of people to opt in to the sex, porn lines or other services. We want to stop such services, but we see no reason why people should not have the choice of opting in to any of the legitimate services—other than the porn lines—that are provided. That view was explicitly spelt out on page 37 of the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on chatline and message services that was presented in January 1989.

It was, of course, the service providers in the free market that told the commission that the proposals of the Director General of Telecommunications for making service providers

"responsible for contracting-in . . . in respect of chatlines were unacceptable."

Sadly, the Government listened to only one side of the argument. Typically, they listened only to that side of the argument that had the capital to back up its argument, rather than to ordinary people with fewer resources with legitimate concerns.

Let us consider the Government's action on porn lines and services. The Minister could hardly come to the House tonight and claim that the Government have taken tough action. I am glad that he did not try to do so, as the Government have taken no such action. The maximum fine for the porn services is a laughable £1,000—the figure to which the Government raised the fine in October 1992.

Sex line bosses openly boast about the Government's tolerance of their activities. One sex line boss told *The Mail on Sunday* on 29 November, barely a fortnight ago:

"frankly, I know what the law says, but we easily get around it. My girls can really say what they like on the phones."

We know that section 43 of the Telecommunications Act 1984 makes it a clear offence to send grossly offensive, obscene or menacing messages over the phone, but with a fine of a paltry £1,000 it is hardly surprising that sex line bosses are laughing at the Minister, because they know that in his heart he does not intend to regulate a market that generates £200 million, much of it profits made at the expense of the misery of others.

Mr. Lewis: It is instructive to note that ICSTIS, Oftel and the Government between them have not brought one prosecution under section 43(1) of the Telecommunications Act. Operators are merely told to change their format or to take off the lines, and Ministers accept that sanction.

Mr. Griffiths: I see the heads in the Chamber nodding with shock at that information. *The Mail on Sunday* and journalists Denya Allen and Tanya Reed have carried out excellent studies of the sort that my hon. Friend has asked the Home Office to carry out. They have discovered a catalogue of feeble policing. One sex line firm, Bluebase Ltd., is cited in the August ICSTIS report for

"describing sexual acts in an offensive way".

I am pleased to say that it was barred—but only for 14 days. In the next month, the same company, under this Government's telecommunications regime, was found guilty of offering two services that breached the "debase, degrade and demean" criteria, in addition to the "grave offence" criterion clearly set out in the code. The company claimed that it had withdrawn both services, yet one of those services still operates under the very nose of the Minister and his officers in the DTI.

In another case, Telecommunications Ltd. was barred from access to the numbers—again for two weeks—after two offences of advertising in a free newspaper—clearly against the ICSTIS code of conduct. The company was let

[Mr. Griffiths]

off the offence in September, after claiming that it was merely the fault of the booking agent. A month later, in October, it tried to blame another free sheet when it was caught committing the same offence again. Again, the punishment was simply to be barred from access to the number for two weeks. Why does not the Minister tackle companies like Bluebase Ltd. and Telecommunications Ltd., given that they are openly ignoring the code—only to have pitifully weak penalties imposed on them for doing so? Why do not the Government bring in far tougher measures?

Dr. Spink: The Telecommunications Act 1984 comes under the umbrella of the Obscene Publications Act 1959. If the Government introduced legislation to strengthen the latter Act, to achieve some of what the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) wants, could we expect Labour support for the Government's action?

Mr. Griffiths: The hon.Gentleman asks an excellent question, and I give him this assurance on behalf of Labour Front Benchers. Anything that the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Worsley propose to stamp out such phone lines that commands all-party support will be firmly endorsed by my right hon. and hon. Friends. I am sorry that the same cannot be said by members of the Government Front Bench. However, I know that the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) will bring his redoubtable persuasive pressures to bear on his colleagues over their lack of action.

The Independent Committee for the supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services had a number of opportunities to condemn such practices outright, and I took a close look at its recent press releases. I draw the attention of the House to a ICSTIS press release dated Monday 22 June, which announced a record number of services closed. I am sure that the House welcomes that, especially in the light of tonight's debate. I hope that development will have all-party support—barring members of the Government Front Bench.

The press release runs to three pages and goes into detail about the record number of closed services, but does not make a single mention of porn lines. A key example of the lines that ICSTIS trumpets about removing is this;

"Callers had in reality had to listen to a lengthy promotion for a water purifying system".

That is the sole example that ICSTIS cites of the 689 services that were removed during the year. Not one word of concern about the porn lines that have so troubled the House and the country. No mention of the problems that my hon. Friend rightly raised, and of the fear that sex lines generate among the public. No mention of the fact—and I am grateful to the Minister for giving us one useful fact tonight—that only one third of the lines removed were porn services.

I lay down this challenge to ICSTIS. It should stop focusing exclusively on the promotion of water purifying systems and concentrate on publicising the 230 porn lines that ICSTIS was forced to remove. Why was so little publicity given to them?

My hon. Friend makes a modest request. He asks for an independent Home Office study of the impact of sex lines. Right hon. and hon. Members know of the allegations made by constituents of the malevolent influence of sex lines in sex cases in our constituencies. I have received many such letters, as have other right hon. and hon. Members—including one last weekend, which related to a sex case too horrible to mention. However, it has been given a great deal of publicity in Edinburgh and in the rest of Scotland because of the leniency of the sentence passed on the offender—something which I and others are taking up.

My hon. Friend is asking only for an independent study of the impact of sex lines, and I am disappointed that the Minister did not respond to that invitation to the Home Office to undertake such a study. I know that the public harbour deep suspicions that some assaults, rapes and other horrendous sexual crimes are directly connected with the existence of porn lines.

The flaws in self-regulation are clear. It is shocking that the organisation responsible for monitoring sex lines should employ a staff of only 25 to listen to the millions of telephone calls that are made every year. How can they be expected to act as guardians of public values, and to provide the necessary safeguards? The reason why there are only 25 staff is, of course, the business's unwillingness to fund a proper investigation and proper vetting of telephone lines.

The same people who are laughing at the Minister for failing to introduce proper penalties—for failing to bar those who operate sex lines not just for 14 days, but once and for all—are laughing at ICSTIS; and I must say, with some sadness, that they are right to do so, as ICSTIS is clearly not doing its job properly. ICSTIS boasts that, in the past year, telephone users have been paid £475,000 in compensation as a result of misuse of chat line services. That however, should be set against the £200 million business generated by the sales.

Labour's message is clear. These porn lines are operating with the clear sanction of the Government—or, at least, because of Government inaction—and they must be stopped. Labour wholly supports my hon. Friend the Member for Worsley in that regard; indeed, I believe that much of the House supports him. We are very disappointed that the Minister has failed to tackle the problem—preferring to blame his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Technology—and has given us no reassurance. He may think that he can brush the matter under the carpet, but Labour will continue to pursue it until the law is changed and there is adequate regulation of this disgraceful business.

Engineering

11.12 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): The successful conclusion of the Edinburgh summit over the weekend provides the right background to the debate. After all, the completion of the Single European Act at the end of the British presidency of the European Council on 31 December will confirm Europe as the world's largest trading bloc—almost as large as the United States and Japan combined. I believe that progress with the Maastricht treaty is vital to future opportunities in trade and manufacturing, and I hope that the House will proceed with the Bill in the coming weeks and months.

To succeed in world markets, the country must perform well in engineering and manufacturing. I shall be able to refer only briefly to issues which have a bearing on that fundamental truth and will leave it to others to fill in the details.

Given the exchanges in the House over recent weeks and months, I think it right to strike a positive note and provide some good news. That is one of the reasons why I have chosen this subject for debate tonight.

I am grateful to those hon. Members who have seen fit to attend the debate. I welcome, in particular, my hon. Friends the Members for Castle Point (Dr. Spink), for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) and for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), whose speeches I look forward to hearing. I welcome, too, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, who is to reply to the debate in due course, and my hon. Friend the Whip, who I know is listening carefully——

The Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household (Mr. Sydney Chapman): The hon. Member for Chipping Barnet.

Mr. Thompson: I refer to my hon. Friend as the Whip because I regard that as his true role in the debate. I know that he will listen carefully to everything that is said during the next hour.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State may already be aware that at least six Departments of State are covered by the subject of the debate—the Department of Education, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Office of Public Service and Science, the Department of Transport and the Department of Employment. There may even be others. I am sure that my hon. Friend will have no difficulty in ranging outside his brief in his reply.

As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State knows, his colleague the Minister for Trade made a significant but not widely reported speech on 25 November, speaking to the Institute of Export. In that speech, which I regard as a milestone in the Department's thinking, my hon. Friend referred to the economic challenge facing Britain and to our export performance which, thanks to the Government's policy and energy, is good in many respects. He also referred to the urgent need to increase our share of trade, not only with North America and Europe but against the competition of "the tigers", to use my hon. Friend's words—the economies of the southern and eastern Pacific. My hon. Friend spoke also of the need for a partnership between business and the Government.

I welcome such remarks because, in discussing the role of engineering in manufacturing industry, we must remember that there is a need for the Government to work closely with industry and business. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will be able to confirm in his reply that that is the thinking of his Department.

In the speech to which I referred a moment ago, my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade spoke about the balance of payments deficit which has been caused by the narrowing of the manufacturing base and increasingly sharp competition from outside. He spoke in particular of the fact that our share of exports of capital goods to non-OECD countries had declined from 7 per cent. to 5 per cent. since 1985. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State shares the concern of the Minister for Trade about that decline, which represents a challenge both to the Government and to business and industry. After all, capital goods are the products that our engineers and industrialists are engaged in producing. We should be increasing our exports of such goods not only within the Community but to countries outside it. The figures that I have quoted are disturbing, and form part of a trend which should be reversed. To be blunt, we are not doing well enough in this area.

Britain has an excellent tradition, going back over many years, of education in science and engineering. I do not have time to refer to the great scientists and engineers of the industrial revolution and since. We also have great engineering achievements to our name. It follows, therefore, that we should be world leaders in the production and export of capital goods. Yet our share of such exports is declining.

I wish to refer to the early-day motion standing in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) who, as my hon. Friends know, is chairman of the parliamentary group for engineering development. My hon. Friends the Members for Castle Point, for Hertfordshire, South-West and for Bolton, North-East are also members of that excellent all-party group, and I am sure that they will join me in paying tribute to its excellent work in raising the profile of engineering both in the outside world and here in Parliament. That early-day motion declares:

> "That this House, recognising the need to regenerate the United Kingdom manufacturing base and the importance of engineering to that process, notes the Engineering Employers' Federation proposals for a national industrial strategy; and calls for an early debate."

Of course, this short debate very late at night might not answer that point totally, but at least we are having a debate on engineering and on manufacture.

The Engineering Employers Federation, which is referred to in the early-day motion, has supplied me with details of the strategy that it recommends. Time does not permit me to describe it, but there are many excellent points and I recommend that hon. Members study that industrial strategy and take note and learn lessons where they apply. In particular, the federation is concerned that we should tackle the cultural bias against vocational education and industrial training.

In Norwich at the weekend I heard an address by Professor Paul Ormerod of the Henley centre for forecasting. He spoke about the prospects for growth in the 1990s. In fact, he was bullish—optimistic about the future, and rightly so. My hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench will agree that prospects for 1993 are certainly encouraging. He said that high-tech companies will lead us out of the present recession. Of course, the good news for hon. Members who represent

[Mr. Thompson]

constituencies in East Anglia is the fact that that part of the country contains a high proportion of high-tech firms. That is good news for East Anglia, it is good news for the country, and it is good that high-tech firms will lead the way in a recovery.

Perhaps in my constituency of Norwich, North the news is not quite so good, because the proportion of high-tech firms in Norwich is not so high as I should like it to be. The chamber of commerce and other local organisations are aware of that and are doing all that they can to improve the situation. They are also rightly putting pressure on local Members of Parliament and on Ministers for improvements in the infrastructure in the Norwich and Norfolk area. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor), the Secretary of State for Transport, for the recent improvement in road construction in the Norfolk and Norwich area, but there is a long way to go. Infrastructure is important to the setting up of new industries, particularly high-tech industries in any area, and that is certainly true in Norwich. I should like there eventually to be a science park, perhaps creating a centre for high-tech industries in the Norwich area.

Success in high technology comes from the correct use of engineering and manufacturing skills. In May this year, the Institution of Electrical Engineers published a survey of surveys concerned with United Kingdom manufacturing. Its conclusions were important and interesting. First, it found that there have been improvements in management and that further gains are necessary. Secondly, it found that there is a need to reassess the balance between shareholders, managers and the work force. Thirdly, it found that the United Kingdom has a creditably large number of internationally competitive companies and that 12 of them account for the majority of our national spend on research and development. It follows from that—the institution certainly came to this conclusion—that research and development needs to penetrate a wider spread of companies in this country.

Fourthly, the institution found that the United Kingdom is losing ground in patent applications. That is a worrying point for those of us who are worried about future innovation in industry. Fifthly, it found that the United Kingdom work force, except at the top, is still seriously under-qualified. Not surprisingly, of course, the same survey called for a change in national attitudes.

Therefore, I support calls from all quarters for the engineering profession to trumpet its successes and to capture the attention of the media. There is a need for new and positive themes after the doom and gloom that we have heard during 1992. There is good news on the engineering front. Ron Kirby, director of public affairs at the Engineering Council, spoke recently about surveys which had been conducted. In the past three years, pay and job satisfaction have increased in the engineering profession. Now young people are more likely to be recommended to go into engineering; apparently, young people's perception of the engineer has improved. Applications for university engineering courses have risen by 12 per cent. compared with two years ago. That is all good news on which it is worth focusing.

Similar trends were uncovered in recent answers on the subject from education Ministers to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). The initiative to encourage women into science and engineering has also succeeded and the number of women studying engineering has doubled since that campaign started in 1984. There is a lot of good news to relate at this time of night as we look forward to 1993 and the growth in engineering and manufacturing.

I hope that Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry are forging closer links with those at the Department of Education and the Department of Employment to consider vocational and technical training. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and for Employment have widened access to further and higher education. They have reformed fundamentally vocational qualifications and removed the distinction between universities and polytechnics. They have also freed further education colleges from local education authorities. Those changes are all part of the revolution in further education, which I welcome. They represent a good start, but there is a long way to go.

Last week I had the opportunity to visit the Norwich ITEC—the information technology centre—which is funded by its own commercial efforts and the Norfolk and Waveney training and enterprise council. I saw excellent examples of training for young people leading to national vocational qualifications. In 1991-92, some 93 per cent. of those young trainees found jobs, despite the recession.

Even now, however, concern is being expressed in Norwich—and, I suspect, nationally—about a future skills shortage. Concern has also been expressed about future funding through the training and enterprise councils, but I do not have time to debate that in detail. Concern about skill shortages is important because if such concern is being expressed now, it will deepen as the economic recovery gathers pace in 1993 and beyond. We should address that concern now, press on with training and provide the resources to encourage that.

It is interesting to note that the Engineering Council, in its response to the consultation exercise launched in August by the Office of Science and Technology, called for

"a larger number of sub-degree support personnel trained in NVQs levels 3 and 4."

The need for a better supply of skilled people of that level cannot be overstated. My experience of industry dates back to the 1950s. Even then, people were drawing attention to the inadequate supply of technicians to provide back-up, compared with the adequate supply of graduate engineers. It is amazing that that is still true today. Our future competitiveness in world markets will depend as much on that supply of trained personnel as on anything else.

We have a reputation for short-termism. As we emerge from the recession, it is vital that we plan ahead. We must have a partnership between business and Government. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister agrees that there should be such a partnership before breakfast, lunch and dinner, and later if necessary. After all, if we are able to debate this issue at 11.30 pm, I see no reason why such co-operation should not continue through the night as well as before such meals.

Not everyone realises that 9,500 qualified engineers are chief executives, children or managing directors of firms. I do not believe that everyone realises that there are 200,000 chartered engineers—one must add to that all the other categories of engineers.

That figure compares with 134,000 chartered accountants and 55,000 solicitors. The number of engineers is significant. Engineers are important and there are a lot of them, so it is vital that we convey the message to them that there must be no more self-indulgent talk about the low status of engineers. Those days are gone.

I hope that the profession will discuss in public the challenges that we face not only in this country but in the world at large. I refer to the challenges of the environment: for example, in this time of famine in Somalia and elsewhere, the challenge of how we produce and transport food from one part of the world to another; the challenges of energy production and conservation; and, of course, the challenges of improving the infrastructure not only of this country but of the world.

I am sure that those following the debate will agree that engineering must be highly regarded in its own right. Engineering courses must not be subservient to the immediate needs of industry. There must be attractive and intellectually stimulating courses for our young people and they must attract a broader range of the population than just the future chartered engineer. Our future prosperity and self-respect as a nation depend on our attitude to creative and innovative work in industry.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will respond in that spirit. I hope that he will confirm the pro-active role of Government, as described by the Minister for Trade in his speech last month, to which I referred earlier, so that Britain can again be the envy of the world in the quality and quantity of its trade in manufactured goods and in the number of well qualified and enthusiastic young engineers and technicians we have ready to solve the problems of the future.

11.31 pm

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): It is a difficult job for a new and innocent Member such as myself to follow my experienced and knowledgeable hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), who eloquently and forcefully presented the debate and set out the terms for the next hour. I welcome his initiative in promoting the debate.

With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to address the key issue of the research that is undertaken in educational establishments, and to focus in particular on engineering and technological research. I hope that in doing so I shall be able to signpost one simple way for the Government to intervene sensibly, and—if I may borrow a phrase from my hon. Friend—before breakfast, lunch and dinner, to help the manufacturing sector to help this nation back into growth.

Hon. Members will be aware that the manufacturing base of our economy relies for its innovation and competitiveness on technological research. They will also be aware that 63 per cent. of British exports—the figure is rising—derive from the manufacturing sector of our economy. I doubt that any hon. Member would seek to deny the strategic importance of the manufacturing sector to the British economy.

The position of industrial research and development in the United Kingdom is not as gloomy as one might think. Expenditure has shown a strong upward trend in recent years. That is not altogether unconnected with the recognition and support of the Conservative Government in the past decade for research in this sector of the economy.

One of the questions that I shall pose tonight is whether we as a nation derive the maximum benefit from that research. Is that research truly helpful in the long term to our economy, or is it more helpful to economies of other nations that are somewhat quicker off the mark than we seem to be in Britain? I shall suggest that the Government could do certain things to redress that situation.

For example, clearly the Japanese have been successful in bringing products rapidly to the marketplace. They exploit technological innovation in a way that assists their economy positively, which we would do well to emulate. Japan and other industrial nations take technological developments rapidly through to products in the marketplace.

In this country we often have the feeling that other nations watch British universities carefully and painstakingly clearing a path through the jungle of fundamental research and then through the technological development, and that those other nations then seem somehow to time their product development runs cunningly down the research path that we British have so carefully cleared for them. They seem to start after us but to pass us just before we reach the warm sunlit clearing and the comfort of the marketplace. We do the basic research, but foreign economies too often benefit from it in the competitive marketplace.

Hon. Members will be aware that there are three generic phases of research—strategic, applied and near-market research. Strategic research is concerned with the longer term; applied research takes a medium-term view; near-market research is just what the name implies—it focuses on a one-year or two-year time scale. It is that near-market research which we neglect at our peril, and I wish to promote it tonight.

In recent years, industry has recognised and begun to apply compressed time concepts and philosophies in order to bring products more rapidly to the marketplace and secure a competitive advantage. It is time that the Government gave more recognition to the enormous value of near-market research, and they could do so by switching research funding away from the more fundamental PhD type of research towards more practical near-market research. Provided that that took place within a balanced strategy, it would be more immediately valuable to our economy.

I welcome the White Paper on the subject, and the reply of the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science to my question on the issue earlier today. But the Government can play a yet greater part in the shift of emphasis towards applied research. To do so, the Office of Science and Technology and the separate Department of Trade and Industry must create better bridges, so that the flow of research enterprise, from basic research through strategic and applied research to near-market research will bring competitive and innovative products to the marketplace for the benefit of our economy rather than of someone else's.

If the price that we had to pay for that was that we had fewer Nobel prize winners, but we had a more enterprising, successful and vibrant economy, with more jobs, that would be a price well worth paying. That is not to say that all big science projects should be disbanded in favour of

[Dr. Robert Spink]

short-term projects. For instance, I believe passionately that the joint European torus project should continue to receive our full support.

The public are now a little confused about where the responsibility for research and research funding lies. My constituents are not certain how the Government provide funds to promote the development of marketable products —but they are under no illusions about the fact that we must bring such products to the marketplace if we as a nation are not to fall behind in the competitive race from which there is no opt-out for Great Britain.

Of course, I accept the prime need to ensure that public funds directed to all research, and especially to near-market research, go to the right potential product areas, and therefore to the correct educational and other institutions that can most effectively deliver products and technologies to the marketplace. That will require that the marketplace is properly researched—but that is another question.

The whole concept raises the issue of what are the right institutions to conduct near-market research. The links between industry and academia need to be encouraged and improved to maximise the development of new products and technologies. There are good examples of successful interaction between industry and academia enabling us to exploit the science and technological base of our universities. They include the teaching company scheme, the support by ACME of near-market research and the willingness of the Department of Trade and Industry and some of the funding councils to support centres of excellence in near-market research in our universities. The Cimtex centre at De Montfort university is an excellent example of such support and of such a centre of excellence.

Such examples are still too few. There is a strong resistance to near-market research and a presumption in favour of the PhD-based, more traditional research in our educational establishments. That is entirely understandable given the traditional basis of many of our academic institutions compared with the more pragmatic educational and research establishments that have grown up in modern, less traditionally based economies.

I urge the Government to look for ways in which to redress the unhelpful bias against applied research and to give near-market research the credibility, status and value given to fundamental research. They should give applied research a more rational and therefore a more equal level of funding compared with the funding that traditional research currently enjoys.

Clearly, the former polytechnics, which have done so remarkably well academically, can be beacons of light for some of our ancient educational institutions in terms of technological, near-market research. We need as a nation to look again at the funding methodologies for research in our educational establishments. The Higher Education Funding Council for England gives a weighting for funding applied research of excellence of only one third of that given for basic research of excellence. I do not know how that can possibly be justified and the people of Essex expect me to fight in the House for a more rational balance in the funding of the different phases of research.

Indeed, the HEFCE has even suggested, albeit tentatively, that applied research may not be recognised at all for funding. That would militate against the former polytechnics which are now forming a new platform of university excellence. Sadly, they can currently expect to receive little recognition of their research from the HEFCE, as much of it is applied. Such a policy is part of the British disease. I am delighted that so many of my hon. Friends agree with me on the matter.

Our research students are often encouraged to believe that a theoretical paper published in a good academic journal is of more value than a product brought to the marketplace. I would agree with that if I were a Japanese industrialist feeding off the papers and taking other people's efforts to the marketplace for my own Japanese benefit, but I cannot agree with that as someone who has responsibility for finding ways in which to fund a better health service, better and more education, and improved pensions, which could be done by developing a competitive economy. That means a dynamic manufacturing sector and more effective near-market research—as they say, "QED".

The Higher Education Funding Council for England should fund strategic and applied research that is linked to a national framework of economic objectives within a visionary strategy for growth and employment for industry and the economy. Industry should be encouraged to collaborate with academia in near-market research using industrial and commercial specifications for that research.

Such a process would very quickly become self-sustaining as industry gained confidence in the service that it received. That should lead to the new universities benefiting from much greater dual funding than they currently enjoy in comparison with the ancient universities. The new universities should develop close and sensible partnerships and relationships with industry.

As time is short, I will refer to my next two points briefly and raise them as issues to which we should return as part of the general debate. The first of those issues is a national framework for research funding that recognises areas for applied and near-market research that are likely to have the most desirable and internationally marketable outcomes.

The second issue is the scope for improved education and training opportunities in science and technology and the need for a national framework and objectives that will promote engineering and technology as more desirable options. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North called for options for students from A-level through to higher research.

We must strive to increase the status of engineers and I recommend a review and study of the German model whereby engineers are educated in an integrated way with industry. Hon. Members may be aware that I have been promoting differential student grants and the emergence of statutory registration for engineers and technologies as part of the move to improve the status of engineers and engineering in our society.

I am not surprised that hon. Members say that I would say that anyway. I acknowledge that I have a vested interest in the matter as I am a simple engineer. I should be pleased if my hon. Friend the Minister could comment on the Government's view of statutory registration of engineers.

The aims of the Finniston report were excellent, but sadly it failed in its delivery. The report failed to deliver

primarily due to a lack of ownership and commitment by industry and, I am sad to say, a distinct lack of enthusiasm and promotion in the House.

I am aware that the Engineering Council is addressing that question from the industrial viewpoint, and I welcome that. I am sure that hon. Members will join me in encouraging the council in that endeavour. I trust also that the boards of all research funding agencies and councils are exercised by the arguments in favour of near-market research that have been set out in this debate.

11.48 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on having the wit and wisdom to choose this topic and, even more so, on having it at a reasonable time rather than at 2 or 3 am. I notice that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs is to reply to the debate. I understand that, when he replies, he will be halfway through his triple. No doubt my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry will owe my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State something for his presence for this triple-decker.

In each of the past three or four years, I have delivered what I would call my annual manufacturing speech—and, until the last autumn statement, more in hope than in expectation. As the years rolled by, my speech developed a stereotype nature. It had one major advantage—I did not have to update it much, except the figures. The message of my speech was the importance of manufacturing as the basis of our major economic activity and the need for targeted support if we were to match foreign competition. I advanced the same case until the autumn statement.

I sincerely hope that the autumn statement has signalled a shift in policy towards manufacturing and industry in the Treasury's long-term thinking. I use the word "hope", because I want to believe that the targeting of various levels of support schemes within the time limits set out in the autumn statement is the start of a long-term policy. I hope that the targeting of such schemes is not simply a short-term measure to alleviate the recession, after which we will return to the previous policy of creating a uniform regime which covers every manufacturing and commercial sector in the United Kingdom—the proverbial level playing field, with no distortions, no anomalies, no recognition of overseas competition, and theory which is untroubled and untrammelled by practice.

In 1979, I welcomed as enthusiastically as anybody else the moves to shake up our rather sluggish and inefficient industrial base. Over the next eight to nine years, I welcomed, as did everybody else, the fact that management was released to manage, restructure and defeat restricted practices. In that time, quality and productivity rose and efficiency improved. The state-owned industrial bastions of inefficiency, ruled by the political lunchtime directive, moved into the private sector. In a short period, the United Kingdom stopped being the sick man of Europe: it showed a distinct improvement in economic health.

The time then came to move to the next stage. A gulf of understanding had to be bridged between those who lived in the theoretical world of economic models and forecasts —in the worlds of Samuel Johnson and those whose knowledge of the world is strained through books—and those who lived in the real world of industry and commerce. The real world which I am talking about is the one in which people have to find the wages on Friday night; in which one is out of a job and could lose one's house if one fails. I am talking about the world that provides the basis on which the theoretical world rests and draws the revenue.

I said earlier that I hoped that the autumn statement has signalled a change in policy which will give the various industrial sectors matching and targeted support to compete in the export and import substitution markets equally. That is absolute common sense to the business manager, because he or she uses a whole range of incentives and selective treatments to cure problems and make his or her business grow. There are few cases in which a blanket solution solves all problems. More often, problems are like a cake: one divides it into slices and deals with each slice individually. In that way, one solves the overall problem.

I am aware of the time contraints this evening, so I will not embark on my next point in any depth whatever, except to say that, with the single market coming and the transfer of taxpayers' goods throughout the European Community, the Government will have to examine two matters: first, extending the VAT tax base and, secondly, examining differential VAT rates. I quote as an example what is happening to our horse racing at present.

It would be nice to think that we could have a simple, overall, blanket solution of one VAT rate at the top end and then the zero exempt rate. However, I do not believe that we can live in such a world. If we are in the European Community, either the other member states must change or we must change. We simply cannot survive by hitting certain people with 17·5 per cent. while somebody else pays the penalty of only 5 per cent.

The transferability of goods means that we must examine that change. I do not like it; I do not want it; but I move away from the theory into the real and practical world. It will mean that every sector of industry has its own market problems which must be tackled individually. That is why I congratulate my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, and I am delighted that he has reconstituted the 15 industrial sectors which will look at each of those areas of industry in detail.

Overall, there will also be a division to study world best manufacturing practice and how that information can be best distributed and implemented within the United Kingdom. I am not sure whether it is above or intermingled with the 15 industrial sectors, but it will be called the industrial competitive division. It is under the control of Professor Dobbe—that is spelt D-o-b-b-e, for the sake of the people up in *Hansard*, so that they do not have to send me a little note. I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker—you can reprimand me if you wish. You will be absolutely right. We are not under too much pressure here this evening.

From the work of the industrial competitive division will come a much more detailed knowledge of how our competitors operate and how we can provide our industry with that equalising factor. That does not mean politicians picking winners. They could not pick a winner in a one horse race. It means the abandonment of our previous policy of unilateral industrial disarmament. It did not work for defence, and I see absolutely no reason why it should work for manufacturing.

[Mr. Richard Page]

More information will emerge from that division. It will examine world best practices and target our resources. That will give us a greater chance of success. I take one example from our industrial competitors abroad—the machine tool sector in Japan. Every two years, a sector is targeted for support. The Government choose specific objectives which thay want that sector to achieve.

In 1980-82, energy efficiency in manufacturing machine tools and companies employing fewer than 1,000 people were targeted. In 1985-89, the Government targeted investment in new technologies using CNC machines and gave support to it. The Government targeted support to specific areas in a series of years. Everyone knows that increases in quality and productivity and success in the marketplace flow from the advances being made in machine production techniques. So the emphasis on machine tools is not entirely surprising.

The Japanese are not alone in giving support to specific areas of industry. I understand that the Italians have a £0·75 billion programme of support for small and medium companies. Some 25 per cent. grant is given towards purchase, and low rates of interest are made available. In Portugal, the Government give money towards certain forms of moulding machines. One could go on and on producing examples in the machine world.

I hesitate to produce other examples to the House, but one need only consider shipping. Help for shipping is even more widespread. Certain Governments have introduced measures to compensate for the widening of the cost gap between European and third world crews. For example, some Governments have reduced social security payments for employers of national seafarers. I have here a list of comparisons with other countries. Exemptions from seafarers' income tax in full or in part, with varying conditions, are available in Belgium, Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands and Sweden—and the list goes on.

We must begin to consider varying our terms and conditions if we want to compete. Lacking such support, what have we seen? Barely 1 per cent. of the world's shipping now sails under the British flag. We are down to 27th place. In a parallel fashion, there is concern about the age of our fleet. Questions must be asked, such as whether roll-over relief should be considered if we are to stay in the same game.

If anyone thinks that I am dealing only with Europe or the east, I also have details of American subsidies. According to the *Financial Times* on 12 November, the

> "US faces the prospect of being taken to task by Gatt, after an extraordinary formal admission of the considerable export credit insurance subsidies it provides to exporters."

The article gives four or five examples of other countries where support has been given. The actions of our foreign competitors in the world market bring my remarks full circle, as I hope that the autumn statement has introduced an on-going policy of time-limited, targeted support for industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North has already mentioned the most excellent speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), to the Institute of Export on 25 November, and that gave the framework. I hope that the industrial competitiveness division, which has 15 sectors under observation, will start to colour in the squares.

In some quarters of the House, hon. Members believe that, if we can get the macro-economic formula right, all benefits will flow. I have to disillusion them fully. Life is not like that—it is the nitty-gritty, piece-by-piece attention to detail which will bring things right and win.

The President of the Board of Trade has told the story of the Japanese company going round a British steel-making company. The Japanese company carried out the same process but was more profitable. On leaving, the Japanese asked, "Would you mind if we made a few suggestions?" The company director said, "I would be delighted." The Japanese firm produced 50 items. For example, it said, "You take too much steel for testing—you do not need to take a foot of steel, as three inches will do and you open the furnace door wide open, when you only need to open it a few inches, as that saves heat." Those examples show the nitty-gritty and attention to detail that give companies efficiency and an edge.

I have abandoned my previous speech. The autumn statement has moved the game on, and this will be my standard speech until those sectors are coloured in and efficiencies are obtained. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North for bringing the subject to the attention of the House.

12.2 am

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I wish to intervene in the debate briefly, in view of the hour and the limited time. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on his luck in the ballot. I have put in for a debate on a number of occasions, but have not been able to get anywhere near the luxurious position of being able to talk not long after midnight, if not before it. I congratulate him on choosing such an excellent subject. We cannot spend too much time in the House debating engineering.

I declare an interest, as before coming to the House my career was entirely in the engineering industry. There used to be two other members of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers in the House, but I regret that that is no longer the case. We lost the late David Penhaligon, the former Member for Truro, which was a great sadness to us all. I enjoyed debating with him when he was here. The loss of my noble Friend Lord Hayhoe, the former right hon. Member for Isleworth and Brentford, is a gain for the other House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) said that one has to remember what it is like at the sharp end, when one has to pay the wages every week. That is the position which I faced when I started my own business, and I still face it, although I am glad that my wife is principally concerned with the business on a day-to-day basis.

The debate is timely in view of the fact that the Institution of Mechanical Engineers is judging the finals of the manufacturing effectiveness awards tomorrow, and I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will be there to present the prizes, which have a total value of £20,000. There is a £10,000 prize for the outright winner and a £5,000 prize for the winner of the small firms category—firms with up to 200 employees. Eight firms have reached the semi-final stage and I was delighted to see that two of them are north-west companies: British Aerospace, and Thorn Fire Protection in Oldham.

The other firms include Footprints Tools of Sheffield; GEC Alsthom of Rugby; which is through to the final four; Hayward Tyler Sumo of Kilbride; Johnston Engineering of Dorking, which is also through to the final four; Nautech Ltd of Portsmouth; Rexel Business Machines Ltd of Droitwich, which is through to the final four and is the outright small firms winner, as it is the only small firm to have reached the final four. Thorn Fire Protection is the fourth firm to have reached the finals.

I have the good fortune to be on the judging panel to select the winner from those four finalists. I have been delighted to read the contributions made by those four companies and I recommend that all hon. Members who have participated in this debate read those stimulating entries, which show exactly what can be done in this country and the excellence that can be achieved by our firms. They all talk of substantial increases in their share of world markets and give evidence of how this country has increased its share of the world markets in recent years. After decades of decline through the 1960s and 1970s, we are at last seeing an overall increase in our share of trade.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is not here, but I recently showed him some figures giving this country's total share of both visible and invisible trade. I recommend that hon. Members look at those figures, which are available from the Library. The lastest figures that I have show that in 1990 this country's share of total visible and invisible trade amounted to 13·2 per cent., an increase from 12·1 per cent. the year before and 11·5 per cent. the year before that. It is made up of visible trade of 8·6 per cent. and invisible trade of 16·9 per cent. We should not worry whether we earn our wealth through visible or invisible trade, because it all contributes to our standard of living. As we have a higher share of invisible trade, which is the fastest growing sector of world trade, it gives us a better basis for increasing our share in future.

May I quote some of the points made by Thorn Fire Protection as an example of a north-west firm. I am delighted that the north west is so well represented this evening. The hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) and the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) are both present and may like to hear of some of the points that Thorn Fire Protection made in its excellent submission. We do not know who will win tomorrow, but I am sure that Thorn will be given strong consideration on the basis of its excellent written submission in advance of its full presentation tomorrow.

The submission says that the company

"has a turnover of over £30 million and employs 1,000 people in the UK"

and that

"The significant improvement in the business over the 6 year period is the result of visionary thinking started in 1985 with the aim of becoming the 'Best in the Business'."

It says that the

"changes since 1985 have enabled the company to grow in turnover at a compound rate of around 15 per cent. per year"

giving a return on net assets of 30 per cent. and profit-to-sales ratio of more than 10 per cent. The submission goes on:

"In terms of market share, the company currently holds No. 1 position for manufacturing output and No. 2 in fire extinguisher servicing within Europe."

There has been a total transformation in the company's Oldham factory from its traditional "fire-fighting" mode to "excellence in extinguisher manufacturing". The submission says:

"The Oldham manufacturing operation has moved up in its ranking from 6th to No. 1 position for output volumes, productivity and stock turns compared to its counterparts within Europe . . . The original concept for change required a great deal of creative thinking and a visionary approach. Right at the outset, the change programme was seen as a long haul, with no short cut route to success and requiring sustained commitment and support from the top."

The report shows how its service branch network has improved its stock turns from about six times a year to in excess of 20. On quality and the way in which it has motivated its staff, it shows that it has involved the shopfloor employees through "Kaizen"—a Japanese word meaning continuous improvement. In that way it has motivated its staff through involvement and created team spirit—a key success factor.

The report uses a memorable phrase on quality. It states that the management team's belief is that

"Quality is a journey and not a destination".

That should be borne in mind by everyone who is involved in manufacturing industry.

I thought that I would use that example to show how firms in the United Kingdom, particularly the north-west, have been able to improve their positions substantially in recent years, due to the success of Government policies, which have enabled management to focus on the job of managing. That company has brought itself up from number six in Europe to number one in a climate where the number of days lost through strikes has dropped from the high figures experienced under the last Labour Government to the lowest figure since records began 100 years ago.

I am confident that the engineering industry will be able to go from strength to strength and management will be able to demonstrate that it can make companies in this country the best in the world. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to participate in the debate, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North, who has done so much to bring engineering to the attention of the House, will continue to be successful in the ballots.

12.12 am

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I congratulate the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson)—with whom I have been spending rather a lot of time recently—on choosing the subject for debate. At a constituency level I have great interest in the topic as my constituency houses Trafford park, which is still one of the leading centres of engineering industry in this country. Its traditions are desperately important—it is a source of both employment and economic success, for the city and the country.

The engineering industry is fundamental to this country's future. We have heard four interesting speeches. We always say that debates in the House are interesting—some are more interesting than others—but tonight's has been. All four speeches have been slightly different in structure and have mentioned different aspects.

I was intrigued by the speech of the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) and the gentle, mocking irony with which he spoke of the Government. He rightly said that nobody would seek to deny the strategic importance

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of the manufacturing sector. He also said that it had been supported by 10 years of Conservative government. As an oblique attack on the Ministers, his must be one of the more subtle ways of sticking the knife into Ministers' backs.

Dr. Spink: Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that he welcomes the increase in unit productivity that we have achieved in the manufacturing sector over the past decade?

Mr. Lloyd: When the hon. Gentleman says "we have achieved", I trust that he includes both sides of industry. Some of the credit should go to those who are still in employment and who have made considerable sacrifices.

I should place on record a less rose-coloured view of Britain's manufacturing sector, particularly the engineering sector. The facts—borne out by many of the professional and employer-led organisations in engineering, not just employees—show that engineering in particular and manufacturing in general have been in decline for the past 20 years. The present recession has badly hurt British industry. I hope that the Minister will pay attention to that.

While engineering represented 11·8 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1979, when the present Government came to power, by the middle of 1990, the level had dropped to 9·4 per cent.—a significant decline. Since the recession began in 1989, there has been a 13 per cent. fall in engineering output. That is tragic for the nation and for the individuals involved. Those people have seen their employment base in engineering shrink from 3·3 million to about 2 million. These are highly skilled people, with skills that should have been updated. Even the employers reckon that about 55,000 more jobs will go in the next year.

The hon. Member for Norwich, North said that people were bullish about the future of the industry. I have with me numerous press cuttings in which people roundly condemn the Government's role in the industry and express their concerns for the future. One states that engineering confidence has been "shot to pieces". Suppliers to collieries, especially the Association of British Mining Equipment Companies, talk of the loss of 120,000 jobs in their industry as a result of the destruction of the mining industry by the so-called interventionist President of the Board of Trade. That industry alone has a turnover of £900 million a year.

The director-general of the Engineering Employers Federation has said that engineering skills are going to waste in this recession, threatening Britain's longer-term ability to compete. He added that a Government policy "of waiting for something to turn up is demonstrably not going to provide the sort of positive results industry has the right to expect."

So engineering is hardly a success story at the moment. It is rather a story of Government incompetence and failure to act in partnership with the industry. That failure has cost the nation and those employed in the industry dear.

Ironically, because of the nation's and the industry's failure to train, we face the almost unique calamity of an erosion of skills at the same time as a significant skills shortage. An article in today's *Birmingham Evening Mail* carries an interview with the managing director of a bolt-making firm, Bauer and Schauerte Kaucher, who has been trying for six months to recruit four skilled setters to work some new high-technology forging machines. Mr. Gevals Hammond said that he had thought that "soaring unemployment would make it easy to fill the jobs. 'We know we are paying a very competitive rate and a generous bonus scheme, but in the current climate experienced workers with the skills we are looking for are reluctant to risk losing possible redundancy pay off by leaving existing jobs.'".

So people are afraid for their futures, and the mobility that the industry needs is being ripped away because of these uncertainties.

There are severe skills shortages in the electrical engineering and capital goods sectors—alongside high levels of unemployment. Those shortages spell future capacity and output downturns which will threaten the competitiveness of the industry. The uncertainties lead in turn to a reluctance by the industry to train people and to invest—and that feeds back into the skills shortages that created the problem in the first place. So we are trapped, not in the bullish market described by Conservative Members, but in a vicious circle that will cost the nation dear.

The hon. Member for Norwich, North was right about the need to train engineers. If we are to increase the amount of research and development in the productive end of the industry, we need highly trained engineers and technicians. We need them to perform a new role; to sustain and increase our R and D in areas such as product and process development. Only that will bring about the long-term competitive edge that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. That is not even beginning to happen at the moment. The statistics describing the state of the British industry make for a sad comparison with those of our competitors. We know that the United Kingdom's capital stock is much older than that of competitor nations. In Japan, the average fixed asset life is six years, compared with decades-old machinery that still exists in British engineering and elsewhere.

Japanese investment is led very much by a confidence in the future that British industry does not have. That confidence is also absent in the training of our young people. That begins at school. There is an acute shortage of teachers for science and technical subjects that are so important as the fundamental base of the engineering industry.

A very low number of young people in the post-16 group stay on at school. We fall far behind Germany and Japan in that respect. The Japanese and French train three times as many craftsmen and women in mechanical and electrical engineering and in construction. Britain would have to train an extra 50,000 young people a year to catch up with the Japanese and the French, and an extra 80,000 a year to catch up with the Germans. That is the kind of task that our nation must set itself and achieve.

Conservative Members should not be deceived by their own propaganda, because the situation is much more worrying than they suggest. Under the German dual system, to which the hon. Member for Castle Point drew attention, 600,000 people are trained every year, and it strips away the artificial divide between academia and vocational training. Germans view with amazement the kind of educational system that we have. We have a lot to learn, and we should not be blind to the achievements of the German system.

Seventy per cent. of those who pass through the dual system gain a qualification, and 30 per cent. of those who

start dual training already have qualifications higher than our present A-levels. It is therefore ridiculous to suggest that the German qualification is downgraded. It is a high-status qualification and one which we should seek to emulate.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman's whole diatribe is centred on how much better other countries are than our own. I do not believe that it is all a one-way business. Obviously we can learn from others in the world, but the Engineering Employers Federation states that engineer training in this country is better than in Germany.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman refers to my diatribe, but it is a diatribe of fact. If he will say which of the facts that I stated he considers inaccurate, I shall be happy to debate the matter with him. The hon. Gentleman says that the Engineering Employers Federation states that the training given in Britain is better than that in Germany. I will not enter into an argument about whether British training is better, although I will return to that theme later.

It is certain, however, that the Germans are training many more—that a much larger number of young people in Germany are studying for a higher qualification. Even if the hon. Gentleman is right to say British training is better, such small numbers are involved, at such a specialised level, that it is a little dangerous and self-deluding to have the idea that we are competing with the Germans. The hon. Gentleman should view with concern the figures that I gave.

Britain is found lacking in the whole area of industrial training. There has been a large cut, of about 45 per cent., in the money provided by training and enterprise councils since 1988. On previous occasions, I have expressed severe doubts about the quality of training provided by the TEC system. I believe that Conservative Members at least share my view that those who pass through our academic and vocational systems must be of the highest quality.

I share the view of the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) that Britain should produce the best engineers and technicians in the world. If we are to do that, however, we must begin to establish some basic facts.

One of those facts is that this country does not invest enough in training and education for our young people —both generally, and in manufacturing and engineering specifically. An anti-manufacturing culture has existed here for some years, and the position was not helped by Lord Lawson when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer. As Conservative Members will recall, for many years he told the House that manufacturing was concerned with the smokestack industries; the future, he said, was in services.

The future can never be in services in that glib sense. Services have an important role, and no one wishes to knock that role; but it is a matter of statistical fact that, for every 1 per cent. of manufacturing exports that we lose, we would have to increase exports of services by 3 per cent. We still depend very much on manufacturing, but there is real doubt about whether our manufacturing base is large enough to sustain the size of our economy. We must rectify that: we must begin to train, and we must give a commitment that the funds will be there to make the training available. Those funds must come both from central Government and from the private sector.

It is instructive to note that when Labour spoke at the last general election of the need for a training levy, it was in touch not only with the views of Jacques Delors—who introduced a similar system in France some 20 years ago: that system works, albeit at a much higher level than we propose—but with those of Sir Brian Wolfson, chairman of the national training task force. He recently called on the Cabinet to abandon its philosophy of "voluntarism", and to introduce a compulsory levy on company payrolls to ensure that money was spent on training. Sir Brian's comments echoed some recent remarks by Sir Richard Layard at the Economic and Social Research Council: Sir Richard said that Britain would continue to provide a vast army of "lumpenproletarians" unless the state invested more in training.

We need a commitment that the Government have not been prepared to give in the past. Time after time, without that driving force and without a levy, the private sector will regard investment in training as a negotiable cost which can be cut in a period of recession. Earlier this year, the Department of Employment's own survey of training made it clear that the private sector had cut its investment for that reason.

We need to overhaul our attitude to manufacturing and, in particular, to engineering. We need to develop a culture that views manufacturing and engineering as a strong and significant element, and which appreciates that people with an engineering background, such as the hon. Member for Castle Point, have something real to say to the House and the country. We must turn away from the outdated view that accountants and lawyers should run our industry; we must develop the manufacturing culture, and invest in it. Sadly, however, there are no signs as yet that the Government intend to do that.

12.27 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on his initiative in giving us the opportunity to debate this important subject. I regret that I cannot claim to be an engineer myself, although my father was one; I am a humble lawyer, and my only connection with the world of nuts and bolts has been the occasional throwing of a spanner into the works over the years.

The importance of engineers and engineering in industry is, however, undoubted: many hon. Members have made plain their support for that proposition tonight. Engineers, of course, have a profound effect on the economy, wealth creation and everyday life. Although we are most conscious of their contribution to the engineering industry, they also make a major contribution to all aspects of business life. Their skills and training are necessary ingredients in management and the successful operation of modern companies, stretching well beyond what we recognise as the engineering sector.

The engineering sector is of major importance to the United Kingdom, and the annual sales of the United Kingdom engineering industry are estimated at more than £100 billion, with more than £50 billion-worth of exports in 1991. The engineering industry's output accounts for 42 per cent. of our manufacturers' gross domestic product. The sector employs some 2 million people, and we depend

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on the skills and ingenuity of our engineers, often without even realising it. It is too easy to undervalue their important contribution to almost every walk of life.

People with the right blend of skills are vital to our industry, and if our industry is to benefit most from recovery, we must fully develop and train our engineers and technologists. Our engineers need to be of the highest quality. They must be innovative and highly motivated. Our industry must have access to the latest engineering technology and must make the best possible use of it.

The message must go wider than our engineering industry, however. If our engineers are to play their full part in underpinning long-term growth, our financial institutions need to understand engineering and make good use of their talents. We must examine and learn from the best engineering practice around the world. Unless all sectors of industry and commerce use engineering skills to the full, our potential for wealth creation will suffer and our bright ideas will be left on the shelf or, worse still, will be exploited by others.

If we are to strengthen our productive performance, we need to break out of the damaging and outdated thinking about practical work. For too long, our culture has undermined practical work—even in the case of a discipline as vital and intellectually demanding as engineering. The solution to that problem lies in a partnership between education, the engineering professional institutions, employers and Government.

Stepping outside my departmental responsibilities to an area which is immensely important to trade and wealth creation, the training of our engineers must start as early as possible and it must continue, through full-time education and training, in a lifetime's process of learning. I mention first the initiatives that the Government have taken in schools, where the development begins. By 1995, all pupils aged 16—girls as well as boys—will have followed the national curriculum throughout their secondary education. They will thus all have studied technology. Similarly, all those who reach 16 in 1994 will have studied science. Gone are the bad old days when pupils could drop such subjects by their own choice or perhaps at parental whim. That remarkable change should boost the long-term take-up of engineering as a subject and a career.

We are always seeking ways to improve, however. The Department of Education is currently undertaking a review of technology, and that should improve further the preparation for continuing studies in engineering and other disciplines. In addition, the technology schools initiative encourages schools to provide specialised supplementary courses with vocational relevance. Such courses are designed to allow pupils with particular aptitude for technology to build on the subjects covered in the national curriculum.

The role of vocational qualifications has not been neglected. In the past, there has been great confusion about the types and levels of vocational qualifications. It has been a veritable jungle. We are cutting through that jungle with a new system of national vocational qualifications. The NVQs fit into a comprehensive framework. They are based on national standards, which define the skills, knowledge and understanding that employers need, and the employers are closely involved in their development. The options for gaining NVQs are varied: they can be obtained at school, in sixth form and further education colleges and by study at work. NVQs are made up of units which can be added together and which allow individuals to become qualified at their own pace.

Many NVQs are already available in science and technology subjects—for example, power station operation, pharmaceutical processing and aircraft maintenance. The Government strongly support the national education and training targets, which include critical goals for NVQs both for those in education and for those in work. For example, one aim is that 50 per cent. of young people should reach NVQ level 3 by the year 2000. That work is crucial to the United Kingdom's ability to compete with the best in the world.

For 16 to 19-year-olds, there remains the traditional route into university by means of A-levels. We have also introduced the general national vocational qualification, which should provide a further route into universities, whether of the old or of the new variety. We want universities to encourage the use of GNVQs as an entry method. That will provide greater opportunities for students to obtain a broader, vocationally relevant qualification. GNVQs will provide some general direction to students' career paths, which may well be in technology, but will not close off paths prematurely.

The further education sector also received a boost in the half billion pound increase in education funding announced in the autumn statement. That extra support will increase dramatically—by about 250,000—the number of students in further education. We expect within two years to have more than 1 million people studying in further education. That will provide many more young people with the technical skills that industry needs. It will also help to lift us to the top of the international league table for 16 to 19-year-olds staying on in education over the next three years.

In higher education we have already acted to ensure that there is no shortage of engineering places. There have been two specific initiatives—the engineering technology programme and the manufacturing systems engineering initiative. The latter initiative, for example, has brought together traditional engineering knowledge and skills with the use of management systems. It has been a success, and courses have been enrolled above their targets. That initiative has been carefully evaluated and a report will be available shortly.

Industry and commerce need senior people who have engineering knowledge and experience—people who look wider than the figures on the balance sheet, people who will look beyond the short term, and people who understand the processes of product design and manufacture. Engineers have the potential to climb the ladder to the top of companies. They understand the technology and its capabilities, but engineers need to be able to participate in all business activities, including management, and our university degree courses must offer that integrated style of education. Some universities already do so; others must follow.

Although the number of student places has been increased, the demand has not been so high as we would have liked. However, it is pleasing to note that applications to 1992 engineering and technology degree courses were up on those for 1991. We must all work to ensure that that demand continues to grow.

Universities must play a part in attracting and retaining young people. Science and technology education must be made an attractive option. We already have some of the most outstanding science and engineering courses in the world, but all our universities must seek to attain that same high standard if they are to attract the best students in the numbers that industry needs. It is not for the Government, of course, to tell young people which courses to take. The Government have a role, but schools, teachers, career advisers, parents and society generally all have their parts to play. Engineering must be seen as a worthwhile career option which leads to stimulating and rewarding job opportunities. In the United Kingdom, that requires a culture change. In Germany and Japan, the engineer is highly valued, and we must do the same if the United Kingdom is to prosper.

There is, of course, a key role for employers to show that engineering and technology skills lead to rewarding and satisfying careers for young men and women. They must transmit the right signals about engineers to the whole of society. Unfortunately, recent evidence suggests that the manufacturing sector still has a poor image among final year undergraduate engineers, and the most commercially minded of them intend to leave engineering. That clearly brings into question that sector's ability to recruit the high-calibre engineers whom it needs.

Most of all, we need a commitment from companies to increase job quality for young engineers and provide early opportunities for them to take responsibility. I understand the constraints, particularly in a recession, but there is also the need for employers to provide and maintain competitive pay and to give it full publicity as a factor in image building. There is evidence that more employers are recognising that. The pay of new graduate engineers has risen over the past few years, but that remains an important element in increasing the professional status and the social standing of engineers.

Knowledge and skills are at a premium in today's economies. In the United Kingdom, we have made large investments in the scientific and technological research and skills in our universities. The research and skills are first rate and acknowledged as such by the world's science and engineering communities. They are a national asset which should be developed and used. There is a clear need for a constructive partnership between our educational institutions and industry and commerce. That partnership should be a two-way street. Industry can make enormous gains by exploiting the technology and expertise that our research has produced. At the same time, British industry and commerce must play their part in assisting our higher education institutions to become as industry-oriented as possible.

The Department of Trade and Industry supports a number of schemes which serve to foster links between the academic world and industry at different levels. Those schemes include Link, which encourages collaborative research, equipment schemes which help colleges to re-equip their laboratories with up-to-date technology, and expansion of the Shell technology enterprise programme which places second-year undergraduates in companies for eight weeks. A number of our schemes encourage the exchange of people—they are the best vehicles for transferring technology—so that companies can exploit the wealth of knowledge and technology in our science and engineering base.

I will give one example to demonstrate that point. The highly successful teaching company scheme is widely recognised as an effective vehicle for providing bright young graduates with practical industry-oriented training. It does that by placing them in companies, of which more than 60 per cent. are small and medium-sized enterprises, to perform strategic technology projects. They work under the supervision of industrialists and academics. The teaching company scheme also serves to transfer technology from our universities into industry and begins the process of establishing long-lasting links between companies and higher education institutions. The teaching companies scheme is sponsored jointly by the DTI and the Science and Engineering Research Council, along with a number of other participants. It has a budget of about £14 million this year with more than 450 live programmes.

We should note the important contribution of the engineering profession. More than 40 professional institutions represent professional engineers of different disciplines. I am delighted to say that my right hon. Friends the President of the Board of Trade and the Minister for Industry will meet the presidents of four of those institutions in January. My right hon. Friends are looking forward to hearing, at first hand, their views on some of the central issues for engineering. I also know that the Royal Academy of Engineering works hard to promote engineering and to raise its status. It was highly appropriate that the President of the Board of Trade spoke at the recent dinner celebrating the academy's change of name. He warmly congratulated it on being granted permission to show its royal patronage in its title. That is surely a sign that our culture is beginning to value its engineers.

It has long been recognised that fragmentation does not serve the profession well. The barriers between the engineering disciplines, as practised in industry, are beginning to break down. A more unified approach to the engineering profession would therefore seem sensible. It is for that reason that I warmly welcome the recent initiative by Sir John Fairclough in conjunction with the Council of Presidents. They are considering how the profession could be organised so as to focus more sharply on the big issues that it faces. The DTI is providing half the cost of a secondee to assist in the work and I look forward eagerly to the results of their consultations and discussions when they appear next year.

In that context, we should not forget the work of the Engineering Council. One of its objectives is

"to promote the status and practice of engineering with a view to improving competitiveness."

The Government supported its establishment with initial pump priming of almost £3 million in three years as grant in aid. The council has a range of continuing activities. It maintains and develops the register of 290,000 chartered engineers, incorporated engineers and engineering technicians. It operates through education and training initiatives to ensure that industry's needs are met. It also runs schemes, seminars and conferences to promote the career image of the profession.

The DTI has provided specific financial assistance for some of that important work—for example, the neighbourhood engineers scheme. That scheme aims to secure closer links between practising engineers and secondary schools, to assist with project work in the curriculum and to foster the understanding of the role of

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engineers by schoolchildren, their parents and teachers. It currently involves more than 7,500 engineers in nearly 2,000 schools.

It is also important to note one other initiative that the Engineering Council runs—Women Into Science and Engineering, which was launched in 1984. The intention is to help——

In accordance with Mr. Speaker's ruling—[Official Report, 31 January 1983; Vol. 36, c. 19]*—the debate was concluded.*

Cammell Laird Shipbuilders

12.42 am

Ms. Angela Eagle (Wallasey): The future of Cammell Laird has been in the news recently because of the announcement two weeks ago by its current owners, Vickers Shipbuilders and Engineering Ltd., that it had effectively given up the ghost. It said that it would no longer seek orders once the current order book runs out in June next year.

The Cammell Laird yard, which is an important and historic yard in my part of the world, the Wirral, will finally close its doors after 160 years. That time has been marked by the yard's and its employees' record of vital service and achievement in the interests of the country.

When we consider what the future of that yard might be, we appreciate its central achievements. It has led the way in shipbuilding, and was a byword for innovation. In its time, the Cammell Laird yard has been at the forefront of shipbuilding techniques—it was on the cusp of their evolution. It was at the forefront of the switch from wooden ships to iron ones, from sails to steam, from riveting to welding. It is also noticeable that its history has been marked by a regular mix of merchant and military shipbuilding. Its exclusive concentration on military building may have led to its current difficulties, to which I shall refer later.

When it was founded in 1824, the shipyard was based in my constituency, but in 1858 it moved to its current site in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field).

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I think that I am right in saying that my hon. Friend's constituency did not exist then.

Ms. Eagle: I always believe in progress. I am happy that that progress was made, because it is probably why I am here today.

In the second world war, the yard built 106 fighting ships—one for every 20 days of the war. Such service must not be thrown away lightly. At its peak, the work force totalled 12,000, but 1992 was the first year this century when it fell below 2,000. Indeed, the only other time when the work force dropped below 2,000 was in 1931, at the height of the great depression. The next few months will be vital to the yard.

In 1977, the shipyard was nationalised as part of British Shipbuilders and the decision was made to concentrate more on military contracts. That concentration may have caused its present difficulties. Its magnificent covered construction yard, which is still one of the finest in the world, was built the year after.

When the yard was denationalised in 1985, it was bought for only £1, and the value placed on it by VSEL still rankles in the local area. There were two problems with the settlement. The first was that, as it was designated exclusively as a warship yard, it did not have access to the intervention fund. Although some may disagree about its current predicament, no one would argue that that lack of access has been a major problem. Secondly, because of its designation as a warship yard, it has been badly affected by the unforeseen but welcome developments summed up in "Options for Change" in the post-cold-war world.

It can be argued that VSEL had a fundamental conflict of interest when it took over the yard, because, naturally,

it wanted to preserve its yard at Barrow, and it has always been suspected that it had a vested interest in not exerting itself too much to save shipbuilding on the Mersey. That is still a problem. I believe that the closure announcement gives the yard a window of opportunity to get away from that deadly embrace and to try to make its future elsewhere. The closure announcement was a pretty stark example of the company giving up the ghost and signalling to all that it would no longer try to get work after next June.

In a debate only last week, I spoke in detail about the economic effects of the closure on the local area. I described them as devastating, which they are. During the 1980s, the Wirral area lost 15 per cent. of its manufacturing employment. One of the greatest declines in the standard industrial classifications during that era was the 22 per cent. decline in the shipbuilding, engineering and vehicle sector, and that had a bad effect on the yard.

The closure would not only lead directly to the loss of 1,000 jobs; the local council estimates that it would lead indirectly to a further loss of up to 6,000 jobs, threatening 600 local suppliers. Lairds had always supported the local area and bought its materials locally. It is estimated that the closure could withdraw up to £30 million in spending power from the local economy, and could lead overnight to a 2 per cent. increase in the local unemployment rate.

In my constituency of Wallasey, the unemployment rates are well above the national average—18 per cent. male unemployment and 7 per cent. female unemployment, making an overall rate of about 14 per cent. We must also realise that the loss of full-time jobs for men, which are either not replaced or are replaced by low-paid part-time work which usually goes to women, has a profound effect on the social fabric of the area. We must take account of that.

It has been estimated that the closure of the yard will cost the public purse £111·1 million in the first year. Moreover, the costs would continue. To support that level of unemployment, there would be more social security payments, lost production and capacity, and lost tax revenues. I repeat that the economic effects of the closure do not bear thinking about. It would be the economics of the madhouse to proceed with it. We must look for a way round it, and do what we can to save that vital local manufacturing and employment base.

The way in which the closure was arranged is interesting, and may reveal some of the other motives for VSEL's behaviour. We must note that VSEL's most recent six-month profits have increased by more than £3·5 million this year compared with those for 1991. That makes one wonder exactly what is going on in the firm.

The company envisages the destruction of the yard and its shipbuilding facilities within two years. With the help of outside consultants St. Quintin, it has produced a plan for the future—a plan in which I am afraid I have little confidence. It not only suggests the destruction of the Lairds yard within two years, but says that, after the yard closes next June, there will be minimum security. To suggest that such a facility need not be guarded properly makes a mockery of the idea that the option for the yard to reopen within two years is being retained. In such a dockland area, lack of security would quickly lead to a flourishing black market and the illegal destruction and vandalism of the remaining facilities. The idea of minimum security is an important clue to the real motives behind VSEL's plans.

VSEL plans to destroy the production shops immediately. As the St. Quintin report says, that would be done to reduce the rateable liability. That could be good for VSEL—but what is good for VSEL is not necessarily good for the local community, or for the country. I believe that the company is planning to asset-strip the yard, and at the same time to destroy a potential competitor. VSEL does not want the yard to pass out of its hands and to be able to bid against it for scarce work. We must take account of VSEL's possible vested interest in the matter and prevent it from fulfilling its plan.

The St. Quintin's report says that the future for the site is not for it to continue to build ships, which is what it is clearly good at, and which is what its facilities and its work force can do; but that there should be an effort once more to develop office blocks, light industry and retail on the site, with some housing. Yet the property market in the area is appalling. The St. Quintin's report admits:

> "A £100 million redevelopment of the waterfront on the Wirral including a mix of industrial, commercial and leisure facilities, has been postponed indefinitely. It is proving difficult to find tenants for new or existing developments."

I do not know what St. Quintin's was paid for producing the report. I think that it is money for old rope. I could probably have done a better job on the back of an envelope. The report then goes on to suggest that the derelict site and the destroyed site of the shipbuilding yard could be used to build a new retail park and extra houses. There is lack of credibility in the plan. It is nonsense.

The local community, in welcome co-operation not only with all Wirral Members of Parliament, but with local political leaders, with the shop stewards and with the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, have got together since the announcement and have come up with a plan for which there is all-party support. The principle behind the plan is that shipbuilding must be preserved on Merseyside. I shall explain in a moment why I think that the plan is viable.

We want the yard to be returned to the local community for the £1 that VSEL paid for it when it took over in 1985. It has essentially given up trying to provide a secure future for the yard. There is all-party support on the Wirral and on Merseyside for the idea that the yard has a viable future. We want to be given the right to try to search out that future to safeguard our skills in our work force and to help the country to preserve valuable engineering skills which have served it so well in the past. We also want VSEL to provide an endowment fund to help us to get the development under way.

I should like the Minister's response on the next point. We want the Government to help us to get the yard back. The Government still have a golden share, with which they might be able to put some pressure on to VSEL. Even more importantly, the Government are effectively VSEL's sole customer. I should like a pledge from the Government, tonight if possible, that they will support us in our chosen route. We want to vest the ownership of the yard in a local community trust which would be accountable via the local authority, perhaps involving the Merseyside development corporation and other bodies, so that we could try to assure the yard's future.

I also want some idea from the Government of what would be the possibility of ending the yard's warship yard

[Ms. Eagle]

status if, for example, it pledged not to go for defence contracts. As I shall explain, there are new market opportunities that VSEL has failed to exploit because of the warship yard status which has prevented it from having access to intervention funding and from bidding for other work.

The view in the international shipping market is that the prospects for recovery are excellent. The British Chamber of Shipping recently said that the average age of the British merchant fleet has now lengthened to 13 years. That exceeds the world average of 10 years. Clearly, there is a lot of potential refit work which will become available in the next few years. Three quarters of the world's tanker fleet is now more than 10 years old. The normal life span of those huge vessels is commonly thought to be about 20 years. Lairds missed out on building them originally when it went down the defence line and built Polaris. Perhaps the company should now have the opportunity to refit some of that work.

We have also seen a rise in the world merchant fleet capacity over the past four years of quite startling proportions. That capacity has risen by 10 million tonnes a year every year since 1988, according to *Lloyd's Register of Shipping*. It is thought likely that those trends will continue, and that foreign shipbuilders see a very buoyant market ahead of them for the next few years—so much so, that Japanese and South Korean yards are now building speculatively, seeing what they can sell on the market once they have built it. We believe that there are good growth possibilities.

If we consider what is happening on the Mersey, we see signs of a potentially useful and viable future for the yard. Merchant and refitting business is coming on stream in the world market to which the Cammell Laird yard could have access if its warship status was removed. In addition, a new freeport has been opened. The St. Quintin report had the gall to say:

"Work has recently been completed to the new Freeport to the south of the docks which will increase the amount of shipping in Birkenhead."

The report states that it will certainly increase the amount of shipping on the Mersey. However, it does not attempt to analyse the possible beneficial effects of that for a company with three dry docks and the best refitting and repair facilities in the world. Instead, the report comes up with a mad, crackpot idea for retail development.

If there are more ships on the Mersey as a result of the success of the freeport, that provides Cammell Laird with another market opportunity that it would be in a good position to exploit. Moreover, there continue to be offshore opportunities through the oil and gas developments in Liverpool and Morecambe bay, and in connection with the Hamilton oil development at Point of Ayr. If there is a beneficial result from the public inquiry due early next year on that development, it is highly likely that Cammell Laird would be in an excellent position to bid for that work, which would help to secure its future.

We have world-class facilities; some of the best shipbuilding facilities in the world; the best history of quality and activity of any shipyard; and a world-class work force. Cammell Laird deserves a proper chance with an owner committed to its survival, not one that is playing market games.

1.2 am

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): While it gives me no pleasure to participate in the debate as we are debating what VSEL intends to do—to destroy Cammell Laird, if it get its way—it nevertheless gives me pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle). When I was elected in 1979, I became part of a team of Wirral Members who supported Cammell Laird and other local interests. We did that across parties. As a result of the election of my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey, there are now five Members of Parliament who have a key interest in the yard, as my hon. Friend's predecessor is a Minister in another place and takes a proper interest from there.

In the first part of my speech I want to comment on the background to the lobbying that Wirral Members have carried out successfully in the past for Cammell Laird. I do that not for the sake of drawing attention to us, but because it is now noticeable that VSEL has no friends in the House who will defend its actions. It is important that VSEL should take note of what Wirral Members have done for Cammell Laird and VSEL, and of how determined we are to ensure that the company does not get away with destroying what my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey has described as a most important asset for Merseyside and a valuable asset for the country.

The starting point is the Department of Trade and Industry. I welcome the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs as I know that his attitude is now different from that held by the DTI in the early days of the Thatcher Government. At that time hon. Members were faced with a real fear that the unspoken agenda of the Department of Trade and Industry was to close our yard and other yards on the basis that there were too many shipyards in the United Kingdom.

I pick up the story when we were attempting to secure vital frigate orders for the yard. I know that all the Wirral Members, as proper lobbyists, listened to what was said in the yard and in the House. We tried to find out how the contracts were fixed against us. It occurred to us late one night when a Labour Member came out of one of the House bars, got me against the wall, thumped me with a big, fat finger and said that our tender had won both frigates. The crucial information that that gave us was that we knew, from our trips into Cammell Laird, that we would have to submit two tenders for both boats. The Department of Trade and Industry had ensured that we would submit figures which could in no way compete with the figures from Swan Hunter.

I hope that the Secretary of State for Wales will not mind my drawing attention to his position. I gave him that piece of information, and he relayed it to the then Secretary of State for Defence, now President of the Board of Trade, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). One of the myths in our area is that the right hon. Gentleman is a friend of Merseyside and Cammell Laird because he gave us special treatment over the order for the frigates. He is indeed a friend of Merseyside, but not because he gave us special treatment that night. His friendship was in ensuring that the information that the yard supplied to him about our tender, as opposed to tenders, would be part of the discussion at the Cabinet table. As a result of that intervention, we gained a crucial order.

The next important part of our lobbying activities related to privatisation. If it had been left to Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd., the yard would have been won by Trafalgar House. As Wirral Members, our job was to ask the then Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry, Sir Peter Morrison, each day whether the Department had a view about the favoured candidate for privatisation. Would it be the in-house VSEL bid or Trafalgar House? Every day, Peter Morrison was asked that question. However, one Thursday evening at the 7 o'clock vote, he was not anxious to talk to Wirral Members, and we realised that a decision had been made. He told us that the decision had been made. It was against VSEL, and favoured Trafalgar House buying the yard.

The Wirral Members then worked to ensure that the decision was overturned when the Economic Sub-Committee of the Cabinet met the next morning. The decision was overturned. I believe that Mr. Tebbit and Mrs. Thatcher, as they then were, were the only two people who supported the original proposal from the DTI.

This is a crucial juncture of our story, because Wirral Members were fearful about their long-term future with VSEL. We believed that we had a short-term future with VSEL, whereas there would be no future whatever with Trafalgar House. Therefore, it was important for the VSEL consortium to win, although that posed a danger to us in the long term.

Since that day, the Wirral Members have sought a way of obtaining a peaceful and honourable divorce from VSEL. Late in the day, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey said, VSEL has offered that opportunity by announcing just before Christmas in rather grand style that 900 men and women were to be made redundant. Some will be made redundant before Christmas and some after. It is important to register that they are not just any men and women, although it would be important if they were: those men and women are the work force of Cammell Laird who at one stage had to fight their way through the rent-a-mob which was brought in to prevent them from reclaiming their yard.

We are therefore talking about people who are not only highly skilled but unbelievably brave, not merely in talking but in their actions in ensuring that the yard should survive. I hope that the Minister will therefore register that it is not in the Government's interest to stand idly by and let VSEL butcher the labour force in a way in which it was not butchered when the rent-a-mob was put outside the yard to destroy it.

When we are thinking about VSEL's role and the role that Wirral Members may have to play in the next six months if we do not get the separation that we require, it is also important to consider the record of Cammell Laird under VSEL's ownership. There are two parts to it. First, it must be registered that we were successful in bidding for an order for three conventional submarines. Secondly, it is also important to register that almost no yard other than Cammell Laird or VSEL could have undertaken the work. So we were not up against much competition. From that order, our attempts to win frigate orders have been thwarted by VSEL.

We know from the information that we have had from Cammell Laird that the bid that we have put together to win the orders from the Government would have to go up to Barrow. Barrow would put the VSEL levy on to our tender. My hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey called it the "deadly embrace". The effect of the embrace was that we could not win those orders. I have been as puzzled as other Wirral Members about why VSEL adopted that approach and what its long-term strategy was for its own future.

I have made those comments because it is important to register the efforts and lengths to which Wirral Members have gone to secure the future of Cammell Laird. When VSEL comes to weigh up its future it should think carefully whether it wishes to make public enemies of the four Wirral Members and the former Minister who sits in the Lords, as well as the Members of Parliament from surrounding constituencies from the other end of the Wirral or the other side of the river.

It will not be a nice time for VSEL, particularly as it appears that it has reached the point of throwing in the towel in relation not only to Cammell Laird but possibly to its own future. It is possible that VSEL is waiting for some sugar daddy to come along in the form of a takeover bid to give it the diversification that it failed to acquire. If that is VSEL's strategy, it is important for it to have a quiet time while it conducts those negotiations. Wirral Members of Parliament, privately in our lobbying or publicly at every opportunity that we have in the House, will draw attention to the behaviour of VSEL. This is the third opportunity that we have been granted publicly to debate VSEL's conduct since the announcement 10 days ago, and it is merely a foretaste of what will occur after Christmas.

My other point is whether the decision is in the interest of VSEL. If it is in VSEL's interest, is it in the country's interest? If it is not in the country's interest, should not the Government say that that is the unacceptable face of VSEL and that they do not intend to allow it to continue with its proposed line of action? The Secretary of State for Wales will be aware that at several of our meetings with VSEL we have said that we believe that there has always been a conflict of interests between what it sees as its need for survival at Barrow and our needs for survival at Cammell Laird. Had there been a number of Barrow seats rather than one, and had we represented them, we would have taken a different position, but we do not represent Barrow or VSEL—we have another task. We do not accuse VSEL of behaving immorally: it has made a calculated decision about its best interests. Our duty is to question whether that is in the best interests of Cammell Laird and of the manufacturing base.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey has already said that we want to pose some questions for the Government. I know perfectly well that they will meet our demands in so far as they can. From 14 years of lobbying, I also know that issuing checklists is not always the most successful way to get the Government to move. As Wirral Members, we all know that, shortly after Christmas, our job will be to present a future for Cammell Laird that is attractive to the Government and will make them realise that our proposals for our single yard are interesting to them, as they begin a new phase of developing policies to abate the rising tide of unemployment and to protect the manufacturing base. The more successful we can be in setting Laird's interests in the national scene, the more successful we shall be in protecting its interests and its future.

I end on the note on which I have ended every debate on the subject since the atrocious announcement by VSEL a short time ago that it intended to butcher the brave men and women who work at Cammell Laird. We shall not let its decision pass without one God-almighty fight. Indeed,

[Mr. Frank Field]

if need be, by the end of our campaign we shall have so moved the debate that VSEL will decide that it is in its interests to have a quiet life from the four Wirral Members of Parliament, and our additional member in the Lords, and from surrounding Members in the Wirral, Cheshire and Liverpool, who have given us active support.

1.17 am

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle) on her choice of subject, because it is certainly vital to the people of the Wirral and to the Merseyside economy.

I am pleased to hear that my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has been able to co-operate with Members across the party divide, but he has been lucky in the Wirral's choice of Tory Members of Parliament, because there is not a single out-and-out Thatcherite among them. Baroness Chalker and the Secretary of State for Wales do not come into that category, even though they were willing to be dragged along for a time. They have a chance to change people's attitude to the Tory Government, and although people on Merseyside will not necessarily vote for them, they may change the atmosphere nevertheless.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead mentioned the friendliness to Merseyside shown by the President of the Board of Trade. Suspicions against the Tory Government on Merseyside are very old, because people recall that, in 1981, after visiting Toxteth, the President, who was then Secretary of State for the Environment with responsibility for Merseyside, prepared a report called "It Took a Riot". It was prepared after someone in Toxteth told him that it had taken a riot to get him there.

In Locket's restaurant, just along the way, the noble Lord Howe, then the Chancellor of the Exchequer, worked against the right hon. Member for Henley and managed to get the Government to oppose any real efforts for Merseyside. Indeed, Lord Howe has been quoted as saying that to put money into Merseyside was to throw good money after bad. I hope that that is not the attitude of present Cabinet Members.

The closure of the Cammell Laird shipbuilding yard would amount to an economic and social catastrophe in an area—the Wirral—where one in eight people are now out of a job. The problem extends beyond the Wirral, because some of my constituents work or have worked in Cammell Laird, and all of us who were brought up on Merseyside remember from our earliest childhood looking across the River Mersey from Liverpool, and those cranes were part of the scene. I see that the Minister for Transport in London well remembers that. We do not want an end to that image, which testifies to the industrial skill and activity of the people of Merseyside.

The yard has modern facilities. I believe that it has the largest dry dock in Britain, which can contain the largest of vessels. Indeed, the largest passenger liner to be built in this country since the second world war, the Windsor Castle, was constructed at Cammell Laird.

The Government have made no real effort to ensure that there is a move towards defence diversification following the end of the cold war. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey that Cammell Laird's present commitment as a defence contractor is preventing European Community fifth directive aid from being steered in the yard's direction. That dependence on warship development should end. My hon. Friend referred to the development of Morecambe bay and Liverpool bay for offshore gas or oil in the future. The yard has constructed offshore rigs and platforms, and those skills would be used in its future development.

The idea that this country should let shipbuilding continue to decline must be pushed aside. It is interesting to note that, at the beginning of this century, when Cammell Laird was at its height, 50 per cent. of the ships produced in the world were produced in Great Britain. By 1950, that figure had declined to 40 per cent., and by 1989, Britain was producing less than 1 per cent. of the world tonnage in shipping.

It might be argued that other countries, particularly Japan, coming on to the scene was inevitable. Despite the fact that their shipbuilding yards were totally devastated by the war, West Germany and Sweden made considerable gains as a result of Britain's continual impoverishment.

The Government have much to answer for. The British merchant fleet has declined by 75 per cent. since 1979. We had 1,614 vessels in 1975, but by 1988 that figure had dropped to 482 vessels, which resulted in the loss of many jobs. Many of my constituents have a knowledge of seafaring that goes back many decades. Between 1976 and 1990, the number of seafarers from this country declined from 58,000 to 18,000.

It was an outrage that, when the Atlantic Conveyor was lost during the Falkland war, that great patriot, the present Prime Minister's predecessor, did not turn to the shipbuilding yards of Britain such as Cammell Laird. She turned to the shipbuilding yards of South Korea, which has been able to make its way in the world because of its low wage costs. However, that is not the complete reason for Britain's decline; United Kingdom wage rates are currently 40 per cent. lower than those in Japan, but we still see a continual decline in shipbuilding.

In 1989, world shipbuilding orders increased by 26 per cent. In 1990, they increased by 12 per cent., but during that period, orders for vessels being produced in this country declined by 7·6 per cent. Britain now stands not No. 1 in the world of shipbuilding, but in 13th place—near the relegation zone.

There is a demand for vessels, and it will increase. Concern for environmental protection means that more and more countries will want ships that take into account problems such as pollution. The United States' desire to ban single-bottomed tankers, which are prone to leak, has created a demand for double-bottomed tankers. Britain should be taking its share of that market.

It is no use the Government saying, "We cannot interfere." The first time that I went to see a Minister—who happened to be the present Chancellor of the Exchequer—when Schweppes in the Walton constituency faced closure, his response was that the Government did not act against the commercial judgement of individual firms. I hope that the Government will intervene positively to assist Cammell Laird to change its status from that of a world warship yard to one that can provide for the civil market on a grand scale.

Cammell Laird is in a perfect location. It is situated on what is still one of the major rivers of the United Kingdom, and has good motorway links with the A41—a good road—the Mersey tunnel and the M53 motorway. If

the Government show a commitment to Cammell Laird and lift confidence on the Mersey, Merseyside could become the gateway of the European Community for Atlantic trade.

There is much work that can be done, and I hope that Government will consider the matter carefully. Merseyside survived the Luftwaffe, but it is having great difficulty surviving 14 years of Tory Governments who have no commitment to manufacturing industry.

The Government have destroyed this country's manufacturing base. Part of the export base of that manufacturing industry is shipbuilding. I hope that the Government will take this opportunity to do something to save Cammell Laird, to save jobs, to lift the confidence of Merseyside and to save themselves from the considerable social costs of the unemployment that will follow if they do nothing.

1.29 am

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): The sacrifices referred to in the debate on engineering just now are only too apparent in Merseyside. During the 16 years that I have been in the area, major industries have disappeared off the face of the earth. It could be said that many of them were the old smokestack industries of days gone by, but more recently there have been redundancies in industries involving highly skilled workers serving the needs of a modern society.

Merseyside has suffered enormous losses in the service sector, too. Not so many years ago, the Bank of England had a major regional headquarters in the town, established there because of the shipping trade of days gone by. When I first went to Merseyside, it was commonplace to see the remnants of the old shipping trade—insurers, bankers and carriers meeting the manufacturers to arrange the transport of goods across the Atlantic. That is all past now, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) said, Merseyside can regain its pre-eminence in the shipping industry and become an important gateway to the Atlantic for Britain and its European partners.

In an earlier debate, I referred to the knock-on effects of redundancy. My hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle) estimates that 5,000 or 6,000 jobs would be affected by these redundancies. I believe that to be a realistic estimate. These redundancies must be seen against the background of major redundancies throughout the Wirral already. The problems elsewhere in Merseyside notwithstanding, the Wirral has suffered extremely badly in recent years.

I do not believe that our major competitors would allow this to happen in their countries. Last year, I attended a meeting—my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) was on the platform—at which workers, local authority representatives, residents and local politicians came together to hear VSEL give a commitment to the yard. Many of us thought the firm's commitment somewhat shallow at the time. There was a debate about the potential exploitation of intervention funds if the yard were to give up its exclusive building of warships. VSEL made all sorts of promises to look into such possibilities, but the audience found the company's statements shallow—they were greeted with some disbelief.

Now more time has passed, and the time for action to safeguard the yard has arrived. Who says these skills are not needed? My hon. Friends have mentioned the offshore industrial possibilities. There is all sorts of potential in research at the bottom of the ocean. There is potential also in energy renewables. It would be possible to convert and apply the engineering skills developed over the yard's 160-year history to projects that meet modern-day needs. They may not include warship construction—let us hope, in many respects, that they never do. Such projects could, however, provide suitable employment for skills that already exist.

In an earlier debate, reference was made to the report recently published by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology. Its contents should be studied in the context of Cammell Laird redundancies. We need a driving force, but not of the kind represented by the nonsense produced by St. Quintin. When I first heard that name, I thought that it was a gaol. Perhaps that is where the report's authors should be put.

The report is an extraordinary document:

> "The location of companies such as Cammell Laird, Candy, Vauxhall and Unilever has enhanced the strength of the peninsula, with Port Sunlight providing an historic importance."

One does not need too many qualifications to point that out. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey pointed out, the report interestingly includes that the 160-acre site could be used for a retail park. It fails to mention that land of substantially higher acreage under the ownership of Unilever Merseyside Ltd. has been transformed into a retail park—just one and a half miles down the road.

Why did the report make no reference to the major study funded by Unilever and Wirral borough council just a few years ago, following the major redundancies at Van den Berg and Jurgen? Why was such factual information not sought? It is an extremely weak document, and I hope that the Minister will give it the treatment it deserves. There is only one place to file such a report.

If we can create the driving force to which my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead referred, and establish a partnership between the area's existing industrial talents, the Government, and the work force, and make proper utilisation of all the higher and further education skills, a future can be found that would be much more worth while than a debate about a £1 share. VSEL have had a fine return on capital invested, if one looks at it in those terms.

VSEL at Cammell Laird is not a lame duck. It has enormous latent talent, and it is the job of the House to exploit that talent not only in the interests of the workers of Cammell Laird and of Merseyside, or even of our country—but in the interests of the revitalisation of the River Mersey and of the trading potential of the whole European continent. I hope that the Minister will tonight give the north-west some confidence that the Government will be part of the campaign to which my hon. Friend referred, and an assurance that VSEL will not get away with it, and that the interests of the north-west will be properly served.

1.38 am

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Those of my hon. Friends representing constituencies in the Wirral and on Merseyside spoke powerfully tonight about the predicament of the Cammell Laird shipyard. Those of us who represent shipbuilding areas, and still

[Mr. Jim Cousins]

more those of us who spent part of our working lives in or around the shipbuilding industry, will share my hon. Friend's sentiments.

The most powerful sentiment that we share is that we see the shipbuilding industry on Merseyside and everywhere else as a modern industry with a tremendous future. It has at least as good a future as the retail industry. The Opposition consider that shipbuilding has enormous potential: we are currently witnessing a revolution in shipbuilding techniques that is converting the industry into a high-technology, high-added-value concern. As my hon. Friends have pointed out, shipyards can be easily diversified into the energy industries, the creation of sub-sea structures, and oceanic development; they also provide facilities with important environmental uses.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) pointed out, important changes in the regulation of ships and shipbuilding throughout the world can create new markets. The elimination of inferior tankers and the upgrading of roll-on, roll-off ferries, for example, have made shipbuilding a modern industry and have turned the facilities at Cammell Laird into an important national asset which must not be lightly set aside.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle) spoke of the "deadly embrace" of VSEL, and my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) described the separation of Cammell Laird from VSEL as an honourable divorce.

Mr. Frank Field: I said that I hoped that it would secure an honourable divorce. That is not what is currently on offer.

Mr. Cousins: My hon. Friend is wise enough to ensure that an equally honourable settlement is included in his project for an honourable divorce.

VSEL is not on the ropes financially; it has powerful resources. At the last count, its cash reserves were said to amount to some £160 million. It has benefited from the high interest rates of recent years; its profits are substantial and rising, and currently amount to over £50 million. Our fear—it is a fear for Cammell Laird now, but I suspect that it will also be a fear for Barrow later—is that VSEL will diversify its activities out of shipbuilding, but will not use its enormous resources to enable its work force, and the communities who depend on that work force, to share in its possibilities. That is the Government's task, as my hon. Friends have correctly pointed out.

There has already been a huge reduction in our shipbuilding capacity. We have recently seen major job losses in offshore oil, as well as in shipbuilding itself. At least four shipyards have closed in the past two years; slightly before that, capacity switched away from shipbuilding to other industries. Surely the Government can legitimately use all those facts to renegotiate the original deal with the European Community: the recent rundown in the capacity of British shipbuilding is very relevant to Europe, and to European directives. The rundown of that capacity has been far greater than that in any other European country. It also exceeds the planned rundown in capacity of the east German shipyards, even though those yards are to attract intervention fund support of more than 35 per cent. while Cammell Laird has no access to such support.

It is perverse to classify warship yards as they have been classified for European purposes. They must be given a proper opportunity to diversify away from warship building in precisely the same way as the east German shipyards must be given a proper opportunity to diversify away from the markets of the former Soviet Union and the eastern bloc on which they depended and which have now collapsed. The warship yards of Britain—and the yards of east Germany, so heavily dependent on orders from the eastern bloc—should be given a level playing field on which to operate.

In the fading days of their presidency of the European Community, the Government must explain why they have not pressed this matter with the European Community. They must also account for the amazing fact that the reconstruction of the yards cannot attract regional development grant support. They must now start to revise the original deal in connection with the losses of the shipbuilding industry—now a part of ancient history—and state aids, which gave rise to the exclusion of yards such as Cammell Laird from the intervention fund support that is now so critical to securing the future of the yard.

In a debate on European aid to shipbuilding which took place as recently as 18 November, the Minister for Industry said that he recognised the

"reality of the circumstances under which the warship yards were privatised and the arrangments entered into with the Commission at the time."

The right hon. Gentleman went on to say:

"it is possible that over time or even fairly soon there may be a change in circumstances and that the situation could be reconsidered."—[*Official Report, European Standing Committee B*; 18 November 1992; c. 32.]

The crisis that Cammell Laird now faces is just the sort of circumstances that the right hon. Gentleman must have had in mind.

The Government must now reconsider their whole position on intervention funding and on access to regional development grants in the reconstruction of the yards. They should give the British warship yards a chance to diversify from their declining markets in exactly the same way as the German Government have rightly sought to give the east German shipyards a chance to diversify away from theirs.

Those are the powerful underlying issues behind the crisis at Cammell Laird. The present owner of Cammell Laird is not short of financial resources, having been given a very favourable deal by the Government of the time to start the yard off. All these are matters on which the Government ought to respond.

1.47 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): Let me participate in the proceedings for the third time this evening.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle) on initiating this important debate. The sober way in which Opposition Members have spoken—reflecting the great sadness that we all feel at the predicament in which Cammell Laird now finds itself—has added to the power with which they have been able to advocate their case. I can assure them that I have been impressed by it.

I must apologise for the absence of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry, who is chairing the

Telecommunications Council. I hope that, as a Cheshire Member and as the Department of Trade and Industry Minister responsible for the north-west, I shall prove to be an acceptable substitute. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am pleased to have at least some support among my hon. Friends for that unarguable proposition.

Cammell Laird and its work force have made valiant attempts to cope with extremely difficult market conditions. As a Member of Parliament whose constituency is only a short distance away, I have been very struck by the calamity which the workers at Cammell Laird have suffered in recent times.

Cammell Laird merged with VSEL in June 1985, and, as a VSEL subsidiary, was subsequently privatised as a warship builder in March 1986. Of course, the political and economic world was very different six years ago, and the market for defence equipment has greatly reflected that change. It was considered then that many yards would have better prospects if privatised as warship builders. Although the circumstances which caused us to make those judgments at that time have changed, for reasons which I am sure everybody welcomes in general terms, nevertheless we do not welcome the secondary consequences which have produced the difficulty that Cammell Laird faces today.

World merchant shipbuilding capacity was also too high. That has had to be cut as well. It is instructive to look at the experience of other countries. After all, in Germany in the past 15 years, shipbuilding capacity has been cut by more than half, in Belgium by more than three quarters, in Spain by 60 per cent., in France by 79 per cent., and in many other countries in the Community by substantial amounts as well.

Britain is not alone in having experienced the traumas of change. In order to tackle the problem within Europe, the Commission, in its 1985 agreement with the United Kingdom Government, insisted that those shipyards which were privatised as warship yards could not gain access to intervention funding.

Of course, the unforeseen change to the European political scene resulted in the Ministry of Defence reviewing its requirements, and subsequently announcing "Options for Change". The defence sector then faced a situation similar to that which the merchant sector had faced previously. There was over-capacity in warship building, accompanied by a steeply declining order book. That meant that Cammell Laird's order book consisted virtually entirely of the construction of diesel submarines for the Ministry of Defence.

Cammell Laird's parent, VSEL, and defence companies, unable to diversify, could no longer maintain the levels of work force that they had previously employed. At the time of privatisation, and in a much more buoyant market, Cammell's work force was 2,100.

Therefore, VSEL, following the announcement of "Options for Change" announced, as early as October 1990, that Cammell Laird was for sale. At the same time, a necessary programme of redundancies was to be undertaken at Birkenhead and later Barrow. The United Kingdom Government, in an attempt to help VSEL in its efforts to sell Cammell, informed possible overseas buyers and United Kingdom industry of the availability of the yard through its British overseas posts, and day-to-day discussions with industry.

Part of the VSEL announcement in October 1990 stated that, if a purchaser could not be found for the Cammell Laird shipyard, it would close in the summer of 1993 following delivery of the last of the diesel submarines. At that time, it was much hoped that the yard could be sold as a whole.

Due to the shipbuilding market and partly due to the recession, no party interested in the yard could be found. VSEL therefore decided that it might be a better option to sell Cammell Laird in small plots under a zonal selling strategy.

Although there were one or two approaches, still no serious bids were received for any of the plots. At the same time, the Department continued to approach the Commission in order to see whether it would change its mind on the availability of intervention fund for warship builders. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales—he is present at this somewhat inconvenient hour of the morning, which reflects our commitment to the workers at Cammell Laird and to Merseyside in general —along with my noble Friend Lady Chalker, as the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), in his usual fair way, acknowledged, gave great support to hon. Members' attempts to resolve what appeared to be an intractable problem.

In 1990, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) sought to persuade the Commission that warship builders should have access to the intervention fund. The Commission would not agree to that, but did agree that United Kingdom merchant yards should be allowed to return to unsubsidised merchant shipbuilding. In the following year, my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), who is also in Brussels today and therefore cannot be with us, made a further unsuccessful attempt to persuade Sir Leon Brittan that warship builders should be allowed subsidy.

As recently as November this year, my officials sounded out Sir Leon Brittan's cabinet on the prospects of resuming subsidy. His officials were clear that there was no prospect that the Commission might agree to this. Officials remain in close touch with the Commission, so that if there is a change in attitude, we can ensure that any ministerial approach will produce the most favourable response.

I must tell the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) that, however laudable his aim of securing a change of status for the yard, that does not lie within our gift, unilaterally, to achieve. He is well aware that the regime under which shipbuilding is managed in the Community, particularly in respect of the subsidies available, is the preserve of the Commission. Although we attempt to influence its decisions and press strongly the case for our shipbuilding industry, it is not something about which we alone can take a decision.

Mr. Cousins: During the British presidency the relevant Ministers have held the chair at such meetings. Did our Ministers ever raise the matter of Cammell Laird with our colleagues in the Council of Ministers?

Mr. Hamilton: I cannot give that information off the top of my head, because I was not present at those meetings, but I shall, of course, inquire about it. The member state that holds the presidency must, however, act in the interests of the Community as a whole. That often produces some difficulties for those who have to bear that responsibility. Other Ministers or officials represent the United Kingdom, and I am sure that they put forward

[Mr. Hamilton]

vigorously those points that benefit our industry. I should be very surprised if we did not take full advantage of any opportunity to discuss the issue.

We are conscious that the EC decision is particularly hard to accept when, as several Opposition Members have said, the former East German yards have been given non-contract-related aid of up to 36 per cent. However, social and economic conditions there were so serious as to lead EC Ministers, in an Industry Council on 17 June 1992, as a whole to accept a special arrangement for those yards.

I emphasise that the maximum figure of 36 per cent. cannot be directly compared with the 9 per cent. at present available to shipbuilding in the rest of the Community for aid to specific contracts. Where there is no competition from outside the Community, east German prices must not fall below the level quoted by other Community shipbuilders. The original provisions of the directive already ensure that such action can be taken where there is competition from outside the Community. The Commission has also been instructed to ensure that those companies which have bought east German yards do not increase their capacity during modernisation.

Despite the unavailability of intervention fund subsidies, there was still some hope for Cammell Laird with the proposed development of an oil and gas terminal at Point of Ayr by the Hamilton brothers—no relation—who had applied for planning permission. However, Wirral borough council objected to that application, which is now awaiting a decision following a public inquiry. That was a significant factor in triggering VSEL's announcement on 2 December, reconfirming its 1990 announcement to close the yard.

The announcement was therefore not unexpected, but it still represents very sad news, and it was received with much regret both on Merseyside and elsewhere. Both management and work force have sought to secure a future for Cammell Laird, but it has not proved possible in the circumstances.

While this is a decision essentially for VSEL, the Government have repeatedly sought to help the extremely difficult market conditions. However, as a development area, Birkenhead already qualifies for the full range of DTI support measures. Cammel Laird, the local TEC and the Wirral task force have established a joint fund to assist retraining of redundant Cammell Laird employees—more than 800 have benefited so far. Some £37.5 million has been made available over five years under Wirral's city challenge programme. The newly designated freeport and associated maritime development zone form the cornerstone of the local regeneration initiative.

Ms Eagle: I asked whether the Government would be willing to support the local community's proposal to maintain Lairds as a shipbuilding area. The Minister is talking, quite properly, about what would happen if the catastrophe came about and the yard closed. I should be interested in his comments on the local community initiative that my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and I mentioned, so that we can offer workers some hope that they may have a future if we can get the yard out of VSEL's grip.

Mr. Hamilton: I well understand the hon. Lady's desire that shipbuilding should continue at a site where it has been carried on for many generations. If she and the local community can put together a viable scheme that convinces investors that shipbuilding can continue, no doubt it can be put forward. I am sure that she appreciates that, as it is not my direct responsibility, I cannot give a personal opinion, but I shall ensure that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry gives the closest consideration to her proposal.

It is very sad that circumstances have conspired in such a way that it is not possible to undertake profitable shipbuilding at Cammell Laird. It is particularly sad because no one has striven harder than the yard's management and work force to make the yard a long-term success. Submarines are still being built at Cammell Laird, but when the contracts are completed, the yard will, on present plans, be put on a care-and-maintenance basis in readiness for better times, which we hope will come. The over-capacity in world markets does not make it easier to put together the viable plans to which the hon. Lady has referred.

Mr. Wareing: Does not the Minister understand that it is not a matter of waiting for somebody else to come along with a viable plan? Surely the Government should now declare their firm commitment to help by actively intervening to achieve such a plan. After all, they must bear in mind their responsibilities for the balance of payments, and the loss of the Cammell Laird yard will make us more dependent on shipbuilding in other parts of the world. There is also the dire social cost of allowing people to lose their jobs.

Mr. Hamilton: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point, but he will know that we are not masters in our own house. We have to justify our decisions about subsidies and intervention to the European Commission and have to fit our schemes with those set out in Brussels. Otherwise, the level playing field for which Opposition Members have so eloquently called will be perceived differently by other member states of the Community. These matters must be discussed and agreed. It is not possible for us to take the kind of unilateral action that the hon. Member suggests.

Mr. Frank Field: The Minister talks about us not being masters in our own house, and there could not be a truer statement about the plight of Laird's at the moment. Earlier, he said that Laird's had been unsuccessful in bidding for orders to keep the yard going. The crucial clause that he omitted from that sentence was "under the current ownership". One of the points that we have made this evening is that VSEL clearly does not believe that it is in its interests for Laird's to succeed. When we tried to win orders for frigates, VSEL marked up tenders in a way that made it impossible for us to win.

It is important to register that fact—but as the Minister said earlier that attempts had been made to sell some of the land, it is also important to register the fact that in the weeks leading up to the announcement that the yard was to be butchered, the Merseyside development corporation attempted to buy from the shipyard vacant land which nobody thinks will be used for shipbuilding, yet it was impossible for a sale to be agreed. Several people have reported similar reactions from VSEL, which seems to suggest that the company has a long-term strategy for the

yard vis-a-vis its value for VSEL's books, but not a long-term strategy for building ships and keeping the workers employed.

Mr. Hamilton: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, and again, I shall draw it to the attention to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry. It is not possible for me to comment on it now because I am not in possession of the facts.

In spite of the sad story that I have catalogued, I am especially pleased to be able to announce that the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) has just approved a £2·45 million city grant towards a £7·2 million scheme of industrial development in the challenge area at Valley road in Birkenhead. The project involves the reclamation of 11 acres of derelict land and the building of 173,000 sq ft of industrial and warehouse units, which will provide space for 400 new jobs.

I know that, in the midst of recession, from which we hope we are emerging—there are now signs which give us grounds for optimism—this may all seem like rather cold comfort. I appreciate that, in the context of the difficulties that we have experienced in recent months and years, what is happening will be hard to take, but we have to look to the future.

The Government are firmly committed to the regeneration of Merseyside. It is a massive task, and it will not be achieved overnight. Industrial change is always painful, and when Labour Governments were in power they had to face similar traumatic changes. We are committed to cope with those changes and to ensure that as far as possible the pains of transition are diminished, if not eliminated.

Although I do not know what future is in store for Cammell Laird, for its employees and for the site that it occupies, I can say that the Government take seriously everything that has been said in the debate, and that we shall do our level best to ensure that the Wirral constituents of hon. Members on both sides of the House are given the best future that it is within our power to give them.

London Transport

2.7 am

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): There is a tradition in the House that if one has an interest in a topic one ought to declare it, so it is only appropriate for me to declare that I have an interest in the improvement of London transport because I am a frequent user of it. I am a frequent user of the Northern line, which is all too often described as the "misery line". A former chairman of London Transport, Sir Keith Bright, once described it as an abomination, and I do not believe that the quality of the service has improved sufficiently for that description to cease to apply.

My fundamental belief is that the only answer to London's traffic problems is to increase investment in public transport. It is clear that there can be little additional road building in London, because Londoners' resistance to such developments is great, the costs are huge, and the benefits are slight in terms of relieving traffic congestion. One of the lessons of building urban motorways has been that all too often the better road immediately generates increased traffic, and at the end of the day there is no less congestion. Road building in cities is a wonderful example of Say's law, with supply creating its own demand.

The only road that offers much hope for improving traffic flows in London is the M25, London's ring road. The widening of the M25 and perhaps eventually the building of a "son of M25" offers some hope for Londoners. What we must also recognise is that, while there will be little additional road building, car ownership in London is likely to increase by a further 50 per cent. over the next 20 years. It is up to the Government and to others to decide what can be done to stop London grinding to a complete halt.

As I see it, the solution is a massive increase in investment in public transport. It is true that my hon. Friend the Minister has approved a number of red routes, but they merely delay Armageddon. They may speed up the flow of traffic into central London, but they can do nothing to provide parking spaces in central London. There are others who see road pricing as a panacea for the problems of traffic in London. We have still to discover whether it is technically feasible, and at the very best it is only a medium-term solution. I believe that, ideally, any road pricing should be introduced after public transport has been improved, rather than before.

It is common ground in the House that London Transport was starved of investment in the early 1980s. The Greater London council, the demise of which is unregretted in London, made a deliberate decision to subsidise fares rather than to improve services. The Livingstone years were the locust years for London Transport. Investment in rolling stock was at £60·6 million in 1980-81. By 1984-85, it had fallen to £17·7 million.

The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) was responsible for a massive decline in investment in rolling stock by London Transport. That inadequate investment was used so that there could be cheaper fares on London Transport for American tourists. The GLC should have produced a better service for Londoners rather than cheaper fares for visitors to the capital. The task facing London Transport and my hon. Friend the

[Mr. John Marshall]

Minister today is to make good the neglect of the past, to invest in new routes and to provide the services that will be necessary once the recession is over.

I will talk for a minute about the Northern line, the London Transport service that I endure all too often. On the Northern line, we have an information service which was once described as being at the frontiers of technology, but it is far behind those frontiers today and is frequently regarded as unsatisfactory by those who use it. The trains of the Northern line are frequently graffiti-ridden, uninviting and not as clean as one would like. It is true that London Transport has sought to improve the quality of the stations. I pay tribute to those who work on London Transport for the amount of refuse that they collect at the stations, but it is a poor reflection on those who use the stations that London Transport has to remove so much rubbish day in and day out.

The new Angel station on the Northern line is substantially better than the previous station. Building new stations and improving other stations is essential if we are to get the increased traffic that is expected. However, although we can see some clean stations and some new stations, many of the other stations on the Northern line and elsewhere suffer from inadequate investment. Only one escalator out of three at London Bridge station was working today. We frequently find that lifts are not working. The saga of Highgate station is well known in other parts of London. Many of our stations need a radical overhaul; the clocks do not work and there are far too few automatic ticket gates. There is also a need for massive modernisation.

The autumn statement affects London Transport in two respects. The first is that conditional approval was given for investment in the Jubilee line. That was warmly welcomed by all who are concerned about the future of London. The Jubilee line extension will benefit docklands and certain parts of south London that currently lack adequate public transport. However, many of us are concerned about the reluctance of the banks to cough up. Today's—or was it yesterday's—edition of the *Evening Standard* suggests that the banks were somewhat reluctant to cough up their share of the Jubilee line money. What happens if the banks do not cough up? Will the extension then be doomed? What will happen to the £1.4 billion that the Government were committed to spending on the Jubilee line extension?

If the Jubilee line extension is cancelled because the banks refuse to pay their part of the bill, I hope that the rest of the money will be spent elsewhere in London. The need is there. People who travel on the London underground know that it must be improved. However, much more importantly, my right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Secretary for Transport, by agreeing to the extension to the Jubilee line, have told the House and the country that the £1.4 billion in available for investment in the line.

If, for reasons created by the banks, that money is not going to be spent on the Jubilee line, my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London should use that good local government term "virement" and say that the money that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said would allocated to transport in London should benefit from virement from the Jubilee line to other services in London Underground.

The second feature of the autumn statement which affects London Transport is the reduction from £752 million to £530 million in the external financing limit of London Transport's core business for 1993-94. There were other reductions for 1994-95 and 1995-96. I remind the House that that compares with a recommendation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission that we should spend £750 million on London Underground. I realise that the 1993-94 figures are set in concrete, but I ask my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues to consider the figures further out. Just as they were willing to change the figures agreed in 1991, I hope that they will be willing to change the medium-term figures agreed in 1992.

I would also like my hon. Friend the Minister to consider his budget for transport in London and see whether he can seek virement from road building to public transport. The return to Londoners will be much better if he does that. We must also consider new ways of financing investment in public transport in London. Today's *Financial Times* reported that the Government, the Confederation of British Industry and London Transport should be looking at new ways of financing the necessary investment to improve our transport facilities.

I hope that we can consider the role of the private sector as several stations, including Hammersmith and Mansion House, have been improved by property developers. Today, I recognise that not many property developers are trying to improve anything; they are merely trying to survive. At some stage in the next two to three years, however, the developers will come back to town. I hope that London Transport will be encouraged to use the skill, the know-how and the cash of private developers to improve stations, because improving stations is essential if we are to get better services within London.

I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to examine the possibility of private sector leasing. We have allowed British Rail to lease rolling stock for some of the south-east train lines. If British Rail is allowed to lease rolling stock, there is no logical reason why London Transport should not be allowed to do the same.

I should also like my hon. Friend and the Confederation of British Industry to examine the possibility of industry making a greater contribution to London Transport. It is essential for the prosperity of shops, offices and the tourist industry in London, to have a decent underground network. We should consider whether those important sources of employment in London can provide extra money to revive London Transport.

As the theme of my speech, I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the editorial in the *Financial Times* which summarises the argument in one sentence:

"If London is to maintain its international competitive position, the government needs to think urgently about how it is going to cope with the strains on its infrastructure."

My hon. Friend is capable of that thought, and I believe that he will put forward many positive proposals in the next few months.

2.22 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am grateful that the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) chose this subject for his ballot.

I wonder whether the House would first bear with me for a moment. I would like to preface my comments by sharing with the House a considerable sadness to my Liberal Democrat colleagues. About 6 o'clock last evening, the senior parliamentary researcher for the Liberal Democrats here in the House of Commons died. He was aged about 30 and had for the last couple of weeks fought pneumonia and cancer. He had worked in the House for several years, and led the team to research people who back us up here. His name was Ewan Cameron. He was an extremely bright and able and greatly respected young man. He worked for me and other colleagues before he came to his most recent job. The parliamentary staff and my colleagues are devastated. Often, we go without saying how grateful we are to the people who, do the work, unseen and unsung, to keep us well informed, well briefed and well equipped with arguments from both sides of the House. It would be unfair and unreasonable of me tonight, and I would not have wished, to begin without paying the greatest tribute to Ewan, whom we will all miss greatly. We send our love and wishes to his parents and family.

Londoners probably spend as much time talking about London Transport as about the weather. That does not apply only to those who use the buses, trains and tubes. The subject of London Transport is raised fairly regularly in the House, and it is a dominant issue during transport questions. It has a far greater proportion of political interest than the 15 per cent. of us who live in London might justify, or even the greater percentage of those who work here and visit here.

We are grateful that a Minister has responsibility for London Transport. I pay tribute, as others have done and I expect will do, to the Minister for Transport in London for his interest and knowledge. Inevitably, once he saw that the subject had been selected, he would expect several questions about what is going on. I want to ask several questions. The opportunity is timely, given that it is only a matter of weeks since the autumn statement, which obviously had a severe impact on London Transport funding, the subject of tonight's debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not know whether you noticed the comments of London Transport in response to the Chancellor's statement on the funding of transport in the years ahead. The chairman of London Transport was not pleased with the result. That is not surprising. There was effectively a 30 per cent. cut in funding, according to London Transport, as a result of the autumn statement. That came as a disappointment to London Transport and London Members of Parliament after last year's statement and commitments of considerable extra investment.

I shall quote what the Secretary of State for Transport said last year, and the response of the chairman of London Transport this November. Last year the Secretary of State said:

"By 1993-94, London Underground investment in the existing railway should be over £700 million a year. This takes full account of the conclusions of the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission earlier this year, which noted the need"—

this is important—

"for an average expenditure of £700 to £750 million a year in order to provide an acceptably modern network."

The response to this year's figures by Mr. Wilfred Newton was:

"We now face the real prospect of deteriorating services, and the loss of some 7,000 jobs in supply industries . . . Twelve months later we are facing savage cuts: 30 per cent. next year, 31 per cent. the year after and 26 per cent. in 1995-96. This returns us to the weary stop-go cycle we had every reason to believe was behind us. Higher fares next year and lower wage increases are dwarfed by the severity of today's swingeing cuts."

Of course, we could go back into history and have an interesting and relevant debate about the level of investment during the time when the Greater London council was in charge of London Transport. We rehearsed much of that debate when we discussed the Bill which set up London Transport. I served on the Standing Committee which considered that Bill, and the Bill which abolished the GLC. I might add that I did not support either Bill. However, such a historical debate would not be particularly helpful now.

The key issue is the future and future levels of investment. It is clear that, unless something changes, expenditure on London Transport will be in difficulty as a result of the Government's commitment to cutting public expenditure. We shall lose a great deal in the years ahead —not this year but in the years from next April on. I am sure that the Minister and his colleagues do not rejoice in that. They have had to take their share, like everyone else, of the brunt of a decision made by the Government about cutting public expenditure.

However, we must ask some appropriate questions. First, what will be done about the reduced investment? What chance is there of those cuts being reversed? What chance is there of a return to the increased levels of investment which the Government accepted should be made? What chance is there of the public investment which many Members of Parliament—not only Opposition Members—have argued is necessary if the London transport system is to be equipped to deal with the demands of the decade, let alone the decades ahead?

Mr. Wilfred Newton went on to say:

"cuts in investment will mean worsening service quality in order to maintain safety. Last month, the Underground met every Government service quality objective, five months ahead of schedule. That progress has been torpedoed today."

He also said that many of the basic infrastructure projects would be at risk. He dealt with specific matters of anxiety, such as plans to relieve congestion of overcrowded stations, and provide public information—all measures for which the public are asking and would find useful. He ended by saying that probable—I accept that it is probably —London Transport would not be able to proceed with the new escalators between Bank and Monument, and would certainly have to recommend the closure of Aldwych station. That is not an encouraging prospect.

Against that background, what will happen to the level of investment and to the need for security of investment year on year? Transport planners, like any other team of experts or engineers, need to know what money will be available this year and the year after, because transport planning is a medium to long-term exercise. When one develops new underground lines or improves busy stations, one cannot suddenly bring people on site or take them away. The key question is, what will happen next April and what can we do about it?

I also have a short and fairly straightforward list of more immediate questions. I suppose that the Minister would not expect me to do otherwise than to begin the list with a question about the proposed extension to the Jubilee line. The hon. Member for Hendon, South mentioned it, and quoted from Monday's *Evening*

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Standard, which suggested that there was not going to be a green light for the line this side of Christmas. I do not know what sort of light the line has so far had—perhaps it has been one of those Christmas tree lights, which has been flashing on and off. But where, oh where is the green light for the Jubilee line? I hope that it will come soon. I have made no secret about it—I have not spent hours in the House and elsewhere lobbying for the Jubilee line to give up now. I know that the Minister and the Government are equally committed, but commitment and conclusion are as yet apart.

I hear mixed noises. I would be grateful if the Minister could update us and give us some encouragement that the Jubilee line will go ahead, and that everything is being done to bring together and work on those people who have an interest in it, to get a decision as soon as possible. The project team and the engineers are in the wings, waiting to go, much of the preparatory work has been done with Parliament square and Bridge street having been dug up as part of that work. I am not complaining about that, but we are now waiting for the real thing. The sooner the holes are dug, the sooner it will all be over.

I declare an interest, as my constituency will have the largest part of the Jubilee line extension. My constituents look forward to the end product, but they will have to put up with a lot of disruption, spoil removal and noise in the meantime. Their plea, and mine, is "let us get on with it." I should be grateful to find out whether that is going to happen. If there is no specific news yet, what do we have to do to bring it about, where do we have to go, whom do we have to see, and which bankers' doors do we have to bang on to get a decision? Please, could we have a decision for Christmas? It would be a jolly good Christmas present, and I promise that I would close my eyes and go to bed early if there was a prospect of Father Christmas delivering that commitment at the end of the week.

Secondly, can we do anything to ensure that we do not lose the Thames riverbus? The Minister was good enough to come to my constituency to relaunch the service, from Greenland pier in the Surrey docks, earlier this year. The riverbus had a difficult beginning, but since its management changed hands it has done better and carried more people. The private sector has subsidised it to keep it going but, judging by the reports, it seems shaky, and a potential competitor seems to have received ministerial endorsement.

I have a simple view of the riverbus. The Thames is the least congested, most central and most pleasant transport route in London, linking many of the most important transport interchanges. If we could have a riverbus that intersected London Transport's infrastructure rail and tube networks, if it could appear on the tube map and if we could have an integrated ticket system we would be well away. I should be grateful to hear about the Government's commitment to ensuring that the riverbus remains afloat in some form—and for a sign that they will try to ensure that the service does not sink but is increasingly available to and used by Londoners.

Next, what is the effect of the cuts announced in the underground service on the modernisation and works needed at many crucial stations? Obviously, I have an interest, with four stations in my constituency: London Bridge, which is very busy; the Elephant and Castle, Northern and Bakerloo lines, which are very busy; and the two stations on the East London line—Surrey Quays, or "Surrey Docks" as local people still prefer to call it, and Rotherhithe.

The other day I was with the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), the leader of Southwark council, the chief executive, Uncle Tom Cobbley and all at the Elephant and Castle, unveiling the next stage of the murals in the underpass, which are part of a programme supported by Government funding to make the Elephant and Castle safer, more commercially viable and more encouraging and welcoming to users.

However, the Northern Line station entrance is still grim and has put off some investors. Additional work on it was started some years ago but remains unfinished. Bare concrete spalling on the outside makes one think that one could be entering anything from a construction site to a urinal. It is important, because it serves an area in which a lot of effort has been made on a partnership basis between the local authority, the Government, the private sector and residents to try to bring the Elephant back to life. The owners painted the shopping centre pink to try to make people feel that things were brightening up. People may not like it, but at least they notice it. It has brought business and other investors back to the Elephant.

My final question is about buses, particularly the concessionary fares scheme. There has been a round of negotiations, as there is bound to be under the present system, to consider whether the concessionary fares scheme is to be continued in future. That requires all the local authorities to decide their position. Under legislation, there is a fallback position, which is less good if local authorities do not agree.

My constituents over state retirement age ask me most often, "Will we still have our concessionary fares scheme?" It matters enormously to them. I appreciate that many colleagues from other parts of the country may be jealous of London Members because they do not have a similarly generous scheme. It is worth keeping in London, however, irrespective of whether such schemes are less generously funded in other parts of the country, because in areas with less car ownership, it provides mobility and access, and makes London theirs. Thanks to this scheme, many of our citizens who might otherwise be imprisoned by physical or financial circumstances are enabled to travel round the city.

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman join me in condemning the politically motivated attempt year after year to frighten pensioners in London that the scheme is about to go? At every annual round since at least 1986, it has been suggested that my constituents and many others are about to lose that scheme. It has caused much unnecessary worry and suffering to elderly people.

Mr. Hughes: I condemn all rumours and scaremongering, but I attend the meetings of the Greater London forum for the elderly that are held in the House and those of other cross-London pensioners' organisations, and I know that they are not scaremongering when they express their concern. They regularly ask me and other colleagues across the party divide to campaign to ensure that this scheme is guaranteed. The way that the system operates —which does not guarantee it indefinitely, but only from year to year—inevitably generates concern.

I should be grateful if the Minister would say how far the negotiations have got. I have made inquiries, and understand that many boroughs have agreed to endorse the scheme fully. I believe that there may, however, be at least one borough—Kingston—that has not. If that is so, I am sad, and it would be helpful if the Minister could give us some accurate information on the state of play. What can be done to ensure that scheme, in its present form, is fully guaranteed for the future?

Those four specific issues—the Jubilee line, the riverbus, tube station improvements and the concessionary fares scheme—are foremost in my mind tonight in relation to London transport, and in the minds of my constituents. If I can be reassured on those four topics, I shall go off on my Christmas holiday a happier man.

2.37 am

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): The Opposition are grateful that the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) succeeded in the ballot and has raised the subject of the funding of London transport. It gives us the opportunity to set out once again our case and our criticism of the Government for their chronic underfunding of London's transport and the consequent hardship and higher costs that it brings for London commuters. The policies now pursued by the Government will create a bow wave of problems that will probably accumulate for future generations.

The hon. Member for Hendon, South painted a canvas of some criticism of the Government's stewardship of London's transport, but his fellow commuters on the Northern line and his constituents in Hendon, South will note that he failed to press charges against the Government. Indeed, I do not think that he even cautioned the Government, who have failed not just the hon. Gentleman's constituents but everyone in the 32 London boroughs and the thousands of other commuters who daily travel into the metropolis from the surrounding counties. I think that that is because the hon. Gentleman must partly share the Government's guilt in that he has sought to support and sustain Government economic policies which clearly aggravate the existing crisis in the funding of London's transport.

The hon. Member for Hendon, South referred to the autumn statement, its consequences and the betrayal of promises to London transport. Therefore, he must share much of the criticism that Northern line commuters will level at the Government. I think that he is a supporter of the plans to privatise the railways, which will obviously affect commuters coming into work in greater London.

Mr. John Marshall: The hon. Gentleman will know that one of the reasons why I and others favour privatisation is that, wherever privatisation has taken place, it has led to a massive increase in investment—and that is surely what is needed on the railways.

Mr. Mackinlay: All the evidence before the Select Committee on Transport has shown not only that privatisation will not bring investment, but that there is now a hiatus among some important industries connected with the railways, particularly those which build rolling stock. They have empty order books and are worried about the future. Even if orders for rolling stock were placed today, it would probably be too late to support and sustain some of these private industries.

There is currently a haemorrhage in rail freight due to the hiatus and uncertainty created by Government policies. It will not be possible to put the genie back into the bottle. Everyday that more freight is lost to British Rail means the loss of more income for British Rail and additional congestion and pollution on our roads. This is the result of the Government even having contemplated privatisation; the impact of implementing their policies in full can only be guessed at.

The hon. Member for Hendon, South took a ritualistic swipe at the Greater London Council. The problems of trying to keep the metropolis moving at minimum cost are manifestly aggravated by the lack of a strategic planning authority for greater London. The *Wandsworth Borough News* recently stated that the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) wants the Minister for Transport in London to co-ordinate bridge closures so that they caused the least possible disruption. Three Thames bridges were closed simultaneously, with enormous attendant problems for those crossing from south London to the north bank.

The hon. Member said that the problem was caused by a lack of co-ordination between Wandsworth and the borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and went on:

"Of course bridges have to be repaired, but surely it makes sense for someone to co-ordinate this and make sure that only one bridge is affected at a time."

Since the abolition of the GLC there has been no such co-ordinating body. The case of the bridges amply shows that mobility planning in London is in a state of near-anarchy.

London Transport, British Rail and the other agencies which provide mobility around our capital city are in crisis. That crisis is indicative of a much wider problem. It is not so much a case of a capital region in decline as of a proud and ancient London falling into decay. That decay is exemplified by what is happening to investment in public transport. It is a matter of fact that the Government continue to cut investment in real terms in London Transport, and in the underground especially. In the autumn statement, the Government chose to renege on their promise to accept the recommendation of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission—that the underground should get £700 million a year. As the hon. Member for Hendon, South said, that was cut to £513 million a year—a major reduction, resulting from the Government's mishandling of the economy.

The answer lies in a change of economic strategy. There is an immediate need for some Government initiatives, until such time as a strategic authority for London is set up —democratically elected and installed, I hope, by a Labour Government—to maximise the use of public transport, to minimise the costs to customers and to ensure that, where there has to be road traffic, there is also action to minimise increases in pollution, noise and congestion.

The hon. Members for Hendon, South and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred to the River Thames. It is a tragedy that that great potential asset is so under-used. I hope that future policies initiated by a strategic authority or by a Labour Government—albeit some time away—will endeavour to exploit the River Thames commercially, as a way of taking not hundreds but thousands of people to their place of work, as well as making sure that it has an important part to play in the recreation of Londoners and those who live in surrounding counties.

[Mr. Mackinlay]

The question of a strategic authority cannot be divorced from land use planning. Transport planning and funding cannot be divorced from land use planning, which also supports the argument for a central strategic authority—which the Government have failed to provide. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey referred to the response of London Transport's chairman when he realised the impact that the autumn statement would have on his service.

Although I was not present, I guess that London Transport's chairman threw up his hands when he said, "The result of the autumn statement returns us to the weary stop-go cycle we had reason to believe was behind us." One can legitimately claim that there will continue to be problems in the years immediately ahead, and a bow-wave of problems for Londoners in the next decade and in the decades beyond as a result of the underfunding announced in the autumn statement.

Investment in London Underground will effectively be cut by 30 per cent. in 1993-94, 31 per cent. in 1994-95, and 26 per cent. in 1995-96. The Government would have liked to brag today that the Jubilee line extension had been given the go-ahead, but we know from last night's *Evening Standard* that they find themselves in an embarrassing situation because that cannot be done.

It never ceases to surprise me that people who advocate and defend market forces, and who always project the idea of private investment as the panacea for all our problems, are taken aback when things go wrong. Conservative Members have amazing cheek when they criticise everyone but themselves. In the case of the hiatus in the Jubilee line's funding and planning, there have been complaints and criticisms about the banks. The banks have a duty to their shareholders to maximise their profits and minimise their losses and to ensure that all risks are kept to the minimum. The hiatus in the funding of the Jubilee line shows that the banks have legitimate grounds for caution.

That is a statement of fact. We require from Government real intervention, to ensure that the Jubilee extension is built with the Minimum of delay. I listened carefully to the comments of the hon. Member for Hendon, South but thought that he was rather defeatist, in that he invited the Minister to stand up and say, "The Jubilee line extension is off, and we shall spend the Government money set aside for that on other forms of transport for London." That is not good enough, and it would be a great betrayal of the people and businesses that are dependent on that line being constructed, and of those who anticipated that jobs would be created thereby assisting in the regeneration of a London now in deep recession. The Minister at least owes the House a reassurance tonight that it is still planned to build the Jubilee line extension, and that there are no great problems, despite the reports in the *Evening Standard*.

I am also concerned about the impact of cuts in funding for London's transport services—and for the underground in particular—on employment in London. Cuts in funding for the existing network—quite apart from the Jubilee line extension—will unquestionably increase unemployment, whereas we and others were hoping, of course, for an injection of funds to stimulate demand for jobs and services in the capital.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey referred to the pending privatisation of London Buses. In 1991-92 London Buses spent £24 million on new vehicles, and a similar programme is required each year to tackle the problem of its aging fleet. It is highly unlikely that, if privatisation goes ahead, any comparable investment will be made by the private sector. Privatisation will mean buses which do not turn up, buses which are unsafe, buses which have missed servicing, buses which will add to the pollution problem and, of course, higher fares. I fear that London residents do not fully appreciate what the impact of privatisation will be; it has, of course, already been experienced by people living outside London.

Like the Minister for Transport in London, I represent an Essex constituency. I am both frustrated and concerned at receiving letters from constituents—after a general election which my party regrettably lost—asking why their bus service have been curtailed. I am forced to explain to them that, when a bus services is privatised, its operators have a legitimate duty to the shareholders and themselves to maximise profits and minimise costs: they are not in the business of running services at a loss. I expect my constituents' experience to be replicated on many services across the London region if privatisation goes ahead.

We are told that, along with the proposals to privatise the bus fleet, we must endure the franchising of British Rail services. That is an important subject, which requires another occasion for the probing of the Government and the exposure of the folly of their policy. It should be said, however, that that policy has already halted investment in both rolling stock and the refurbishment of much of Network SouthEast. That, too, will present a bow wave of problems for future years.

Across London there is some political agreement, both between the Association of London Authorities—which largely represents Labour councils—and the London Boroughs Association, which represents Conservative councils. They have agreed priorities for investment in London's public transport, arguing that anything less than the £700 million promised by the Government for improvements to the London underground will prove catastrophic for both commuters and the network.

The extension of the Jubilee line requires £1.7 billion. The associations insist that the extension must be built, both to fulfil the moral commitment made to the people of London and to provide all the employment and commercial consequences to which I have referred. They want progress on the Hackney-Chelsea line, on crossrail, on the south London orbital rail link and on the British Rail east London line. They look forward to invest in light rail systems, to the completion of the planned extension of the docklands light railway, and to improvements in the interchange between rail and underground. They want 450 new buses, including low-floor single-deck buses to enable people with disabilities to use public transport. That programme, in addition to planned maintenance and safety work, is required and expected by Conservative and Labour politicians on behalf of their electorate, but the Government seem unable or unwilling to deliver it.

I make one further reference to rail privatisation. It is proposed that the track authority will charge out the full costs of the use of track and related facilities. Will that mean that London Underground will have to meet the full costs of the British Rail track over which its services run? If so, the inevitable consequence will be higher fares on London Underground. That question has not been

answered in the White Paper or the franchising document or in the Select Coimmittee on Transport. Where there is an interface between British Rail and London Underground, what will be the cost to London Underground of the establishment of the track authority?

I make no apology for referring to a matter that has not so far been raised in the debate—the future of the British Transport police and their role on London's underground system. With no publicity whatever, the Government issued a consultation document entitled, "The Future Status of British Transport Police". For a long time, that document was not even available in the Vote Office and it was certainly given no fanfare. It was supposed to address the question of the future of the British Transport police following the privatisation of British Rail, but it also contains an important section which should concern each and every Londoner. The Government are considering removing British Transport police from London's underground.

Everyone who uses London's underground and tries to travel around the city will consider such a proposal foolhardy in the extreme. It is also discourteous to the British Transport police, given the high standard of skilled policing that we receive from them on London's underground. It is true that there are not enough police on the underground, but despite the lack of resources the British Transport police provide a good service and who are endeavouring, with some success, to reduce crime on the system. In my view, it is ludicrous to contemplate their removal. I hope that the Minister will reassure us today by telling us that the suggestion has already been consigned to the dustbin.

No doubt the proposal has been dictated by the need to save some money, but it will no do so. It will merely mean more hazards to those who use the underground by increasing the risk of crime. In additon, we must remember that the British Transport police have always played an important role in trying to promote safety. Many of us will recall the great bravery of members of that force at the time of the King's Cross fire.

It is only fair that I should refer to the staff who try to provide a good service on London's transport. It is fashionable to criticise those whom the public meet. Their morale is low because they are constantly the subject of unfair criticism by travellers who are themselves deeply frustrated by the poor service that they receive. The staff on our underground and at British Rail Network SouthEast stations get all the brickbats, yet they are merely victims.

It is the Government who are responsible for the delays, the cancellation of services and the high fares. They are the people who presided over the decline in mobility and in our transport system throughout London. I hope that when the next opportunity arises—albeit some time away—the good people of London will reflect upon that point and that their criticism of the guilty people will be reflected in the ballot box.

3.4 am

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on having secured this debate and on his assiduity in still being here at 3 am. He was in some doubt as to whether it is Monday or Tuesday. I know that it is 15 December, which, if I may be forgiven and if it is not lese-majesté, is a dies mirabilis for me because, on this day four years ago, we won the Epping Forest by-election. I should like to record that fact for that, if for no other reason. Although it is a huge pleasure to be here, amid the sea of faces that I see arrayed in front of me, that fact gives the debate a particular piquancy.

I welcome my hon. Friends the Members for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) and the hon. Members for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) and for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), who I imagine might have strayed into the Chamber awaiting further events.

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): The Minister should be apprehensive.

Mr. Norris: That, of course, is not for me, I am delighted to say. In particular, our colleague, the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) is clearly concentrating hard on future debates. I do not propose to disturb his intense and voluble concentration at this hour.

I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) would convey my condolences to Ewan Cameron's relatives. I am very sorry to hear the news that the hon. Gentleman brought to the House. There is very little else that one can say. The hon. Gentleman very much appreciated what Mr. Cameron was able to do for his party and, indeed, for the hon. Gentleman personally.

I should welcome specifically the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay). He is an Essex man. I am, of course, only an honorary Essex man; I was chosen because I had the necessary Essex credentials, which, at the time, were a great deal of money and very little taste. I have since managed to shed at least one of those credentials. I now have slightly less money and probably even less taste, but that is arguable. The hon. Gentleman is deputising for his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who is engaged in deep research at this very minute and is unavoidably unable to be with us. None the less, we have had a very interesting debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, south raised a question about roads. Colleagues have interpreted the debate as being about London Transport, the company. I suppose that the debate is capable of being interpreted as meaning London transport generally.

My hon. Friend made an important point. I very much agree with him that road-building is not the answer to graphs which show ever-escalating vehicle ownership. It is an extraordinary phenomenon. I view such statistics rather on the same basis as one views population forecasts—not as inevitabilities and therefore something for which we have to plan by laying down acres of concrete, but, on the contrary, as a warning of what is likely to happen unless we take action to change people's habits of vehicle ownership.

On that basis, my hon. Friend will know that in London we have four large continuing projects—the A406, the A13, the Hackney M11 link road and the east London river crossing. Those routes apart, each of them serves a distinct strategic purpose—our main aim for roads in London is to relieve congestion and to reduce accidents. That is exactly as it should be.

I do not agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South that red routes merely delay Armageddon. I appreciate his argument that, whenever we do something

[Mr. Norris]

to improve road capacity, all that happens is that traffic inevitably fills up the available road space. However, one of the things that has impressed me about the pilot programme is that it has not concentrated on maximising volume; it has regulated existing volume. The number of vehicles per hour entering the red route pilot scheme now at peak times is 1,200, which was the number before the pilot began.

It is important to emphasise that bus times and bus reliability have improved considerably as a result of that pilot route—that is extremely relevant to London Transport. As a consequence, 8,700 extra passengers a week now use the 43 and the 43X on that route, in comparison with a Londonwide reduction in bus patronage of 2·5 per cent. No doubt that reduction is a consequence of the fall in general economic activity.

The difference in passenger numbers achieved under the pilot scheme gives us hope for the future. We should follow that marker, which suggests that we can make people switch to public transport if it is made better by improving reliability and journey times.

The other great advantage of the red route pilot scheme has been the reduction in the accident rate. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South shares my delight in that. Over the pilot red route, the accident rate has reduced by 17 per cent., as opposed to the 7 per cent. reduction achieved in the boroughs through which that route passes. That pilot route has been an excellent experiment and we are now embarked upon the substantive programme to provide about 300 miles of priority routes.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I cannot disagree with the Minister on the figures, but he will be aware that there is a great deal of apprehension in the areas that will be subject to the red route programme for next year. People believe that the economic activity of roadside business should not be prejudiced, especially at a time of particular economic difficulty. A balance must be struck to ensure that the proposed red routes do not lead to the closure of shops and small businesses. I hope that the Minister will keep that in mind when he talks in the months ahead to the traffic director for London and others.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman is aware that I have a great deal of affection for businesses, especially small ones. I have made it clear at every stage that, if I seriously believed that the pilot route programme had a disadvantageous effect on businesses, I would stop it dead in its tracks. I repeat that assurance.

Although there is evidence, sadly, that businesses on the pilot red route have done badly in the past couple of years, the effects of failure have been no less sad for businesses further away from that route. I believe that that is now accepted by most objective observers. The evidence suggests that the improved legislation of parking—more than 600 new, legal, free parking spaces have been provided on the pilot route—has improved facilities for businesses in terms of not only their customers but loading and unloading. I accept the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, and I assure him that I am keeping it in mind. There is no evidence from the pilot route, however, to suggest that prospects for businesses have been damaged.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South made a thoughtful speech and I should like to refer to some of the issues that he raised. The report of the MMC on London Underground has been mentioned several times. The House will recall that that report recognised the concept of the decently modern metro. It quoted London Transport's estimate that between £700 million and £750 million was needed to achieve that aim in a broad 10-year cycle. We remain committed to that concept and those estimates have yet to be substantiated and fleshed out by LT.

I await with interest a more detailed plan showing how we shall achieve our decently modern metro target, what standards we shall be looking for and how they will be achieved in terms of time and money. Neither the MMC report nor the Government's response made a commitment to any particular level of funding. They stressed London Underground's estimate of the likely funds that would be needed.

Mr. Mackinlay: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Norris: Such is the interest in this debate that I may find myself short of time, but I should not want to deny the hon. Gentleman his hour of glory at the Dispatch Box. I hope that the hon. Member for Knowsley, North will be even more prepared to join in the debate.

Mr. Mackinlay: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way and I shall be brief; I accept that earlier I took longer than I proposed. In February, the Minister for Public Transport reiterated that the Government accepted the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report which showed a need for funding of £700 million per annum. He went on to say:

"a massive programme of improvements will be made to the Central line". *[Official Report*, 17 February 1992; Vol 204, c. 157.]

He also said that there would be consequential refurbishment of the Angel station and that other stations would be improved. Is that still on target, or is it on the backboiler as a result of the autumn statement?

Mr. Norris: I hoped not to have to say this to the hon. Gentleman because he is a decent chap and, although I am glad that few people are listening to me say it, I rather like him: he should not pick up briefs from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, who has obviously told him that his chances for promotion to the shadow Cabinet will be increased by accepting them. He should know that Angel station is open now. The refurbishment is worth £72 million; perhaps the hon. Member for Newham, North-West should have told the hon. Gentleman that before inviting him to speculate on the outcome of London Underground's plan. Never mind; better luck next time. We are all grateful to see the hon. Gentleman here and hope that he will stay for at least the next three years.

We have stressed that the amount of funding for London Transport must be determined against the Government's overall spending priorities. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey stressed that this is a difficult year, in which it has been necessary for every Department to rein in some of its expectations.

I have always taken the view that public expenditure projects must be assessed on the basis of not only desirability, which is important, but affordability. Every hon. Member, especially those who have been involved in local government, knows about the cut that is actually a

cut in our ambitions rather than in cash. We have been able to maintain total funding for London Transport, including the Jubilee line, at about £1 billion a year over the next three years, which is a substantial commitment indeed. It is higher in real terms than in any previous year prior to the current one and higher than any level achieved when the Labour party was in office.

It is for London Transport to determine the details of the expenditure survey results that we have made available, but it is likely that London Transport will be able to spend about £500 million more over the next three years than it has been able to spend in the past three years.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South asked why leasing is available to British Rail but not to London Underground. I am sure that he is aware that for leasing to be attractive to the Government, we must see an after-market for the product to be leased; in other words, the Government merely wish to use the asset for a set period and then pass it on. In so far as we have created an after-market in rail services, through the franchising proposals, it is clearly appropriate for the Government to allow British Rail, subject to certain conditions, to enter into leasing commitments for rolling stock. In the absence of any such after-market for London Underground, leasing of itself is of no advantage to the Government.

We must remember that, without the transference of risk, the Government cannot contemplate leasing on any terms other than those on which they contemplate other borrowings. The Government are the keenest borrower in any market, so leasing, which is essentially a financing operation, offers no real benefit unless it is accompanied by the existence either of an after-market or of the concept of transference of risk.

I had the pleasure of travelling on the Northern line yesterday morning—by that, I mean Monday, which is the last day of which I have any clear recollection. Many of us are familiar with that line. It has suffered badly in the past not only from under-investment—it is freely acknowledged that under-investment has been a symptom of London Underground for many years under Administrations of both colours—but from less than effective management.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South knows that the management situation has changed. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission report recognised that the Northern line management had improved immeasurably, as had its service quality. With typical thoroughness, my hon. Friend invited me some months ago to join him on a trip on the Northern line—I had been in my job just over 24 hours when he issued his invitation. Unfortunately for him, we had a flawless journey from start to finish, with tidy platforms, clean trains and polite staff; it was a thoroughly pleasant journey to work. None the less, my hon. Friend spent every second of the journey telling me how awful the journey was on the other 364 days of the year.

I know that my hon. Friend does a good job for his constituents, but I must tell him that for the most recent two reporting periods—the four-week periods ending 12 September and 10 October—the Northern line ran about 98 per cent. of its scheduled trains, compared with a network target of 97·5 per cent., and achieved 94 to 95 per cent. of timetabled intervals between trains, compared with a target of 91 per cent.

It is for London Transport, of course, to assess priorities for the 1992 settlement. I know that my hon. Friend will continue to press on LT, and on me, the case for the Northern line refurbishment. I can confirm that after the Central line programme is finished—costing about £800 million—we shall move on to the Northern line, but it will be for LT to determine exactly when that happens. My hon. Friend is right to say that future years' public expenditure survey negotiations are uncharted waters for us, but I hope that we shall be able to move on to the work as quickly as we can.

Several hon. Members have mentioned the Jubilee line extension, so I am glad to be able to throw some light on the present state of affairs. I must preface my remarks by telling the hon. Member for Thurrock again that he ought not to stray into unfamiliar territory; he seems to make the mistake that some of his colleagues—in local government as well as in the House—have made, in inviting the Government to make up the deficit caused by the collapse of Olympia and York.

Other counsels have been wiser, and it has been pointed out that when Canary Wharf is 15 minutes away from Green Park, its value as a piece of real estate will be substantially enhanced. That argument is certainly not lost on the bankers who now find themselves the owners of the property. Their commitment to the attempt to put a deal together on the terms originally agreed between the Government and Olympia and York has been perfectly genuine.

The House will know that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was able to confirm in his autumn statement that the Government's commitment to the Jubilee line extension partnership is intact. I underline that the commitment is a substantial one of about £1.6 billion. The Government have always recognised that the partnership demanded that there be participation by the private sector. That substantial participation amounts to about £400 million in cash.

I am as disappointed as all hon. Members are that the negotiations to sign that agreement have not yet been concluded. There is no evidence of anything other than good faith on all sides. Remembering the amount of time taken and the costs that my solicitor managed to pass on to me when he recently conveyed to me a house worth marginally more than £100,000, I reckon that when dealing with £400 million of my money, I should want my solicitor to be even more keen on my behalf. I am not surprised, in all seriousness, that, given the complexity of the negotiations and the complexity of the document that was agreed between LT and Olympia and York, detailed negotiations are required.

One of the stumbling blocks, which I know that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey has long recognised because of his long experience of the project, is that we are now dealing with a disparate bunch of groups, including American banks, Canadian banks, Swiss banks, other European banks and British banks, all with different interests, securities, ambitions and liquidity ratios. We are making progress in that context. I hope to be able to have happier news in due course. The outcome will always depend on us reaching agreement on the terms that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has laid down.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I am grateful to the Minister for illuminating a little of what is happening. Would he summarise the position by letting the House know whether

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

he can honestly say to us that he and the Government are optimistic that there will be a satisfactory outcome in the near future?

Mr. Norris: I am sorry that I cannot express a personal view on the negotiations. I believe that in the public interest—I am acutely conscious of the interests of the taxpayers, whom I serve—it is appropriate for me simply to give the House a record of where the negotiations now stand. The opera is not over until the fat lady sings. This particular fat lady has not even got out her music sheet. When the deal is signed, then the deal is done. I hope that that will be as soon as possible, but I do not speculate on the outcome. I hope that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey will understand.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey also raised the question of Riverbus. Riverbus is a private sector initiative. It is essentially a marketing enterprise very imaginatively put together by the the developers of Canary Wharf and of Chelsea Harbour. I appreciate the problem that Riverbus has made towards viability but, as the House knows, it is some way from it at the moment.

I am also satisfied, as is LT, that there are significant public transport options for those arriving at London Bridge and seeking to make their way to Canary Wharf. That is the peak journey for the present riverbus service. The alternatives include the D1, the docklands light railway and the Waterloo-City link. In those circumstance, the Government take the view that their responsibility to provide a public transport network is adequately discharged.

Hon. Members have raised the question of the possible acceptance of Riverbus into the travelcard system. That is not nearly as easy as is sometimes suggested, not least by the energetic Mr. William Edgerley, who never loses an opportunity to press the case for Riverbus—rightly so, as managing director of the company. The House will appreciate that there is a given pot of money coming from travelcard revenues. If a large slug of that is to provide for a Riverbus contribution, it must come from London Buses, London Underground or Network SouthEast. Riverbus is a very expensive small commodity selling a very expensive product into a less expensive market.

This year's settlement fully maintains provision for the crossrail scheme and it provides for more than £200 million worth of preparatory work. That underlines the Government's commitment to the scheme. I am sorry to have to correct the hon. Member for Thurrock once more, but the east London line extension is not a British Rail scheme. I am sure that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West would remind him that it is a London Transport scheme. It is for LT to decide the priority that it wants to attach to the project. The scheme is worth while and has a very good cost-benefit ratio and I hope that it will receive some priority.

I must point out to the hon. Member for Thurrock that there will be no cost to London Underground in terms of an impact on fares arising from the track authority plans contained in the proposals that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will bring forward for rail privatisation.

In that regard, the hon. Member for Thurrock will appreciate that the House could hardly consider proposals for franchising rail services, no matter what view hon. Members take of those proposals, without considering the future of the British Transport police. If the hon. Member for Thurrock has read the document to which he referred, he will be aware that it concludes that, as far as London Underground is concerned, there is no rationale for any change. The report pays heavy and deserved tribute to the work of Chief Constable Desmond O'Brien and his men in the British Transport police, for whom I have a high regard.

I am absolutely convinced that we can do two things to make bus travel infinitely more attractive: the first relates to more bus priority measures similar to those that we are now deploying so successfully and the other is to open up the bus market in London by introducing competition, innovation, enterprise and accelerated capital through privatisation and deregulation. That process does not mean the creation of a free-for-all. It means moving from a system led by planners who believe that they know better than customers what services customers want to one in which ultimately customers determine the form and content of services.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey referred to concessionary fares. He will know that they are the responsibility of the boroughs which finance and agree the scheme. That is right and the Government have no plans to change that. I cannot comment on the negotiations this year, because that is a matter between the local authorities and LT, except to point out that there is a reserve scheme available in legislation which, in the absence of agreement by 31 December, must be employed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South referred to the possibility of funds for the Jubilee line being deployed elsewhere if that project did not succeed. He will appreciate that I do not want particularly to address that prospect. He will also know that I cannot give him any such guarantee because the autumn statement makes it clear that those funds are discretely dedicated to the Jubilee line extension project and I have no authority to contemplate what might happen to those funds if they are not used for the Jubilee line.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South for allowing the House to have this useful debate. I pay tribute to the serious way in which he pursues the interests of his constituents, particularly in relation to the Northern line. I stress that the London Transport settlement allows for about £500 million more investment over the next three years than was possible over the last three years. I also stress my appreciation of the hard work and enterprise of the staff, from Wilfrid Newton down to station and bus operation level, who do an excellent job.

I suspect that it is sometimes forgotten, perhaps understandably, that, although everything in London is by no means perfect, the city of London must be compared not with some of its fellow European cities which are infinitely smaller, but with perhaps a handful of world cities, such as New York and Tokyo. When one makes that comparison, one realises that there is a remarkable amount happening in London's transport structure, which provides a service with which it is difficult to find a parallel anywhere in the world.

We have a coherent strategy for making London's transport service even better. I look forward to the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South, on which I know that I can rely, in improving that service further in years to come.

Water Privatisation (Scotland)

3.35 am

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): Are hon. Members aware that nuns in enclosed orders of Catholic convents get up at 3 o'clock in the morning? They get up to pray for mankind, because they think that many sins are committed at that time. I am not ridiculing that; I think it is an admirable thing for nuns to do. The only sin is that we are complying with the nonsense by coming to the House at this time of the morning. I would like to see the House reformed—I am a new boy—and I hope that any reform in Scotland will include the establishment of a Parliament in Scotland.

The Government's local reform in Scotland is preparing the way to remove from public democratically elected representatives—the councillors—their fundamental basic major responsibilities. Water and drainage are to be privatised. Responsibility for the police, fire services, education and social work are to be given to boards appointed by the Government—more quangos. *[Interruption.]* Yes, it is on the cards. We will have a one-tier authority with new powers, run by Tory hacks and under Tory control. In other words, we will have glorified part-time councillors appointed by the Government.

Once again, power will be centralised, and the Secretary of State for Scotland will not be answerable. He will not be answerable to a Scottish Parliament. He will not be answerable in a referendum on major constitutional changes such as local government reform or the privatisation of water, drainage and sewerage. Instead, we shall merely have a phoney consultative document.

The alternative would be to make savings for the people. If there was no reform of local government, savings would be made in democracy, or what little is left of it. A Scottish Parliament would be the forum to reform local government. Many authorities or important quangos could be made accountable to elected Members, not simply to the Secretary of State.

The will of the people of Scotland is obvious to all of us, but not to the Government. The discussion document produced by the Government on proposals for water and sewerage in Scotland cost £50,000, and it is a sham. Research into the state of Scotland's water shows that its debt for water and sewerage is £1·2 billion. That is money which the authorities were allowed to borrow. We accept that the authorities need to update and reinvest in Scottish water and sewerage. However, the concept that privatising water and sewerage will save taxpayers' money is a total fraud.

In England and Wales, a debt of £5·028 billion was written off using taxpayers' money. The taxpayers paid £160 million for consultants and others to float the assets. Cash handouts to the tune of £1·572 billion were given to private companies. A secret deal between the Treasury and the water chairman ensured that none of the 10 water companies would pay corporation tax for the next 17 years. That was a bonanza of at least £2 billion to the new companies.

Assets worth £34·5 billion were sold for an income of £3·594 billion; £233 million-worth of property assets and recreational grounds were given away, with no clawback for the taxpayer. Some savings! The customers now pay and the taxpayers are the losers.

I give the House a quote:

"We concluded that there was no case at present for a similar move in Scotland . . . I confirm we have no plans to privatise water services in Scotland."—[*Official Report*, 21 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 949.]

That was said by the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. Does the Minister want to comment on that?

We have obtained comparative information from the House of Commons Library. I ask the House to bear with me. The cost of water supplies per head is £25 in Scotland and £35 in England and Wales. Scotland is better off by 40 per cent. Water supply per kilometre is £2,787 in Scotland, compared with £5,531 in England and Wales. Scotland is better off by 99 per cent.

Sewerage charges per head are £18 in Scotland compared with £24 in England and Wales. Scotland is 33 per cent. better off. Sewerage costs per kilometre were £3,217 in Scotland and £3,984 in England and Wales. Scotland is 24 per cent. better off. In 1987-88, the industry in Scotland employed 6,237 people. In 1991, there were 6,222 employees.

The benefits of privatisation are for the few. Company chairmen have received wage increases of up to 267 per cent.—that is the highest increase, for the chairman of Southern Water. Such chairmen have rightly been called water millionaires in the press. Chairmen have received share options. The chairman of North-West Water took up an option of 225,524 shares. Water companies have gone into property development. They have moved into the management of hotel sports complexes. The priority in such realms is not water supplies. Of course, the benefits to the consultants who worked on behalf of the Government are obvious.

The disadvantages are for the many. The cost to users of water will increase. They have increased on average by 50 per cent. in England and Wales since privatisation. Jobs have been lost. There is less emergency cover. The average water loss is 20 per cent. There is inadequate investment in safety. According to a recent analysis, the quality of water in Scotland is better than the average for England and Wales.

The water companies have increased charges for the use of reservoirs and so on, with no concessions for the unemployed and old-age pensioners. In Lothian and other areas, such concessions are available. There is lack of public access to some of the most beautiful parts of our land. There will be more disconnections because people cannot afford to pay the high price of the reality——

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Does my hon. Friend agree that, since water privatisation in England and Wales, about 50,000 people have had their water cut off? In one area, one in seven households have been cut off. Does he also agree that Strathclyde does not get one penny from the Government, although the Secretary of State for Scotland has said that about £237 million has been paid to Scottish water and sewerage authorities? They borrow the money. They borrowed £83 million under section 94 of the Water Act 1973. There is a debt of £418 million for water and sewerage, which is costing the taxpayer about £66 million per year.

The Minister knows that no one in Scotland wants water privatisation. If he wants to do something, why does he not ask the Government to do the same for Scotland as they did for England and Wales, and wipe out the £5,000 million debt, giving it a green dowry? Why do we not get that for Scotland, so that we can bring water up to the standard required by the European Community?

Mr. Clarke: No one in Scotland—with the exception of Scottish Ministers—wants privatisation of water, drainage and sewerage. We hit the streets of Midlothian with our pamphlets and petitions. The public reception was one of total opposition to privatisation. Even the most cynical members of our community were moved to sign, and gladly supported our efforts. I am sure that that is reflected throughout Scotland.

The management and protection of that natural asset and essential service is in good, capable hands in Scotland. The water and drainage committees of the regional councils and the highlands and islands authorities provide a first-class service. Many of the authorities inherited assets from our long-sighted forefathers, and many of them were Conservative-controlled councils. Money to modernise can be borrowed and paid back efficiently without privatisation or the need to destroy a major industry or the organisations concerned.

Anglers, sporting people and those employed in the industry, as well as the people of Scotland, will not stand by and allow it to pass into private hands without a fight. The Labour party has declared war on the tap tax. The popularity of the Conservatives is at its lowest level. Even Tory councillors and other Tory supporters are involved with us in the anti-privatisation battle.

The Government's role is to listen to and accept the will of the people. Scotland is saying no to the privatisation of water and sewerage, to the reorganisation of local government and to the Government's proposals. Above all, they are saying yes to a Scottish Parliament. If we had such a Parliament, we would not have so little time to discuss essential services, and the backbone of the Scottish economy, or have to discuss them at a quarter to four in the morning. We would have the opportunity to debate the matter and make an in-depth input to the discussion.

I shall end there, because I think that some of my colleagues wish to speak. Many of them are here, and there would have been many more if the Scottish Grand Committee, which is also an essential part of our role, had not been sitting this morning. Few Conservative Members were elected to Scottish seats, and there are few of them here, with the exception of the Minister. It would have done them the world of good to come here and listen to what we have to say.

3.49 am

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) for securing this important debate. I do not wish to exaggerate the importance of what will happen in the next one and a half hours or to suggest that all of Scotland is agog with anticipation of what hon. Members present this morning have to say. My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) can certainly not be described as being agog with anticipation at the progress of the debate.

It is symbolic that the Westminster Parliament finds time to debate a matter so critical to Scots in the middle of the night when 99 per cent. of its Members are absent and in bed, most of them blissfully unaware that the subject is being debated. In those circumstances, the clear message is that if Scotland wants Scottish political issues to be treated seriously it must first remove those issues from the responsibility of this House and transfer them to a Scottish Parliament which will be established in our own country in the very near future.

In his foreword to the consultation paper on the future of water services in Scotland, the Secretary of State for Scotland said:

"The Government will reach a decision on the right way forward in the light of responses to this consultation paper."

If one takes that sentence at face value, one could be forgiven for believing that if the overwhelming majority of responses to the consultation paper were opposed to privatisation, the Government would simply accept the Scottish people's opposition to privatisation and drop their plans to privatise water services. However, when the Secretary of State made a statement to the House on the future of water and sewerage in Scotland and was pressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams) as to whether he would accept the results of the consultation, he replied:

"I will accept the findings of a general consultation, but I shall assess the strengths and merits of the arguments that are advanced."—[*Official Report*, 17 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 157.]

An important distinction has to be made. The Secretary of State said that he would assess the strengths of the arguments, which means that if 1,000 or 100,000 or 1 million Scots respond to the consultation by saying that they oppose privatisation of water but the Secretary of State does not like their arguments, he will simply dismiss their response, but if only 10 or 20 Scots say that they are in favour of privatisation and the Secretary of State likes their arguments, he will give more weight to those 10 or 20 responses than to the million responses opposing privatisation.

That fact was confirmed when my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe) pressed the Secretary of State further and reminded him of the precedent of the hospital opt-outs in Aberdeen and Ayrshire before the last general election. Again, the Secretary of State replied:

"As with the hospital trust consultation period, I will assess the arguments advanced and reach a decision with my colleagues on the basis of those arguments."—[*Official Report*, 17 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 161.]

You, Madam Deputy Speaker, may not remember the response to the consultation process on hospital opt-outs in Scotland, but between 80 and 90 per cent. of those who responded opposed the opt-outs. Yet they were simply dismissed by the Government, who went ahead anyway because they were not prepared to accept the arguments put forward. If anyone in Scotland expects this consultation process to be open-minded or democratic in any sense, he can forget it because the mind of the Secretary of State for Scotland has already been made up, as has the Government's mind, because they are intent on privatising water services in Scotland.

All kinds of evidence supports the case that I am putting forward. Everyone recognises that a huge investment is needed in the water industry over the next 10 years. Both sides of the argument agree that some £5,000 million must be found to invest in water services over the next decade. If that money is to be found from within the public purse, the Secretary of State will have to find it from the money allocated to him by the expenditure system under the Westminster Parliament. The Secretary of State's block grant is allocated on a formula which determines Scotland's share of the equivalent spending in England and Wales. Until this year, Scotland used to receive about 11·76 per cent. of equivalent spending. It is important to remember that there is no equivalent

spending in England and Wales on water and sewerage as those services have already been privatised in those countries.

Therefore, if the Secretary of State is to find the £5,000 million in the next 10 years—£500 million for each of those 10 years—he will have to negotiate that sum directly from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The chance of the Secretary of State for Scotland negotiating with the present Chancellor an additional £500 million of public spending to dedicate to water and sewerage in Scotland is absolutely nil. In a recent public spending round, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), boasted with other Scottish Office Ministers that they had successfully negotiated an extra £340 million over the next three years. That is about £100 million for each year to spend on housing, roads, transport, schools, the health service and all the public sector spending requirements in Scotland. If they regard that negotiation as a great success, how on earth can they realistically say to anyone in Scotland that they are seriously considering winning an extra £500 million for every one of the next 10 years to spend entirely on water and sewerage services in Scotland?

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): Is the Minister aware that that amount of money was almost exactly the amount that Renfrew district council found that it would need to bring its council housing stock up to a tolerable standard over the next five years? The amount that Ministers boasted of winning for Scotland would have served to save and bring up to a tolerable standard only the council's present houses.

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. The reality is that the Government are simply not prepared to find the money required to invest in public services in Scotland. They are certainly not prepared to invest in the water and sewerage services in Scotland. They have already made up their minds that, if that money is to be found over the next 10 years, it will have to come from private sector investment in the water and sewerage industries.

The Secretary of State for Scotland claims that the consultation domcument contains eight different options for the future of water and sewerage in Scotland, six of which are in the public sector and only two in the private sector. But only the two in the private sector are being seriously considered by the Government because of their desire to attract private investment into the water and sewerage industries in Scotland. Those two private sector options are outright privatisation on the model of the English and Welsh water companies or franchising by contracting out the water services to private companies.

It does not matter what anyone in Scotland says or thinks, because the Government have already made up their minds. If money has to be found on such a scale, it will be found by attracting private sector investment and selling the water industry in Scotland to the private sector.

Mr. Wray: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government have no intention of providing the £5,000 million that is needed? They want to do the same as they have in England and sell all the assets of the water companies and the local authorities. They want to sell the 365,000 acres of land. There have been 10,000 complaints to the Office of Water Services about water disconnections.

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. If the private sector is to invest in the water industry, it will do so at a price, which will be the profits that the private sector is able to extract from the water industry or, to be more exact, from those who pay for the industry—the consumers.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) referred to privatised companies awarding their chairmen rises of 267 per cent. Did it occur to my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) that, in the House only two weeks ago, we voted on whether or not to allow the public sector—where Scottish water employees currently work—a rise of only 1·5 per cent? Whatever that vote was made out to be, that was what it was about.

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friend is right. This Minister voted to restrict low-paid workers in the public sector to a 1·5 per cent. pay increase, but he has patted on the back bosses awarding themselves huge pay increases at the expense of water consumers.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): Does the hon. Gentleman approve of Strathclyde's recent decision to increase the salary of its director of water services by 20.9 per cent.?

Mr. McAllion: I do not support that decision; I would never support a decision of that kind, the more so since it involved a much larger increase than that paid to the low-paid people who work for Strathclyde region.

What will this decision mean for the ordinary people of my area? First, it will mean that the price of water will rise for consumers in Scotland. In their consultation document, the Government provide figures for the average cost per household of supplying water and sewerage services in Tayside over the past three years. It works out at £94. Recent figures published in *The Observer* show that the average cost per household in England and Wales under the privatised system is £169, which is £75, or 80 per cent., higher than in Tayside. The comparable figure in Anglia is £227 per household, and in South-West it is £228. That is more than £130, or 140 per cent., more expensive than in Tayside. It is therefore easy to see what the result of privatising water services in Scotland will be. It will be to push up the price to the consumer of a service which will not be so good as the one provided by the public sector.

The great gulf between the prices charged by the two sectors is no accident. The regional councils are allowed to borrow money from the public sector at rates much lower than those commercially available to the private water companies. It costs the private companies more to borrow than it does the public water authorities. That means that the former pay higher loan charges than the public sector bodies, and the resulting higher water charges are inevitably passed on to the consumers. Above all, private water companies have to make profits and pay out dividends to their shareholders.

My hon. Friends have rightly drawn attention to the fact that all this will not relieve pressure on the public purse. In England and Wales, the Government wrote off £5·5 billion of capital debt at the time of water privatisation, and gave the private water companies a further green dowry of £1·5 billion. They also introduced tax allowances running into the next century which will be worth a total of £7·7 billion. In all, more than £14 billion

[Mr. McAllion]

of public money was tied up in the privatisation of the water industry in England and Wales. In return, the public purse got only £3·5 billion from the sale—a net loss of £10·9 billion.

I do not underestimate the scale of the investment required in the water industry in Scotland over the next 10 years, but it is dwarfed by the public handouts that the Government have given to the private water companies in England and Wales. If Scotland could have less than half that sum, we should have no problem meeting the investment requirements of the industry in Scotland.

There will be consequences far more serious even than the financial ones. A book called "The Dundee Source Book of Scottish History" takes us back to the situation in Dundee before we had public water authorities. It describes what things used to be like before the water industry was brought into public ownership and massively improved. My first extract comes from a poem written by Thomas Hood about Dundee in 1815. It reads:

"The town is ill-built and is dirty besides"—

—much has changed since then—

"For with water it's scantily, badly supplied.
By wells, where the servants, in filling their pails,
Stand for hours, spreading scandal, and falsehood, and tales.
And abounds so in smells that a stranger supposes
The people are very deficient in noses."

The people of Dundee are not "very deficient in noses", but that extract points out that the city's crude water supply at that time made Dundee dirty and smelly.

On the same page is a list of the causes of death in Dundee in 1833. Cholera stands out, with 137 deaths, and dysentery, with 15 deaths. Fevers, including typhoid, caused the deaths of 132 people. The lack of a clean water supply to the city caused more than 200 deaths that year. The elimination of typhoid and cholera is largely thanks to work undertaken by the public sector in the years since then—by corporations, town councils, county councils, water boards, and regional councils. Their work has been one of the great successes of the second half of the 19th century and of the 20th century—and it is all to be put at risk because of the Government's determination to privatise Scotland's water industry.

The Minister laughs, but I remind him that in Scotland it is currently illegal to disconnect a domestic water supply other than for technical reasons. It is illegal because in Scotland it is recognised as barbaric deliberately to put people's health at risk for private profit. We now run the risk of seeing the reintroduction into our communities of typhoid, dysentery and other diseases which were eliminated many years ago with the introduction of proper public water supplies.

When he made his statement to the House on 17 November, the Secretary of State for Scotland was pressed again and again to say whether he would change the law to provide for the disconnection of water supplies to domestic consumers. He answered:

"Disconnections are not legal in Scotland; they have been legal in England before and after privatisation. We shall address Scottish circumstances in accordance with special Scottish needs."

That did not satisfy hon. Members representing Scottish constituencies. When pressed again, the Secretary of State stated:

"There is no legal consent available to disconnect water in Scotland. I have no plans to make any change in that. I shall be considering the range of options in the light of the submissions in the consultation paper, but at present that does not arise."

Pressed once again, the Secretary of State replied:

"I have already said that I have no plans for disconnection but, clearly, the future structure of the water industry must be decided and, in due course, when one of the eight options —or one of the variants of those options—laid down in the consultation paper has been decided upon, the other factors relevant to that option will also have to be decided."

The

"other factors relevant to that option"

include the disconnection of domestic supplies. My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) put it to the Secretary of State that

"the only way in which the privatisation of water services in Scotland can possibly work is if powers to disconnect domestic premises are introduced".

The Secretary of State replied:

"That is not an issue that I have yet addressed. The time at which to address it will be the time at which we decide on a particular option that might make it necessary."—[*Official Report*, 17 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 155-61.]

The

"particular option that might make it necessary"

is the privatisation of the water industry. The reality is that the Government intend to privatise the water industry and, once they have done that, to change the law in Scotland to allow for disconnections—and to put at risk all the medical advances made in our country over the past 100 years.

Since privatisation in England and Wales, there have been 50,000 domestic disconnections. Between April and September, domestic disconnections increased—exactly contrary to the comments made by the Secretary of State for Scotland in his statement on 17 November. What will people do when their water and sewerage services are cut off and they cannot afford reconnection? If they take water from the streams, but use the same streams as lavatories, we risk seeing the reintroduction into our communities of diseases unheard of in our country for many a long year. That is the risk that the Minister and his like are now running. That is completely unacceptable to the people of Scotland and we shall do whatever is necessary to stop the Minister and the Government from proceeding with their proposals.

4.9 am

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): I note the mirth on the Conservative Bench. I say "Bench" rather than "Benches" because I think that the public, when they read the report of our debate, should understand that behind the Minister and his lackey are rolling acres of green leather: not a single Scottish Conservative has turned up to defend the Government on this vital issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) spoke of the history of urban Scotland before the days of municipalised water—a time of more enlightened men than the Minister, although they may have been of the same political stripe in terms of their attitude to capitalism. The Minister simply cannot understand that Opposition Members—speaking for far more than the 75 per cent. of electors who voted for the Opposition parties in Scotland at the general election—believe that there is something morally wrong with the proposal to hand over the water that God gave the Scottish people in abundance to any cheap speculator who will put his equity into Scottish water in the hope of making a profit.

The Minister seems not to grasp that there will be no other reason for speculators to do that. The city fathers —they were all fathers then—who decided to standardise and municipalise Scottish water supplies did so because they knew that, if left to naked market forces, that would not be done. They knew that the great epidemics to which my hon. Friend referred would become the norm, that the health of the work force would deteriorate and that that work force would not be able to produce the profits that the entrepreneurs wanted. Enlightened self-interest made them go along with standardisation, and led them to make the necessary investments through public expenditure. If it was true then that water could not safely be left to market forces, surely it follows that it is at best dodgy to contemplate returning it to market forces now. Surely even the Minister can understand the logic of that.

My old grandfather used to say that if the Tories could bottle the air that we breathe, they would give us masks and oxygen bottles with a coin slot and a meter so that we could pay for the very means of sustaining life. I used to laugh at that, thinking it an example of my grandfather's extremism: he was even more left wing than I am. But it is not so very far fetched, is it? Today, the Government are seriously contemplating taking the rain that God sends —the Minister laughs, but I doubt that he laughs at the idea of God on Sunday mornings; he probably goes along with the concept then.

Who, if not God, sends the rain from the skies? Yet the Minister proposes to change that rain into just another commodity. Perhaps he—right down to his mutton-chop sideboards—knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. He knows the price that water will fetch on the market, the price of the bribes—dowries of all kinds—that he will stuff down the throats of the speculators, and the price that water will fetch in profits over the years for the speculators who steal it from us. The Minister appears to find those moral points funny. He should be aware, however, that the Government's minuscule support in Scotland is in grave danger of disappearing altogether if they proceed with their proposal to steal Scotland's water.

The Minister knows my constituency and knows that its socio-economic composition is such that, were it in many parts of England, it would undoubtedly be a Conservative constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) represents a similar constituency. Yet in both my hon. Friend's constituency and in mine, people are queuing, and I mean queuing, in the street for 10 minutes or more at a time to append their signatures to petitions protesting at this larceny against the Scottish people—this offence against everything decent that has been built up in Scotland over centuries. Many of them are the kind of people whom, in times gone by, the Minister would have expected to support the Conservative party, and who he—supreme optimist that he is—must surely hope will one day return to the fold.

I warn the Minister: there is no support for the proposals, even among the 25 per cent. minority in Scotland who support the Conservative party. The Government proceed with the proposals at their peril. The House may say, "Why don't we sit back and let them do it?" We cannot do that because too much is at stake. In the hands of the barbarians who will buy it, our water cannot be depended upon. We cannot trust them; our water cannot be safe in their hands. That is our contention, and it is a contention shared by many more people than voted for us on 9 April.

The question of a mandate goes to the heart of the matter. When my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East was referring to the number of times that the Secretary of State had said that he had no plans to change the law in Scotland to allow the disconnection of private water supplies, did it not strike the Minister that that is exactly what his colleague the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), said on 21 March 1989—that the Government had "no plans" to privatise Scottish water? Does the Minister feel no moral qualms about the fact that, just a few months ago, he fought an election in Scotland denying that the Government had any plans to privatise Scottish water? The hon. Gentleman is shaking his head: clearly, he has no moral qualms. Perhaps it was naive of me to expect that he had.

It must strike the Scottish people as an offence against anything that could be called democracy that a Government seeking re-election should hide their enormously important and controversial intention—the Minister will concede that it is controversial, at least—to steal our water from us and should fail to put their proposal to the electoral test. At the general election, the number of Scottish Conservative Members increased from the nefarious nine to the embarrassing 11 who face us across the Chamber, when they can be bothered to muster here. Had the Government told the Scottish people the truth, which was that they intended to embark on a course that would lead to the privatisation of Scottish water, their ranks—had they been large enough, which they were not —would have been decimated. They lied their way back into the House by failing to acknowledge——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. That is not an acceptable expression, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows.

Mr. Galloway: I am not suggesting that any hon. Member is lying in the House, but, collectively, the Conservative party in Scotland lied its way through the general election by omission, by refusing to acknowledge its plans to privatise Scottish water. It is impossible to withdraw that contention, for I feel it in my bones. It is an allegation, not specifically about the conduct of any hon. Member but about the whole Conservative party.

I am running short of time, but I wish to conclude on a point that is not shared by every section of my party. Two Fridays ago, I was going house-to-house in Earl street in Scotstoun in my constituency, where there is water all right. It is in the form of black fungus, growing through the walls and wardrobes and into the clothes and children's toys belonging to my constituents. They ask me, "Why can't we have the capital investment to dry our houses and keep our families warm and dry?" I say, "It is because of a number of reasons connected with the kind of Government we have." They say to me that just 12 miles from that street, the first of four useless hunks of black metal sits on the River Clyde. It is a Trident submarine —one of four which together will cost the British taxpayer £33 billion. Those four useless pieces of metal are pointed nowhere and are bristling with nuclear weapons aimed at nobody.

[Mr. Galloway]

I say to my constituents and to the Minister that, if we need £5,000 million to make Scotland's precious water even more beautiful and clear, we can take that money off the Trident budget, scrap those useless pieces of metal and beat them into the ploughshares that can make a better world for all our people.

4.21 am

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): I should like primarily to address water privatisation, but I cannot forgo commenting on the Secretary of State for Scotland's amazing interview at the weekend in which he said that decentralisation of power to a Scottish Parliament was quite unnecessary as it was to be decentralised to new local authorities instead. As everybody knows, power has been drained from Scottish local authorities and all other local authorities over the past 13 years, and the restructuring of Scottish local government is fundamentally about further erosions of the remaining limited power.

I am not interested in redrawing the map of Scottish local government; I am interested in giving back powers to the various bits of that map and in creating a Scottish Parliament within the United Kingdom to oversee the map as a whole. That is what subsidiarity is all about—decision-making as close to the people as possible, as the preamble to the Maastricht treaty puts it—and that is what thousands of people were demonstrating about on Saturday in Edinburgh.

Referring to water privatisation, the first thing to say is that no devolved Scottish Parliament would even consider it, as there is overwhelming opposition to water privatisation within Scotland. The second thing to say is that the Tories cannot even claim a spurious Scottish election mandate for it as there was no mention whatsoever of Scottish water privatisation in their election manifesto. They did not mention it, nobody wants it, so why are we getting it? The reason involves ideology, profits and the public sector borrowing requirement.

The ideology reason is not susceptible to logic—the private good/public bad myopic chant that has been repeated so insistently and so destructively since 1979. A consequence is the belief that adding to the PSBR is unacceptable, although private borrowing is okay. In each case, however, the sums involved are far from enormous. On some of the details, I might disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion).

Investment of £5 billion is required in Scottish water over the next 15 years, which means an average borrowing of £333 million each year. However, the borrowing consent for water this year is £218 million, so we are talking about an extra £115 million on a Scottish Office budget of £13 billion. The annual loan charges on that £115 million would be about £12 million—equivalent to a 5 per cent. increase on current water charges. The small amount of extra borrowing required would not be covered by the Barnett formula, as there is no comparable programme in England or Wales. It could be negotiated directly with the Treasury, which is where the problem may lie.

Some of the £115 million extra a year could come from the European development fund, a source that would not be available if water were privatised. There is, therefore, no argument in terms of investment, and to prove that further we can look to the record in England where there has been no source of cash since privatisation that was not equally available before it.

The more we look at the argument from the point of view of public money and investment, the more ridiculous it becomes. It is the Government's fault that investment to meet the EC directives is still required. The relevant directives were issued in 1976 and 1980, but in the 1980s the Government did nothing. When the Government eventually decided to spend more public money in England, they threw it in completely the wrong direction. Some £5 billion of debts were written off for the new privatised water companies in England and Wales; £1.5 billion was handed out to those same companies; property and land worth £233 million was just given away; and £160 million was squandered on consultants and others to float the assets. None of the water companies had to pay corporation tax for 17 years—a clear £2 billion loss to the public purse.

Who has gained? Certainly not the Treasury or the public. Average bills have increased by 50 per cent. since privatisation in 1979. Last year, the number of complaints went up by 131 per cent. and, most importantly, the number of disconnections went up by 177 per cent. Since privatisation in England and Wales, 50,000 homes have been disconnected, which is the ultimate obscenity. If it came to disconnections in Scotland, I would support and become involved in direct action to stop any of my constituents from having their water turned off.

The people who require and benefit from disconnections are, of course, the shareholders and the company executives—the sole beneficiaries of water privatisation. Beneath the rhetoric, as always, lie the profits. In 1990-91 in England, pre-tax profits were £1·369 billion—£400 million of that went out in dividends. In the case of Welsh Water, that money went into luxury hotels, while £50,000 from Thames Water went into the Tory party coffers. Thousands and thousands of pounds went to the various water company chairmen.

Between 1990-91 and 1991-92, the salary of the Welsh Water chairman went up from £76,000 to £143,000, the salary of the chairman of Southern Water went up from £78,000 to £142,000, and the salary of the chairman of Thames Water went up from £73,000 to £160,000. Over and above that, last year, the 10 chairmen made £7·42 million through share options—buying shares cheaply and selling them at a profit.

Instead of windfall gains at public expense, we need a policy that centres on public investment and fair charging. Next year, in Scotland, water charges will be related to council tax bands, which is a step in the right direction. Post-privatisation we will be faced with either a high flat-rate charge or water metering. Both cause hardship for low-income families and both bring disconnections in their train.

Water belongs to us all and the supply of water is a fundamental right. We in Scotland will not stand idly by while the water is stolen and that right is abolished. If the Government were wise, which they are not, they would listen to the people of Scotland on this issue. If they were wise, they would not just consider the popularity of our case and the justice of our cause; they would think about the political repercussions for themselves of treating the Scottish people with such undisguised contempt.

4.28 am

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): When I made my maiden speech in 1990, I referred to my late grandfather who had come here some 60 years before, not as a Member of the House, but as a hunger marcher. When he arrived here he was quickly marched off to the nearest railway station and put on a train back to Scotland.

I asked myself then, and I do so now, what has really changed in that time? After all, the rate of unemployment is higher now than it was then, and more people are now homeless. We can conclude that very little has changed.

That, however, would be singularly untrue. There were great changes that were not handed out by the great and good here at Westminster but were hard fought and hard earned by people such as my grandfather, who marched all that way on an empty stomach.

For example, wages councils achieved great changes in working conditions, and changes improved local government so that it is directly elected by people to serve them, yet the Minister is now determined to take that system away and hand out quangos to his friends. There were slum clearance changes and massive municipal house building programmes. We saw the national health service come into being, and equal rights for women.

Those are but a few of the things that changed in that time, but in 1979 a Government were elected with a vision —the survival of the fittest and the weakest shall go to the wall. That Government set about dismantling each of the gains that people had fought for and won. That vision was not acceptable to the people of Scotland.

In the election earlier this year, the Government asked the Scottish people whether they wanted to maintain the status quo—the Union. The Conservative party was the only party to ask that question. Twenty-five per cent. of the Scottish people said yes, but 75 per cent. said, "We may not all want the same thing but we do not want the status quo."

We are continually told that this is the listening Government and the consulting Government. They were not so keen to listen to that 75 per cent. of the Scottish people, so they said, "We won't bother with them. We will get a couple of dozen of our mates round to breakfast and hear what they have to say." Unfortunately, they forgot to tell the rest of us what they had to say; we are still awaiting the outcome of that breakfast meeting.

The Government consulted people on hospital trusts. The people told them that they did not want them, so the people got them. The Government are about to consult people on the privatisation of water, which they forgot to mention in their election manifesto. They did not tell the Scottish people that they intended to do anything with water. They are now telling people that they will consult them, but they are not that sure whether they will accept the answer the people give—they will weigh up all the arguments first.

We have heard that 50,000 people have had their water disconnected in England and Wales. That is not only a disgrace but morally wrong. Water is a right of the people, not something to be sold to the people. It is something to be paid for and administered by the people, but not to be taken and sold back to them. It reminds me of the story of the white men saying to the Indians, "We will buy your land for this string of beads." The Indians laughed, because they had no concept whatsoever of such ownership. But the Indians were right, because nobody should own the land or water apart from all the people.

Mr. Stewart: I congratulate the hon. Lady on her ringing call for the nationalisation of housing.

Mrs. Adams: The Minister apparently heard that, but he does not hear anything else that the people of Scotland have to say. Did he hear the 25,000 voices in Edinburgh on Saturday? Perhaps he will comment on that later—but I doubt it. The 25,000 voices that were heard on Saturday wanted many things, but they did not want the status quo. Apparently the Government had their ear plugs in when those voices were speaking.

When I, like my grandfather, go home to Scotland on the train every week I wonder why I return empty-handed from the Westminster Parliament to the people who elected me—from a Government who are in the minority in Scotland, yet who continue to force their views down the throats of the people of Scotland. I tell them now that they had better be the listening Government. If they are not, there will be little of the Union left.

4.35 am

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): I share the concern expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) about the fact that a debate of such magnitude has to take place at this hour and in such circumstances. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) that it is deplorable that only one Scottish Conservative Member is here.

I also greatly regret the fact that no hon. Member from any of the other Opposition parties in Scotland is here, either—although I believe that a Liberal Democrat came in for 30 seconds while my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams) was speaking. It is unfortunate that no one from the other parties is here, because it would have been helpful for us to be able to show that all the Scottish Opposition parties are united in the call to oppose the privatisation of water.

Like the other hon. Members who have spoken, I want to raise my voice to express what the people of Scotland are saying. There is widespread opposition to the Government's proposal, but also widespread cynicism about whether there is any value in contributing to the current consultation. There is a view that the Government have already made up their mind, that they are working through a political project, which we are also seeing in local government. That project involves the centralisation of many powers to the Scottish Office and its civil servants, the destruction of many local authority services, the privatisation of many of the services that are not being destroyed, with many of the services that remain handed over to quangos stuffed full of Conservative cronies.

That is a disappointing vision of how the governance of Scotland is to operate in future—but the people of Scotland have every justification for believing that that is the perspective that the Government have in mind for them.

I accept, as do most hon. Members, that something has to be done about water and sewerage in Scotland. We realise that bills will have to be met for the necessary work, but the Government must give us a commitment that they

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will genuinely seek the best way to provide the service, rather than starting from what happens to suit their dogma.

I am disappointed that the Government have not published the Quayle Munro report. Clearly there is information there that would enable people prepared to examine the subject without preconceptions to establish which of the options is most likely to meet the needs of Scotland's people at the minimum affordable cost. The fact that the report has not been published leads us to the conclusion either that there is something in it that the Government want to hide, or that it would reveal to us that they had already made up their mind.

That is regrettable, because there is now a cynicism in Scotland that goes beyond the ranks of those who would normally oppose the Government and all their works. Like many of my hon. Friends, I have been surprised by the enthusiasm with which people are queuing up to sign petitions against water privatisation. But I am also despondent about the degree to which they feel that what they do will not make a blind bit of difference anyway. That is not healthy in the Scottish body politic.

The Government are playing with fire; they are alienating the vast majority of the Scottish population from the political process. They may manage to get through one manoeuvre or another; they may manage to perform a particular action—but in the longer term what they are doing is unhealthy for the democratic process. I believe that the Government will be surprised at what they are sowing for the longer term.

There is alienation not simply from the Minister's party, but from the political process itself. The Government are forcing people outwith the bounds of normal democratic politics, which is not a healthy development. We have already seen among the ranks of some of the Opposition parties fundamentally undemocratic currents and elements that choose to operate in an undemocratic manner. Like many other people, I am not especially happy about that, but I recognise that that is the direction in which those groups feel obliged to move.

The Government must take account, to a far greater extent than they have been prepared to do in the past, of Scottish opinion. I hope that, when the consultation views come in, the Government will give evidence, after they have produced their conclusion, that they have actually listened to what Scots have said and not simply proceeded on the basis of doing what they had already made up their mind to do before the exercise began.

4.40 am

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: I call Mr. Chris Smith.

Mr. McLeish: That is close, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is 4.40 am, so there may be some excuse.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Please accept my apologies.

Mr. McLeish: I should not mind the mistake if you had not mistaken me for a London Member. Scots may take some umbrage, but we shall continue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) should be congratulated on winning this debate. It is a subject that the Government would not bring before the House, partly because of the embarrassment it would cause even to sections of the Conservative party in Scotland, including councillors and some of the Minister's hon. Friends on the Back Benches, who I am sure will join us at a later date in criticising the proposal heavily.

It is also important to say that this has been an excellent debate. My hon. Friends have focused sharply on the issues. There has been passion and knowledge, and my hon. Friends have demonstrated the outrage that is felt throughout Scotland about the ultimate absurdity, even for this Government. To talk about the "ultimate absurdity" involves taking into consideration some offences and injuries to the Scots over the past 14 years which are themselves pretty dramatic and pretty terrible.

The debate has highlighted three particular points. First, the Government's attitude has shown that there is a compelling case for the issue to be debated in Scotland in a Parliament of Scots where it can be debated by Scots for Scots. It could be given appropriate time and importance there, and such a Parliament would enable Scots to view the proceedings, rather than our having a debate at this time of the morning 400 miles away from the scene of activity.

The second point that has emerged is that there is no compelling case for water privatisation. It is an absurdity and I look forward to listening to the Minister trying to justify such a measure. We shall, of course, be told that local government reform and water privatisation are the subjects of consultation.

The second point leads me on to the third. Who can believe any consultation process started by this Government? Both consultation processes end on 29 January next year. Is not it the case—the Minister would agree if he was being honest—that local government reform in its simplest form is a paving measure for water privatisation? The two are inextricably linked. The consultations finish at the same time. The Prime Minister goes one step further. He sees local government reform as a substitute for significant constitutional change. My hon. Friends and I disagree with that viewpoint.

It seems curious to me that when the Government are taking stock after the 9 April election, in which they were heavily defeated in Scotland, they are still pursuing a matter that seems not only to outrage Scots, but to insult them. As my hon. Friends have said, why do the Government listen to no one at any time?

The feeling of outrage, as my hon. Friends have suggested, goes well beyond party political differences. It is reaching areas that I have never seen involved, and people of all parties and of no party. The vexed question is when the Government are going to put the public interest of Scotland before the political ideology of the Conservative party.

My hon. Friends have raised a number of important issues and I will highlight some of them. My hon. Friends have mentioned the curious position of Quayle Munro. It was the consultancy company that was commissioned on 4 August to carry out a study on the options for water. The study cost the taxpayers £50,000. The Government refused to publish the brief. They have also refused to publish the report. From the Government's report that was published in the House, it is clear that there is no reference to that study, which cost £50,000 and which is supposed to be the basis for this debate and the debate that will continue until 29 January.

The Government must be asking some searching questions. Why does Quayle Munro seem to be the flavour of the month, every month in Scotland, in relation to Scottish Office work? Why has that company been given £563,000 in only a few years in relation to the Scottish Bus Group, the Skye crossing and now Scottish water and sewerage services?

It is widely known in Scotland that the firm has no technical competence or technological experience. On what considerations do the Government base their commissioning of work from that company? When the Minister responds, I hope that he will tell us why Quayle Munro seems to be favoured when most of its competitors, which are losing contracts against that firm, regard that with dismay and disbelief.

How on earth can the Opposition take seriously a report published by the Government, based on a report commissioned by the Government which has not been published or discussed, but which has cost the taxpayers of the United Kingdom nearly £50,000? That is a key issue to which we want an answer. This is a shabby and tawdry affair. The Government are simply not coming clean about what they are doing with taxpayers' money. We demand answers to those questions—hopefully tonight, or on the other occasions when the issue will be debated.

The necessary investment has also been highlighted in the debate. Most of my hon. Friends know that the Government are arguing that investment equals privatisation, but that is simply a smokescreen. My hon. Friends have pointed out that we do not need to go into the private sector to be privatised and to win the £5 billion-worth of investment.

Most people accept that some £5 billion may be needed over the next 15 years to tackle the Community directives about clean water and waste. That should be the basis for reasonable discussion, but we do not have such a discussion. Instead, the Government use the pretext of the necessary investment to argue for privatisation.

In many recent articles, and in terms of the comments made by my hon. Friends, the £5 billion can be won because, at the present time, the Government do not contribute a penny to the water service in Scotland. Can the Minister deny that? Does he not accept that that is true? The Minister does not seem to be sure. Do the Government accept the view that not a penny comes from the taxpayer towards the provision of water services in Scotland?

Mr. Allan Stewart: As I will explain to the House shortly, the hon. Gentleman is talking the most absolute nonsense.

Mr. McLeish: Will the Minister confirm that, in Scotland, apart from the borrowing consent——

Mr. Stewart: That is right—the borrowing consent.

Mr. McLeish: I hope that my hon. Friends will forgive the digression, but I think that the Minister may want to know something about how capital expenditure operates. Does he not accept that the Treasury allows Scottish local authorities, by way of a signed piece of paper and a bottom-lined activity, to borrow that money? Every penny of the debt and the service comes from the consumer. Therefore, the taxpayers of Britain do not provide a penny towards the provision of the water service.

Mr. Stewart *indicated dissent.*

Mr. McLeish: The Minister can shake his head all morning.

Mr. Stewart: Will the hon. Gentleman explain why such borrowing consent has been consistently classified as public expenditure by every Labour Government?

Mr. McLeish: This is an interesting diversion, but let us return to the key issue. The Minister will not accept that, at present, Scottish local authorities and their consumers pay for every penny of expenditure on the water service.

That is the conclusion of experts, and it is obviously right. Does not the Minister accept that the £5 billion can be found? Calculations suggest that, at the moment, capital expenditure for water and sewerage is more than £200 million a year. The figure of £5 billion over 15 years is about £340 million a year. We are talking about the possibility of servicing the debt on an additional £100 million of capital expenditure. That is simply a smokescreen. We do not need privatisation to win such investment; at present it can be done comfortably by Scottish local authorities.

My hon. Friends have also highlighted the experience of England and Wales. I feel sorry for people in England and Wales, because they are the victims of a disaster: first the sell-off; secondly, the rip-off; thirdly, the pay-off, in the form of the Thames Water contribution to the Conservative party. What a disgrace!

The Government heap insult on injury by not only privatising the most precious asset that any community can have; they then create what my hon. Friends have described as a new batch of water millionaires. In 1988-89, the 10 chairmen of the water companies paid themselves £400,000. In 1991-92, the same 10 chairmen paid themselves £1·2 million. What about wage restraint? What about ripping off the consumer? What does that do for efficiency, value for money, effectiveness and cleaning up our dirty beaches and sewage-laden sands? Nothing whatever: it is simply a licence to print money. I hope that the Minister will address that matter.

My hon. Friends have also mentioned disconnections. "Barbarism" and "obscenity" were two words that I heard. Most Scots agree. They are simply outraged that, although in a culture which values a precious asset we have no disconnections, in England and Wales the ultimate test of the marketplace is to disconnect people.

Despite being given every opportunity, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) said, the Secretary of State for Scotland refused to rule out disconnections in his vision of water and sewerage services in Scotland. Perhaps the Minister will want to address that problem and reassure the House that there will be no connections, regardless of the option selected. He is a charitable man. I am sure that every sinew of his body is tingling with embarrassment, outrage and concern at the possibility of disconnections taking place in his constituency of Eastwood. He has an opportunity to go one step further than the Secretary of State and tell us that there will be no disconnections, regardless of which option he selects for the future.

The debate has been good because it has highlighted, I think conclusively, the fact that the Government must be deeply embarrassed. The Scots are outraged. There is no justification for privatisation and no case on investment. What we see is the bidding of the Treasury, leading Ministers in the Scottish Office once again to bend the

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knee. When will the Ministers in the Scottish Office stand up for Scottish interests and tell the Treasury and the ideologues of Smith square and No. 10 that we simply will not have a scandalous privatisation of the water service?

Let us keep the service public, let us invest what is required, and let us make it clear that every pound spent by consumers is returned to them in value for money, instead of water millionaires, disconnections and the whole paraphernalia of the disastrous privatisation in England and Wales.

4.53 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): One must congratulate the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) on at least managing to work himself into a considerable lather at 4.53 in the morning. I join him and other hon. Members who have spoken in the debate in congratulating the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) on his success in the ballot and on providing us with this opportunity to debate the closely related subjects of local government and the future structure of water in Scotland.

The hon. Member for Midlothian and some other hon. Members have raised the issue of the Scottish Parliament. Madam Deputy Speaker, you would not wish me to dilate on that matter. I repeat my view that if the people of Scotland wish to have a Scottish Parliament, they have and have always had an opportunity to obtain that by voting for the Scottish National party in sufficient numbers.

Mr. Davidson: Does the Minister agree that at the last election the Labour party stood on the basis that it would introduce a Scottish Parliament? It is not reasonable to say that the only choice is Unionism and the status quo or independence. Indeed, the range of people who want a Scottish Parliament of some sort stretches across all the Opposition parties; it is not solely the reserve of the SNP.

Mr. Stewart: I do not dispute for a moment that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends want a Scottish Parliament. But, as I understand it, the Labour party's position is that it accepts that the Government of the United Kingdom should be made up of that party which commands a majority in this House. That is not the position taken by the SNP and it never has been.

I congratulate all hon. Members at least on their stamina in being here at 4.55 am and, indeed, on their impassioned and—I certainly would go so far as to say—on occasion, knowledgeable speeches. I look forward to seeing them all—as I am sure does their Whip, the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster)—at the Scottish Grand Committee at 10.30 this morning.

The first of the two related subjects which the hon. Member for Midlothian brought to the attention of the House was local government reform. Since October, there has been tremendous interest in the consultation paper on local government reorganisation. We have sent out more than 18,000 papers as well as the consultation video and leaflets. The message that continues to emerge from those within local government, members of the public and other organisations is that we now have a considerable opportunity to improve things.

Although, of course, the 1975 reorganisation served its purpose, we now have a chance to develop a sense of identity between communities and local authorities. That identification has been weakened in many cases. I hope that Opposition Members who did not concentrate—I do not criticise them for that—on the wider debate about local government will take the opportunity before the end of the consultation period to put in their constructive comments on the structure of local government they want to see. We believe that the process has got off to an excellent start. It is engaging many thousands of people across Scotland, whose input will be invaluable in the decision-making process.

Opposition Members made the general point that there was some hidden agenda about local government reorganisation; they suggested that it was about moving power and responsibility from local to central Government. It is specifically not about that. We have said that we believe in the enabling rather than the providing role of local government, but that does not take away the responsibilities of local government for ensuring that services are provided. If we intended to move power and responsibility from local authorities, we would hardly have announced recently the transfer of responsibility for care in the community to local authorities in Scotland. So I assure Opposition Members that there is no hidden map or agenda for the reorganisation of local government, and that it is not about the transfer of responsibility from local to central Government.

Mr. Davidson: Can the Minister give us a cast-iron guarantee that none of the powers or activities presently given to local authorities will be removed and given to central Government?

Mr. Stewart: I can repeat the general assurance. However, there are some aspects—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] I shall give an example. At the moment there is a division in the responsibility for trunk roads, and the responses to the original consultation paper showed that there was widespread dissatisfaction with the present arrangements.

There is no general thrust behind the proposals to move the major responsibilities of local government to central Government. That is not the objective.

Mr. McLeish: On a lighter note, if the Secretary of State selects any of the options that do not include Eastwood as a separate entity, will the Minister assure us that he will not resign from the House?

Mr. Stewart: I assure the hon. Member that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is a wise and objective man, who will consider all the representations that he receives in his customary, objective way—[HON. MEMBERS: "All the representations?"] My right hon. Friend will consider all the representations from hon. Members and from everyone else at the end of the consultation process.

Mr. Wray: The Minister mentioned the nationalisation of housing to my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams). Is there to be any reform of housing? Is he aware that 37,500 people were registered homeless last year and that 11,500 of them involved families, which means that 84 children were made homeless every working day of the year?

Mr. Stewart: The debate is about local government and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we envisage that

local authorities will continue to have a responsibility as housing agencies, along with others such as Scottish Homes and housing associations.

My time is now very limited, so may I deal with hon. Members' remarks about water and sewerage? There is an inescapable need to study the structure of the water and sewerage services in Scotland. Local government reorganisation makes that necessary.

I emphasise that the consultation paper sets out a range of possible options and we genuinely want people's well-considered views on them. I hope that respondents will approach the exercise with the same seriousness and open-mindedness as we do.

Frankly, all the options have advantages and disadvantages. It is a question of striking a balance and we want to get that right. It will require careful thought. Knee-jerk reactions against privatisation may make Opposition Members feel good at any time of the day or night, but we will need more than that. Such reactions are not a substitute for thought. We must ask a number of questions.

The changes resulting from the reorganisation of local government provide a good opportunity for asking the questions, but we must also consider financing the capital investment. Opposition Members made some well-considered comments on that. There is general recognition that major capital investment will be required and there is common ground across the House on the broad level of the sums that will be required. If a public sector agency is to undertake that capital investment, fewer resources will inevitably be available for other public sector projects. In any public expenditure, there is an opportunity cost.

I must tell the hon. Member for Fife, Central that the borrowing consent that has been given to the regional and islands authorities naturally counts as public expenditure. The fact that it has counted as public expenditure under this Government and all previous Governments, whatever their political persuasion, cannot be ignored.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway)——

In accordance with Mr. Speaker's ruling—[Official Report, 31 January 1983; Vol. 36, c. 19]—the debate was concluded.

Sub-post Offices

5.5 am

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am grateful for the opportunity to address the House in this short debate and apologise to the Minister for causing him some lost sleep.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham): I am always awake at this time in the morning.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am pleased to hear that. The Department is obviously making the Minister earn his pay.

The subject is important and I do not apologise for detaining the House at this late hour because not just hon. Members are losing sleep tonight; owners of sub-post offices throughout the country are losing sleep as a result of the future that they face. Small businesses, particularly sub-post offices, have had a tough time in recent years, partly because of the current economic context in which they must operate. The commercial world has been under considerable financial strain recently because the recession has been deeper and has lasted much longer than any of us expected.

Moreover, rural and peripheral communities have been under stress for many reasons. Agricultural subsidies have been, are being and will be reduced. Last week's announcement about the hill livestock compensatory allowances, for instance, will badly affect the sheep rearing industry, particularly in my constituency. The uniform business rate has had an adverse effect on small businesses and rural post offices. If my hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) catches your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he may expand on that problem.

There have been significant reductions in the rural transport available in agricultural communities throughout the country. The changing character of villages in the past five or 10 years, as they become dormitories of bigger satellite towns rather than self-supporting communities, has contributed to the problem. It is not a new problem but has been an increasing trend in recent years. It is now becoming critical and it is worth while spending some time looking at the current position.

Sub-post offices and their future must be considered in the context of services provided by Post Office Counters. The Government's plans are clear: they intend to privatise the concern at some stage. That in itself creates the uncertainty with which owners of small sub-post offices must contend.

I have the 10th most rural seat in the entire United Kingdom, according to the reference books on those matters. It is therefore clear to me in my constituency work that sub-post offices provide a vital element in the existing rural framework. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have seen the closure of many Crown post offices. The network has been reduced and Post Office Counters as a business has been rationalising its structure and moving away from the provision of Crown post offices towards the provision of sub-post offices on an agency basis. There is much uncertainty.

My attention, and that of other hon. Members, was drawn to the subject by the benefit uprating statement made by the Secretary of State for Social Security on 12 November. He said that he was trying to save money by trimming administrative costs, which is a laudable objective. He said that it was more expensive to pay giro

[Mr. Kirkwood]

payments across post office counters than to make automated credit transfers, which is true. However, the Secretary of State made a worrying comment. He said:

"I therefore propose to encourage more customers to accept payment of benefits directly into their bank or building society accounts."

In the exchanges following his uprating statement, the Secretary of State said:

"only those who have bank accounts and can be persuaded to use the facility will do so. There can be no question of claimants in rural areas who use the Post Office or whose bank is a long distance away switching from the Post Office. There is, therefore, no threat to rural sub-post offices."—[*Official Report*, 12 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 1015-24.]

As a result of that statement, I wrote to the Minister of State at the Department of Social Security. In an interesting reply written on 11 December, the Minister helpfully explained that the new approach that the Department was adopting to giro payments was part of the move to a citizens charter. He said that it would make more choices and services available to the public, which is laudable. He also said:

"Nowadays around 40 per cent. of new pensioners, and 33 per cent. of new mothers claiming Child Benefit, ask to be paid by ACT."

The Minister said that the research conducted by his Department showed that more than 70 per cent. of all claimants had suitable bank or building society accounts and that 74 per cent. of those approaching pension age had had their wages paid into their bank account. The implication is clearly that new generations of claimants and pensioners will take a different approach to accepting state payments, and substantial numbers of those who became accustomed to receiving direct payments might opt for the new service offered by the Department.

The Minister's letter said that the Department was continuing a system of research and that, after the appropriate research and piloting, in 1993 the Department would introduce its new system, with new forms and information. The system would encourage people to consider the possibility of using automated credit transfer.

The letter contained two other items of significance to tonight's debate. The Minister mentioned the Government's commitment to post offices and the rural sub-post office network. He said:

"The Government remain committed to a nationwide network of post offices in which the rural sub-post offices will continue to play a very important part. Indeed the Post Office were consulted in advance about the proposal and I understand that they do not expect any post offices to close as a result."

The Minister also said:

"we do not expect a significant effect on the viability of rural sub-post offices as a result of this change."

That is an interesting letter, which makes it clear that the Government are founding their arguments on a series of propositions, one of which is that no significant effect on the viability of sub-post offices is to be expected from the changes. The Minister of State clearly stated that the Post Office had been consulted and did not expect any post offices to close. The Government seem to be committed to a national network of post offices. More people have bank accounts now, and it was clear from the Minister's letter that automated credit transfer provides more choice—that is the objective set out in the citizens charter. According to the Government, it is a more secure method of payment and it will save money.

Will the change threaten the sub-post offices in any way? In my submission, it will, at least superficially. The Minister of State at the Department of Social Security does not admit to understanding the structure or finance of the post office network. There are 20,000 post offices, but only 1,000 of them are owned and run by the Post Office as Crown offices. The rest are run as agencies by sub-postmasters, who generally combine their post office activity with a retail business. Sub-postmasters undertake 70 per cent. of all business transacted across post office counters, so the vast bulk of the Post Office's work is conducted in that way.

According to the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters, services provided by the state—driving and television licences, and so on—account for more than 70 per cent. of all business. The work done for the Benefits Agency represents 34 per cent. of that work. The Government do not seem to allow for the fact that the future of rural offices is directly linked to the future of the urban offices, because the Post Office negotiates an overall fee with the Benefits Agency which it then redistributes to the sub-postmasters. The money is not distributed evenly; larger urban post offices are paid less per transaction than are the small, mainly rural, offices. The smaller offices are paid almost eight times as much. That cross-subsidy ensures that the rural network survives.

Any action which threatens the urban post offices will directly or indirectly threaten the viability of the rural network. If the size of the cake is reduced, there will be pressure to change the payment ratio and to pay urban offices more because that is likely to be seen as a way of preserving the maximum number of offices, and the rural offices will be at greatest risk of closure. If the ratio is unchanged, a reduction in benefit transactions will clearly cost rural offices more per head.

The National Federation of Sub-Postmasters takes the view that any action that reduces the urban network will threaten the viability of the rural network, making it even more difficult to maintain it. I have consulted the Post Office on this matter. It takes the view that benefits payments in post offices act as a magnet for the customers who make the private business of the sub-postmasters viable. Thirteen million people visit post offices every week in connection with benefits payments. That represents nearly half the total number of Post Office customers. If the Government succeed in encouraging a large slice of Post Office business to move to banks, the continuing viability of thousands of post offices will be undermined.

The Post Office's view contradicts the Minister's letter, which claimed that the viability of post offices would not be directly undermined. That might mean that the Post Office does not think that any of its own 1,000 Crown offices will close. Five per cent. of the network will be safe thereby, but it would help if the Government explained their statement that they do not believe that the viability of the post office will be undermined by this change.

The closure of post offices in small communities obviously has a knock-on effect on the whole local economy. If people have to travel to the nearest town to withdraw cash, it is likely that they will spend their cash there, thereby removing that cash from the local economy.

Will the change benefit the customer? The Government claim that the citizens charter, and all that it brings in its train, is motivated by a desire to offer greater convenience to the customer, as well as by savings. The Government claim that the increased use of automated credit transfer

means more choice. The problem is that if increased use of ACT results in fewer post offices, that will present benefit recipients with less choice and convenience.

How are recipients in rural areas to obtain cash? They will have to travel to the nearest branch of their bank, which will nearly always be farther away than their local post office. Many of the people forced to do that will be pensioners and mothers with small children.

The reduction in the number of rural post offices comes at the same time as a rapid reduction in the number of bank branches. The latest available figures show that sub-post office closures in 1991-92 totalled 288—nearly one every working day. However, that rate was surpassed by the number of bank closures. In 1990, 304 local bank branches closed—again, one nearly every working day. In 1991, 664 closed—nearly two every working day. In the first six months of 1992, 542 bank branches closed—nearly 3·5 every working day.

Mr. Needham: If the hon. Gentleman is right about that, surely the effect will be to strengthen sub-post offices. If there are fewer banks, more business will go to them.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am talking about communities that are 20 miles from the nearest bank. Bank closures might increase the distance to 40 miles.

Mr. Needham: Exactly.

Mr. Kirkwood: The Minister can develop that point in his own speech.

Most banks envisage further cuts and closures—and most of them will occur in smaller communities. If those closures are compounded by the closure of rural post offices, customer service will be substantially cut.

Increased automated credit transfer could lead to more inconvenience in other respects. Many sub-post offices are the only shop in their community. Those businesses are already under threat, for reasons that I explained earlier. If they go bust because of increased ACT, that will hardly improve convenience. The front page of yesterday's *Daily Mirror* reported that the village shop in the Prime Minister's own village has gone bust, with debts of more than £150,000. Mr. and Mrs. Doug Belcher in Great Stukeley, near Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire, have quite a lot to say about the economic situation in the Prime Minister's constituency. I thought that was a very apposite report in the context of this debate. If the Prime Minister cannot save small village shops in his own constituency, what hope is there for the rest of us in the current economic climate?

Another sector to lose out in convenience terms will be mothers. At present, they collect child benefit from post offices, but in the absence of a local post office, they will be forced to switch to automated credit transfer. When that happens, there is less of a guarantee that the benefit will be used for the correct purpose. If a mother has a joint bank account or must receive the money via her partner, she could lose the valuable direct control over her child benefit that the current systems offer.

Also, a great deal of information about benefits and other Government services is distributed via local post offices. How will the Government replace that facility? Will they pay the banks to do that work, or for large-scale advertising or direct mailings to those whom they think need the information? Or will they not supply the information?

The Minister of State's letter mentioned reducing the time that people spend queueing in post offices. First research shows that 90 per cent. of post office customers are served within three minutes; secondly, and perhaps more important, many people whose benefits are paid by automated credit transfer will still have to queue to withdraw cash at their banks. According to the September issue of the Consumers Association's magazine *Which?*, independent research has shown that queueing times in post offices are shorter than those in banks and building societies.

How much could the Government save through the new technique? At present, 95 per cent. of benefits are paid by order book or giro through the post office and 5 per cent. by automated credit transfer. Use of ACT is increasing as more new recipients opt for it. It offers three methods of saving. First, savings can be achieved by combining the payment of different sorts of benefit that may be going to the same recipient. Secondly—I do not underrate the importance of this—the incidence of fraud can be reduced, because fewer cash order books can be stolen. I know that the DSS worries about fraud, and it is right to do so.

Thirdly, ACT payments are made four or 12 weeks in arrears rather than weekly in advance, like giro payments. That last saving is clearly made at the cost of claimants, who will lose five or 13 weeks' use of their money, depending on which system they choose. According to an article that I read on, I think, 25 September, payment in arrears is already saving the Government some £40 million a year.

Other Departments' responsibilities overlap those of the DSS: the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is an example. A series of Departments are involved in supporting the rural economy, and they must address a number of important questions. New uncertainties have arisen as a result of the benefit uprating statement made by the Secretary of State for Social Security. The two questions that I am asked most often are "Who is the new policy supposed to benefit—the Treasury or the recipient?" and "How will the Government fund their commitment to the national network if they are to remove some of the income that they provide?"

I think that the answer to the first question is that the Treasury will gain: a significant increase in ACT will certainly result in less choice and convenience for the customer, and in damage to rural economies in particular. Only the Government can answer the second question, the Minister of State's letter to me of 11 December states categorically:

"The Government remain committed to a nationwide network of post offices in which rural sub-post offices will continue to play a very important part."

Mr. Needham: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he is against the customer's being able to use ACT if he chooses?

Mr. Kirkwood: No, I am not. I think that savings are important, and that the DSS is right to examine the possibility of developing this system of payment. I am merely saying that the Government do not seem to be giving proper consideration to the consequences of such a policy. Of course I am in favour of extending choice—and the Minister of State's research seems to suggest that that will be the trend in future. The Government must understand, however, that they cannot make such savings

[Mr. Kirkwood]

without striking at the potential future viability of the rural sub-post office network. That is why I felt it necessary to initiate this debate.

The Government will have to examine the situation closely. They owe the House assurances about the future viability of rural post offices. We need to hear not just that the Government are committed to such post offices but how they propose to sustain them financially.

We need assurances, too, that the research to which the Minister referred in his letter to me of 11 December will be carried out and published. The research findings must be reported to the House, and if Benefits Agency staff are setting targets for signing people up to automated credit transfer, we must be told what those targets are. We also need to know whether post offices will be able to sell national lottery tickets.

The Government must make public statements on a whole series of matters to alleviate the uncertainty among the ranks of those who run sub-post offices in particular. If they do not do that, the Post Office will find it more and more difficult to replace staff who at present are working for next to nothing, whose businesses are unprofitable and who are in effect providing a local public service. The staff are committed to the work that they do, day in, day out, often being denied the public holidays that other people can expect to enjoy. The Government owe those people a statement that will make them more confident that they have a future. Many of them are committed to the service that they provide, but they are not prepared to provide it and go bust like Mr. and Mrs. Belcher in Huntingdon. The people who provide that service and who do valuable work from which we can all benefit deserve far more support and consideration from the Government than they seem to be enjoying at present.

5.31 am

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I am delighted to be able to support my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) because he and I share an enthusiasm for community village life. As the House will know, the focal point of the modern village—the epicentre of the community—is the post office. There we celebrate our triumphs and there we mourn our losses, as my hon. Friend and I are mourning a loss today.

We are concerned at the remorseless removal of the service from many rural areas. For that reason, my colleagues in Cornwall and I undertook a comprehensive survey of the sub-post offices just two years ago, in 1990. It was the first of its kind, although since then a number of authoritative surveys by the Rural Development Commission, Action with Communities in Rural England and others have taken place.

Our survey produced some remarkable results. For example, we found that 42 per cent. of the owners of sub-post offices were thinking of giving up, frequently citing the combined effects of the uniform business rate and the poll tax as their reason. Of those who had a general retail store alongside the post office, more than half—56 per cent.—were thinking of giving up.

Since then, the uniform business rate has increased—in some cases quite dramatically. Depending on whether someone was taking over an existing business or maintaining a business, those charges could be quite devastating to the viability of the business. Throughout the following 12 months, my colleagues and I worked with the present chairman of the Post Office, Sir Bryan Nicholson, to try to persuade Ministers that the rural sub-post office was not a conventional profit-making commercial enterprise and should therefore be given special treatment. Sir Bryan thought that he had obtained a concession or exemption for very small post offices—those which were situated in private domestic residences, those which did not have major structural changes to the buildings in which they were placed, and those which did not have a general store alongside. Sadly, after months of negotiation, the then Minister at the Department of the Environment, the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), wrote to say that he could

"see no case for waiving the payment of rates by rural post offices".

Such was the effect of that announcement on the viability of a great number of sub-post offices that my colleagues and I decided to undertake a second survey—this time one that was more concentrated but in more depth—within my constituency of North Cornwall.

In December 1991, I visited a large number of post offices. At that time, there were 72 sub-post offices in my constituency. I suspect that my hon. Friend and I have that unusually large number in common, too, as we have scattered rural communities in our constituencies. Of those, 68 were able to give me detailed information on their circumstances and four were very dependent on seasonal holiday trade or were otherwise unable to give reliable data. Two thirds—67·6 per cent.—had a general store alongside for the hamlet, the village or the part of the town that they served. Thirty five—three quarters of those that had a general store—had the only retail facility serving the people in the area.

One must bear in mind that in that part of the country the average distance to the next retail outlet is at least two miles. Of the people served by those offices, just under 16,000 were retirement pensioners who relied on those sub-post offices to collect their pensions and a further 6,000 were obtaining various other benefits and allowances.

At that moment, the average uniform business rate was about £900. For most, it was expected to rise to £1,000. Despite the moratorium on UBR, of course, there have been rises, and since then it has increased much more. Since the original 1990 survey in that one area of Cornwall, four sub-post offices have closed, leaving their communities without that service and with considerable distances to cover. In each case, the UBR was cited as the last straw that broke the camel's back. In two other cases there have been closures for other reasons, but the majority of closures were a direct result of the totally unrealistic level of UBR.

There is also the difficult problem of community hours. The Post Office has been seeking to restrict a number of sub-post offices to community hours—that is, a reduced service on the ground that that is all that can be justified in a certain village, hamlet or suburb. The effect of that is unfortunate because it is totally unremunerative to sub-postmasters or sub-postmistresses to run a community hours service. Of course, they are under pressure from their customers to try to maintain a wider, longer and more substantial service. If they do so, they do it, in effect, at their own risk.

Obviously, neither survey involved precise scientific samples—they could not—but we have every reason to believe that they were nationally representative. Hon. Members will recognise the problem for being a general one.

I will give one or two specific examples to bring the figures up to date. In the past week or so, I have been in touch with several post offices. I refer to Higher Bore street, in the town of Bodmin, at the top end of the range in my constituency. More than 1,000 pensioners draw their weekly pension from that post office, which is a large one in comparison with others in rural areas. Even that post office has felt the dramatic impact of recent changes. Not only does it face a huge UBR bill, which will increase again next April, but it has suffered a reduction in business as a direct result of the problems to which my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire referred. That town happens to be home to a large number of elderly people who receive a pension from the national health service—they were employed at the large local hospital —and the health authority is currently persuading all its pensioners to transfer their pensions to bank accounts so that no pensions are paid over the counter.

That gives the lie to the Minister's suggestion that it is a matter of choice. For many pensioners, there will be no choice—they will be forced to use a bank. I accept that there are banks in Bodmin, so that will not cause too many difficulties, but at the top end of my constituency the sub-postmistress at Wainhouse Corner near Bude told me that the nearest bank is 13 miles away. Who can travel such a distance without private transport? In the scattered rural community which focuses on Wainhouse Corner there are some 190 old-age pensioners.

At the lower end of my constituency, the sub-postmistress at St. Issey, Mrs. Grubb, told me that she has 87 old-age pensioners, 39 child benefit claimants, seven invalidity benefit claimants and eight people drawing unemployment benefit, which is less than the local unemployment average. I happen to know that community very well and that sub-post office offers a highly prized service. It is having to cope with difficult circumstances. The nearest town which offers a bank and other services is about six miles away. That post office also offers an additional necessary retail outlet which, if lost, would never be replaced.

What is to be done? We must try to maintain, encourage, endorse, strengthen and support the sub-post office network. The current policy of taking services away from rural post offices must be reversed. Rural services should be concentrated on such post offices and they should be properly remunerated for providing them. My hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire has already referred to services such as social security payments and I have referred to the payment of pensions from previously nationalised services and industries—hon. Members may wish to cite other examples.

We believe that other new services should be concentrated at post offices. The licensing of vehicles is now permitted at a small number of rural sub-post offices and my hon. Friend and I know of no reason why that service should not be extended to other such post offices. Those post offices also seem the natural place for insurance services to be offered through a national network. There is no reason why the Giro system should not be used as the national back-up service for the provision of insurance advice and agency services in villages. In rural areas the operation of the national lottery, should it be introduced —there are differing views about that—should rest exclusively and properly with the sub-post offices.

The principal issue, and the one on which we look to the Government for leadership, is relief from the UBR. There is no logic in imposing the UBR on that part of the premises which is used exclusively for post office purposes. No one can pretend that a rural office, particularly if it only operates community hours, represents a commercial service which makes a profit. Those post offices provide an uncommercial, social service. It would be simple to isolate that part of the premises which is used for the sub-post office and to exempt it from the UBR.

Alongside that UBR, an unrealistic valuation is often made of the retail business which sits cheek by jowl with the post office. The UBR valuation system is extraordinarily anachronistic and takes little account of the commercial viability of a business. The calculation of an area is a false criterion on which to base a financial calculation. Worst of all in an area such as the south-west, no regard is paid to seasonal variations.

Anyone who lives in a village—I am not sure whether the Minister does—must know that if a sub-post office network did not exist the Government would have to invent one to provide the facilities, services and information back-up that any sensible Government must provide for its citizens, whether there is a citizens charter or not. Although the majority of Conservative Members tend to represent cities and suburban constituencies, they must understand that rural areas deserve and need this network of services.

It is unusual for us to be working at 5·45 am, but for many people in the Post Office—in Crown offices, sorting offices, on the road or in sub-post offices—it is a normal working hour, especially in the run-up to Christmas. It is entirely appropriate, therefore, that we should be debating the problems faced by this great national public service. We should take this opportunity to pay tribute to the service, which all too often we take for granted. As someone said to me outside the village post office in St. Issey, near Wadebridge and the Camel estuary in the most beautiful constituency in the country, "If we take it for granted, it will be taken away."

5.46 am

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): I congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on choosing this topic. It was a pity that we were not given the benefit of a little tour of Roxburgh and Berwickshire. I should have enjoyed a trip around the Whiteadder and Blackadder, which might have been appropriate to this hour of the morning.

The problems to which the hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire and for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) drew attention are not confined to rural areas. It is worth reminding ourselves that the subject chosen for the debate was simply sub-post offices, not exclusively rural sub-post offices. Many of the problems to which they drew attention—the uniform business rate, the training, recruitment and remuneration of sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses and floating the so-called community post office, with its limited hours and equally limited remuneration—apply to urban areas. I take slight issue

[Mr. Jim Cousins]

with the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, because he should not assume that all urban post offices are large. Many are small and offer a village-style service.

We should bear it in mind that we are debating a substantial business. The sub-post office network—I exclude the Crown post offices—has some 19,000 or 20,000 outlets. It is as extensive as the entire network of banks and building societies combined. It employs some 40,000 people in addition to sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses. It is a substantial employer. Some 7 per cent. of the business of Post Office Counters Limited is done through the sub-post office network.

The hon. Members who have spoken have correctly pointed out that the Government have no choice about that network of services, if they are to take their pledge of a universal post office service obligation seriously. While there will always remain a proportion of benefit users who choose to receive their benefits in cash, the Government must be committed to the present network or something very much like it. It would be nice if the Minister would assure us that that is indeed the case—that we can expect a network of approximately the present size to be a permanent feature of the Post Office Counters system.

We must now explore some of the difficulties caused by the Government's policy towards the Post Office, and the limitations on the development of post office services that make the object far more difficult to achieve.

I shall refer briefly to payments of benefits—a matter which perhaps occupied too much of the two speeches that we have heard so far. Because of the limitations of technology, benefit customers are faced with the choice of receiving their payments either automatically through the bank or in cash through a post office. We should look forward to a time when people will be able to choose to have a proportion of their benefit—which they will be able to determine—paid in cash, and the rest paid through the bank. Through the introduction of smart cards—and perhaps the installation of smart card points in the Post Office Counters network—that could be achieved, and it would mean full flexibility and real freedom of choice between payment in cash and payment through the bank. That is one of the ways in which we could seek to develop the Post Office Counters network services.

The hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire and for North Cornwall were right to refer to the fact that the internal finances of the Post Office provide for a substantial cross-subsidy to the sub-post office network —about £25 million a year. In an article in the *Financial Times* last week the chief executive of the Post Office said that under a system of pure market forces there would be a substantial reduction in the Post Office Counters network, especially in the number of small sub-post offices. The internal cross-subsidy in the present financing arrangements floats the present large network of sub-post offices.

It would be of advantage if the Government would assure us that, whatever proposals they may make for the Post Office, that necessary cross-subsidy will still be available to the Post Office—or to whatever organisation is operating post office services. If the future finances of the Post Office were structured so as to make that cross-subsidy impossible, there would be a serious problem, leading to a collapse of the network. We would all be most concerned about that.

We should look towards a considerable development of the business potential locked up in the Post Office Counters network. With an extension of legal powers—or even without one—it would be possible to introduce a new range of services. The national lottery has been mentioned, and the sale of various tickets. It would be nice to think that if the Government are shortly to arrange the sale of a further tranche of British Telecom shares, some of them could be marketed through the network, perhaps on an experimental basis. If the Government truly believe in share-owning democracy, it would be perfectly appropriate for them to use the Post Office Counters network as a method by which to extend dealing in shares.

It would also be helpful if modern telecommunication points were opened in post offices so that electronic mail systems and fax systems were widely available in rural and urban areas that might not otherwise benefit from them. Expensive services, now only available to people in their homes or through a limited commercial network, could be available universally.

The Post Office Users National Council has expressed grave concern about the future of the sub-post office network. It has referred to rumours of another 1,000 closures of post offices in addition to the previous 1,000 closures of sub-post offices which we have seen over the past four years. That would be grave news indeed.

We are all concerned about the sudden hike in the Post Office's external financing limit projected over the next three years in which, not content with having taken a profit —that may not be quite what it is, but let us call it a profit —of £750 million out of the Post Office over the past seven years, the Government now propose to take £500 million out of the Post Office over the next three years. There is no doubt that meeting such a stiff external financing limit will put many of the current financial arrangements now operated by the Post Office under considerable strain. It is important to have an assurance that, however that external financing limit is to be achieved, it will not be achieved at the price of a collapse or of a substantial reduction in the network of Post Office Counters services.

The investment programme that the Post Office proposes, in extending modern automatic cash-handling systems to about one third of the Post Office Counters network, to be achieved over three years, again would greatly increase the scope of the business that sub-post offices could undertake and would greatly add to their potential as deliverers of financial insurance services along the lines described by the hon. Member for North Cornwall.

All these are matters which could be seriously put at risk by privatisation. It could lead to a disintegration of the organisation of the Post Office. It could lead to a further raising of the external financing limit through the taking of profit and it could also put at risk the cross-subsidy system inside the Post Office's financing arrangements which floats the present substantial network of sub-post offices.

All of us want not simply to retain the existing network of Post Office Counters and the 19,000 sub-post offices, but to use the network of 19,000 contact points for the community greatly to expand the range of services, both public and private, that are provided. We look forward to the Minister's reply on that point.

5.58 am

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham): I also congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on his success in getting the topic debated. If I do not congratulate him on the time, I am sure that he will understand. The hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) said that we were undertaking work. I am not sure that all those who work in sub-post offices would agree that listening to one another is actually work.

To fill in the hon. Member for North Cornwall on my own background, I tell him that I was brought up in Budock Water, which is not far from his constituency. I moved to Broadwindsor, then to Newton Poppleford and then to Somerford Keynes, so I have some vague idea about village life, if not in the constituency of Roxburgh and Berwickshire.

The hon. Member for North Cornwall referred to the very smallest post offices and the uniform business rate. As I understand it, the Inland Revenue has already agreed to exempt those post offices. I listened to the hon. Member very closely and with considerable interest——

Mr. Tyler *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Needham: It is no good the hon. Gentleman shaking his head; that is a fact. I listened to his comments about the UBR with great interest. There was no mention in the manifesto of the Liberal Democrats or of the Labour party of a commitment to a nationwide network of post offices.

The policy of the hon. Member for North Cornwall may have changed; the Liberal Democrat change their policies fairly regularly. However, at the time of the Liberal Democrats' manifesto, their policy was for an annual revaluation. If anything is going to undermine and damage the small business sector, not including the smallest post offices, it is the concept of allowing Labour or Liberal Democrat-controlled councils to set whatever UBR they like. I can think of nothing more horrific for the consequences to local businesses than to allow the UBR to be determined by local councils.

One need only consider the wish to free up the UBR —and that was in the Liberal Democrat manifesto—to allow it to be settled by local councils to realise the effect and damage that that would have on local post offices and other small businesses.

Mr. Tyler: I have fought a case on behalf of a small post office against the UBR valuation. It is clear that the Minister's statement that exemption has been conceded by the Revenue is simply not true. It is impossible for many post offices, even for those that fall within the qualification of being in a domestic premises, without a major structural change or a general store alongside, to obtain an exemption. The security needs of a post office require that there is at least a permanent allocation of space to a post office counter. In those circumstances, the concession is totally meaningless.

Mr. Needham: The hon. Gentleman is obviously well aware of the fact that the UBR is the responsibility of the Department of the Environment. Nevertheless, as I understand it, the Revenue has agreed to exempt the very smallest part-time post offices; I can write to the hon. Gentleman about that. However, that does not alter the fact that the hon. Gentleman has not responded to my point about his policy on the UBR as a whole, the annual revaluation and the effect of allowing local authorities to determine the UBR.

Before the hon. Member for North Cornwall responds to that point, he had better be careful about this. He and I know that there would be a substantial increase in the UBR. It would not be uniform; instead, it would be a business rate to small business people. That is where the charge would lie for the spending plans which the hon. Member for North Cornwall and his colleagues, as they constantly remind us, would like to increase.

Mr. Tyler: The Minister is very gracious to give way a second time and I am grateful to him. If he has read our manifesto—as he obviously has—and our detailed policy documents, he will have read that we support the complete exemption of sub-post offices from UBR as a social service to the community. From his careful reading of our policy papers, the Minister will also recognise that we are in favour of more generous central Government support to enable the UBR to be paid at a lower level.

Mr. Needham: The hon. Gentleman is in favour of an even higher public sector borrowing requirement than the Labour party. Furthermore, if the hon. Gentleman wants to find exemptions for sub-post offices, the money will have to come from other business premises. Therefore, the point made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire about the shop in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—which, by the way, is not a post office—would have made the position even more difficult. However, at this hour of the morning, I do not want to antagonise or provoke anyone. Nothing could be further from my mind.

There are many areas of agreement on the matter and I will try to reassure hon. Members because we all accept the need for as much of a nationwide network of urban and rural post offices as we can achieve. Sub-post offices are the backbone of the counters network and the 19,000 to 20,000 offices serve a large majority of the 28 million customers who use counters every week. As I said, we made a commitment in our manifesto to the nationwide network. Such a commitment was not so clearly stated in the manifestos of the Liberal Democrat party and the Labour party.

Whatever solution we adopt for the Post Office and its constituent parts, whether in the public or private sector, we will ensure that the nationwide network is secure. That does not mean that we can guarantee that every post office will stay open for ever. Much as I should prefer that to be the case, for personal reasons and reasons of upbringing, the precise number and location of offices change with the shift in population and the changes in the requirements of clients and customers. We have accepted that the question of choice and what people are entitled to is important. But our commitment, as stated in the Post Office legislation, is to maintain a readily accessible network which fully satisfies the social, industrial and commercial needs of the United Kingdom.

The main concern of the hon. Member for North Cornwall—I accept that his concern is genuine—is in the future of the rural sub-post office. There are more than 8,000 rural sub-post offices. As the hon. Gentleman correctly pointed out, the sub-post offices in far-flung rural areas—and, I am glad to say, the one which I represent —still maintain a vital role not only in paying benefits but

[Mr. Needham]

as a point of local contact. Rural sub-post offices are also crucial places to which people can go to shop when they do not have transport. Many sub-postmasters provide an essential part of the economic infrastructure of local business communities. As we all agree, many of them run the only shop in the village.

The Post Office fully accepts its responsibility to those communities. Changes in rural life, transport patterns and so on have, inevitably, made a number of village shops uneconomic. The shop in my own village became uneconomic. The economic viability of some village shops depends to some extent on how far the village is from the nearest town. Regrettably, some sub-post offices have closed as a result.

Hon. Members have said that the Post Office, together with the Rural Development Commission and other such bodies, is giving advice on display and lay-out and how to diversify in imaginative ways to make sub-post offices more viable. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) mentioned fax machines. Fax machines as well as estate agencies, dry cleaning facilities, tourist information offices or whatever is appropriate are being installed in sub-post offices. Recently, Post Office Counters Ltd, together with the Rural Development Commission, ran a series of training seminars to serve as an induction package for new village sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses. The hon. Gentleman raised some interesting ideas. At a time when the matter is under review, I am sure that his ideas will be considered.

Recently, Post Office Counters have been inventive in finding ways to keep facilities running in areas in which the sub-postmaster has retired and we have not been able to find a replacement. In the past four years, the Post Office has opened 1,600 community offices which operate limited hours. There is such an office in the Swan with Two Necks which is in Pendleton in Lancashire, in a Portakabin in Whitson in the constituency of Roxburgh and Berwickshire and in various annexes to village halls. When the village post office in Croglin, Cumbria closed, it was difficult to find a replacement. Eventually, a community office was placed in the local toy manufacturer. Croglin Toys agreed to operate a community post office from the front of the factory for two days a week.

That spirit of innovation is necessary if we are to keep the services going. We all agree that the services are highly valued by local communities, but their viability is marginal unless they are combined with other local facilities. If the Post Office, local authorities and other providers of public services continue to act in that spirit, I am sure that this valuable part of our rural heritage will be saved. I make the point again and again that we are committed to a nation wide network. The cross-subsidy from the larger post offices to the smaller units will and should continue. Of course, that is right.

The point about automated credit transfer is an important element in the debate. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire has expressed his anxiety about it and continues to do so whatever letters or replies he receives. I am sure that he will continue to express his anxiety about it long after I have sat down. As he says, ACT has been available for the payment of pension and child benefit—the majority of all benefit transactions—for many years. There is nothing new in that. It has recently been made available for other benefits such as family credit and disability living allowance. We were right in the citizens charter to commit ourselves to extending that method of payment to recipients of other benefits, if they wish.

There is nothing new about encouraging recipients to use ACT. We do not expect to see any sudden decline in the use of sub-post offices for the collection of benefits. The hon. Gentleman quoted the letter of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People to him. My right hon. Friend said that the Post Office had said that it did not expect any decline either. The hon. Gentleman also quoted the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters. However, we have been told by the Post Office that no decline in the use of sub-post offices for the collection of benefits is expected.

The number of people who ask to be paid by automated credit transfer has risen slowly and steadily over the years. I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's concerns. He sets the fox off; then he shoots the fox; then he sets the fox running again. I think that I am right in saying that the number of new beneficiaries who come into the pensions system each year is some 15 per cent. The hon. Gentleman reported from my right hon. Friend's letter that 70 per cent. already have a bank account. So clearly the upward trend will continue and people will want to make use of the ACT facility.

I could not be clear from what the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said whether he was against people being allowed to use the facility, against encouraging them to use it, or did not want the Post Office to encourage them to use it. We are simply making more widely available an option which is secure for the client, cost efficient and, as the hon. Gentleman fairly admitted, involves a saving for the public purse. But we are not forcing people to use bank accounts if they do not wish to do so. We are not giving them a financial incentive to switch from one method to the other.

As the hon. Gentleman said, people may opt for ACT. He went on correctly to point out that bank branches are closing. If bank branches are closing everywhere, there will surely be more business about for the rural or urban sub-post offices. The giro may be a more effective way of doing things. I do not know whether my wife would be particularly pleased to have her personal dealings with the Post Office divulged in the House of Commons at 13 minutes past six in the morning, but her view is clear. She does not want to cash her child benefit through the bank. She certainly does not want to put it through any joint bank account with me. How right she is in that respect.

So there will always be people who, for good and sound personal reasons, will want to continue to use the system as it is. But, equally, there will be others who will want to switch to ACT. We must then consider the total volume of business at post offices. I also accept that many people value highly their regular visits to the post office to collect their pension or child benefit. As the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire rightly said, in rural communities the nearest bank may be many miles away. So I have no doubt that for those reasons alone people will continue to prefer the rural post office to the bank. I repeat that we are not taking that option away.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire asked what forms of encouragement my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security intends to use to increase the uptake of ACT. I understand that he will

simply improve information to benefit recipients about the availability and the advantages of ACT, and he will make it easier for new and existing customers to use that method for all types of benefit in due course, but no pensioner is being forced to accept it.

The issue needs to be put into perspective. The number of people—mainly pensioners—claiming benefit has increased at a greater rate in the past few years than the rate of take-up of automated payment mechanisms. During the past few years the Post Office has performed an increasing number of transactions on behalf of the Department of Social Security, in spite of the gradual increase in automated payments. By 1994-95, after the encouragement that the DSS will give to claimants to have their payments made by ACT, the DSS expects that the volume of payments made through post offices will be about the same as it is today.

I understand the concern of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, but he is considering the matter purely on the basis of those who decide to move to ACT, without taking into account the increasing number of new claimants. The evidence shows that even if more people move gradually to ACT, with a 15 per cent. addition each year, the DSS does not expect the volume of payments to decrease. That is why the Post Office made that point. That is the essence of this debate and it allows the hon. Gentleman to have his cake and eat it, which is what he has been asking for.

Mr. Kirkwood: I have listened carefully to the Minister and I understand his argument. However, demographic changes come and go. If research started to show that the financial viability of post offices would be affected substantially, would the Government accept that it was a part of their responsibility to make good that loss?

Mr. Needham: I do not accept the premise. The hon. Gentleman is again setting out his fox to shoot it when —judging by the evidence that the Government have— what is running is not a runner. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central mentioned new business. However we look at the issue in the long term, those of us who live in country areas have to accept that the rural sub-post office network has declined. That is why we have been discussing the 1,600 new community post offices, which have arrived because it has been impossible to keep village shops open.

In time, we shall have to consider what to do. As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, new facilities are coming in, including the smart card. In many areas of Europe all benefits are paid automatically, but we do not have that system; we do not want it and we will not have it. I suspect that demography will not eat away at the problem, but improvements in information technology, greater mobility and greater wealth will. We therefore come to the key issue of new business, which will offer the way forward.

The Post Office has had to face numerous apparently grave threats to its business, and we have mentioned the increased use of direct debits, and the wider availability of stamps in non-post office premises. Post Office Counters' turnover has grown steadily despite the predictions. During the past five years, automated credit transfer for benefit payments has taken root, but Post Office Counters' turnover has increased every year and is one third higher than it was five years ago. That is the most important point. It has happened partly because the Post Office has taken up new business and entered new markets. The Crown offices, for example, have successfully expanded into retailing a wide range of stationery and greeting cards, imaginatively building on their core business. We have also recently announced that the Post Office will be granted powers to bid for work on the national lottery. That could become a valuable new source of earnings for the Post Office, and particularly useful to sub-offices as a way of getting customers through the door.

I hope that I have dealt with the main points raised in the debate. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central asked about the external financing limit. In recent years, the Post Office has been successful in increasing its turnover, service levels and returns. The contribution that it makes to the Government must take account of a range of factors, including the interests of customers and taxpayers. There is great pressure on the public sector borrowing requirement and a return of less than 4 per cent. of turnover is not over-exacting, given the enormous size and importance of the business.

To sum up, I wish to make two things clear. First, the Government and the Post Office value highly the service given by sub-postmasters throughout the country, in both urban and rural areas. That includes rural, small community and larger urban offices, all of which have a vital role to play. Secondly, we are committed to maintaining a nationwide network of offices, whether or not the Post Office remains in public ownership.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire for giving me an opportunity to put the record straight and for a debate which, even at this hour of the morning, I hope sub-postmasters throughout the country will have found useful and reassuring.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

6.21 am

Sir Keith Speed (Ashford): I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister to the debate. It will be a somewhat Kentish debate, judging by my hon. Friends in the Chamber. I am sure that the Minister will accept some of the criticisms that we shall make in the spirit in which they are made.

Over the past few years, history has shown us that a number of motor transport projects have lacked the political will to carry them through or suffered delays, ineptitude or incompetence. One thinks of the Maplin airport plan, the Heathrow rail link, crossrail and the Jubilee line, which is still being discussed. I submit, however, that the granddaddy of them all is the channel tunnel rail link.

When the new channel tunnel was announced a few years ago, it was decided that a link was not necessary. Then it was decided that it was necessary. Indeed, many of us who live in Kent and see the problems of Network SouthEast realise that to run a viable and complete international channel tunnel service of trains from London and other parts of the United Kingdom through to the continent on the existing Network SouthEast would, in a few years' time, soon lead to disaster.

First, it was said that we needed only one London terminal for the channel tunnel rail link. We then did an about-turn and said that we needed two: King's Cross and Waterloo. It now appears to be one again, because I am not sure about the status of King's Cross. That gives none of us grounds for confidence that people will arrive where they thought they had set out for.

Five years ago, it was clear that if Network SouthEast was to grow at 4 to 5 per cent., which was the incremental growth rate per year until the recent recession, the link was essential; many senior people in British Rail were saying that it would be essential to have it by the turn of the century. It was realised that, as well as being necessary to cope with the capacity problems on Network SouthEast, the line would be of considerable benefit to Kent commuters, which would obviously have a bearing on the way that it was financed.

Since then, the history of the project has bordered on high farce. Unfortunately, that high farce has caused major problems and uncertainty, not only for my constituents but for many others in Kent and south-east London. In 1988, there were four route options through different parts of Kent that joined just north of Folkestone. Some of the options went through housing estates which, apparently, were not on the maps that British Rail was using. I suspect that they were not on the maps used by the Department of Transport either—some of my hon. Friends know of that only too well.

There was much aggravation, consultation and discussion. I, and, I am sure, others of my hon. Friends representing Kent, had a difficult time. I experienced the worst time that I have known in my 24 years in Parliament. I personally received more than 3,000 letters. We were attending public meetings of 400 and 500 people and none of us—British Rail, the Department of Transport and the Government—appeared in a good light.

Eventually, after all that aggravation, we arrived on a likely route—the southerly approach into London. It was to pass up the existing line from Folkestone, through Ashford and my constituency, branching out along the M20, through the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), up through north Kent, to Waterloo and across the river, in through Essex, Stratford and the two terminals at King's Cross. Meanwhile, there was an abortive attempt to involve the private sector.

The consultants—the Ove Arup group—had been drawing up their own solution to the problem, as had a consortium called Rail Europe, based on the original Talis route. The Rail Europe proposal was for a line further to the east of the existing routes, approaching through Stratford into King's Cross through east London and Essex. I believe that that option was never properly evaluated. I know that both the Department and British Rail said that it was, but there was a strong feeling in my part of the world, and, I think in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent, that it was not properly evaluated. Whatever the Minister, I or anybody else says, many of my constituents will take that view with them to their grave. That solution could have been a good one. It would certainly have been people-friendly.

We thought that we had found the final solution. My constituents, if not learning to love it, were learning to live with it. My 3,000 letters dropped to just a few letters every month, and I thought that all was in order. However, in October last year my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, who was then the Secretary of State for Transport, announced in Blackpool at the Conservative party conference that the Ove Arup route through Stratford was to be selected, and the southern route, worked out by British Rail, was to be abandoned.

I believed then, and said so—I have heard nothing to change my mind—that the choice had more to do with the regeneration of the Thames corridor than international transport considerations. My right hon. and learned Friend told his audience in Blackpool, and I heard him —as did the world, because he was widely quoted:

"We are ending the blight and the uncertainty."

At the beginning of this year, Union Railways, a new subsidiary formed by British Rail, was set up to redefine and bring forward the project. I believe—my hon. Friend the Minister can correct me if I am wrong—that the remit from the Department of Transport made it clear that cost savings were to be the main name of the game. It was put about that the Ove Arup route was only a concept, not a detailed line, although it had apparently been a fairly definitive route in October last year.

So it was back to the drawing board. Contrary to what my right hon. and learned Friend had said, fresh blight and uncertainty had been created. Cost-cutting had a lot to do with it, I suspect. People in my part of the world say that the cost-cutting was in preparation for privatisation. I hope that that is untrue. I have reservations about privatisation. I should like to see a partnership between the Government, British Rail and the private sector—a partnership producing high-quality environmental protection.

Matters went from bad to worse. In July this year there were rumours of a new possible route through Kent. They remained rumours, because no consultation had been carried out with Members of Parliament, local councillors, the local business community or anyone else. There were some murky confidential meetings between the chief officers of one or two local councils and one or two council leaders, but there was no "consultation" in the sense that my hon. Friends and I understand that word.

Local people have some idea now of the options under consideration, thanks to the excellent investigative work of our local newspapers, particularly the *Kentish Express*, which has unearthed some interesting facts.

It appears that one option is the original route through Ashford, north through the town in a tunnel, up alongside the M20 to the area know as Charing heath, thence into the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent, on up through the north of Kent and eventually into King's Cross, having passed through parts of Essex and east London.

The favoured option, however, would apparently be completely different. It would abandon the tunnels—this is where the cost considerations come in—and run on the surface almost all the way. In Ashford, it would destroy the local golf club, and the new sewage works, which cost a great deal of money. It would run through one of the most attractive residential parts of the town, emerge alongside the M20 and somehow cross it to join the existing line down near Mersham. The line would also run further into north-west Kent, and it would cause more problems and uncertainties there.

Ashford has been appallingly blighted by all this. I have received letters from business people and other people thinking of moving to Ashford, asking me whether they should buy a house in the town and what will happen if they do. I have sent my hon. Friend the Minister copies of some of those letters. The truth is that neither he nor I can answer them at the moment. If the line does come, we do not know which side of the M20 it will affect. Sale boards are going up again in my part of Kent, and the housing market is just beginning to revive—but not in Ashford, because the line's route is uncertain and no one in his right mind would buy a house knowing that in a few months' time it could be dramatically affected by the high-speed link.

The blight is also affecting what is probably the largest income-generating employer—potentially—in south-east Kent: Trinity College science park in Ashford. It has come to a grinding halt because the new surface line, which would bisect Ashford, would also mess up the science park, thereby destroying its huge potential for high-technology industries and local employment. My constituents are coming to the end of their tethers. They are punch drunk after so many years of "consultations". They had thought that the matter was settled, but they now find that they are unable to sell their houses—and the new route is not even protected for blight purposes.

I understand that Union Railways intends to submit proposals to the Government within the next two weeks, and I strongly believe that the proposals and options should be published at that stage and placed in the public domain. I shall tell my hon. Friend the Minister why: it would end the blight, including that affecting the possible new surface route through the town. I cannot overstress —I am sure that hon. Friends representing other Kent constituencies can bear this out—the hardship, worry and concern being caused.

It is no use saying that early publication will cause blight, because the blight already exists. Once the proposals are published, at least the blight will be defined. We know of and have learnt to live with the route that passes alongside existing lines in Ashford. The possible new route is being imagined by different people in all parts of the town, although I think that the press has done a pretty good job of trying to define it. If the proposals are published as soon as the Department receives them, at least that will eliminate large areas of blight. It seems impossible to get that through to the Government and to Ministers. I think that they cannot understand because the problem does not exist in their constituencies.

I also believe strongly in publication, because the proposals are bound to leak very quickly in garbled form. It is an unfortunate fact of life that Whitehall cannot be relied upon these days to keep confidences confidential. In this particular case, it should not do so anyway, because enough has leaked since last July.

Another important point that should be mentioned—although I do not set great store by it—is that the county council elections are to be held in May. I do not think that the high-speed rail link should be a matter of party political controversy. All parties in my part of the world want it, but it would be singularly unfortunate, to say the least, if the Government decided to publish the proposals in a few months' time, and became embroiled in the county council election campaign. That would not do anybody any good.

Another vital reason for quickly publishing the proposals is so that the consultation will be meaningful. If the Department, Ministers and Union Railways all want the consultation that they say that they want, it is no use the Government sitting on the proposals and causing a delay of three to six months, and then coming forward with their conclusions and saying, "We are now going out to consultation." There has been no consultation so far, and what will consultation be worth at that stage? Will it be consultation about the colour that the fences will be painted, or about whether a tree will be planted here or there? Clearly, it could not be substantial consultation on whether the route should go through tunnels for environmental reasons and on other matters of importance, including freight.

Ashford is already bisected by the main line, but we have lived with that for 120 years and can do so for another 120. If the Government's proposed route for Ashford is the new one alongside the A20, which would introduce an additional bisecting of the town and all the profound disadvantages that I listed—my constituents and I profoundly hope that will not be so—the Government, when they make their announcement, must also announce proposals for dealing with all those problems. Where is the golf course to go? Where is the new sewage works to go? What will be the compensation scheme for all the residential houses affected? What will happen to the Trinity College science park, which is vital to the balanced industrial growth of Ashford and south-east Kent?

Perhaps I have been a little rough so far. I do not mean to be offensive to my hon. Friend the Minister; in his dealings with me and those of my hon. Friends who represent other Kent constituencies, he has always been courteous and helpful and he has done his very best to assist us. He is, however, defending the indefensible if he is not prepared to publish details of the route at an early stage and to ensure that meaningful consultation takes place.

It has been publicly recorded within the past fortnight that my constituents have one of the worst rail services in the United Kingdom—the Kent coast line. I do not blame British Rail for that; I blame the lack of investment in rolling stock on the line. The Networker 471, which would have made an enormous difference to punctuality, reliability and comfort, was promised to my constituents

[Sir Keith Speed]

and those of my hon. Friends who represent south-east Kent: they were originally told that they would have it by 1993. I have maps upstairs, published by British Rail—presumably with the authority of the Department of Transport—which show that that was the plan. Alas, it now seems that the Networker will be at least five years late, appearing in 1997-98 at the earliest.

Over the past five years, my constituents have been subjected to numerous anxieties. All the consultations and statements on the channel tunnel rail link have been totally misleading and out of date, bearing no relation to the latest initiative. My hon. Friend the Minister has done a great deal to try to promote Ashford international passenger station; it is now three-eighths funded, but is clearly unlikely to open before the international services start running. Even at this stage, local British Rail management appears doubtful about whether it can spend the money announced by my hon. Friend on signalling and track work. I feel that my constituents have a right to feel aggrieved.

What is the cost of the exercise? I wrote to my hon. Friend, who was unable to give me the figures; I have, however, ascertained them. The cost of the nugatory work done so far is as follows: £145 million for house purchase, offset by sales of £19 million. Interest on the money raised for expenditure currently stands at £66 million; on top of that are thousands of hours of management and senior management work. The total net cost is clearly in excess of £100 million—for nothing. We are now back to the drawing board.

For £100 million, we could have built the Ashford international passenger station and had £20 million left over for something else. Alternatively, we could have provided about 20 per cent. of the cost of the new Networker fleet. That would have been a substantial start. People in Kent are angry and shell shocked; they are asking for a say in decisions, and they want those decisions to be implemented properly and sensibly, so that the rail link will, at best, be only five or six years behind the comparable link that the French are to open next summer.

If the scheme is to be completed—I hope that it will be, although there is considerable doubt at present—it will need not only the work that is being done but a proper selection of the route and proper environmental protection. It must set European noise standards, rather than trailing behind with outdated standards that might have been adequate for the roads of 20 years ago but are not adequate for the new railways of today.

Before the ink dries on the Edinburgh summit agreement, let me put in a plea. Much of the cost of both the Ashford international passenger station and the link could be found from the £24 billion infrastructure economic funds that are to be provided by the private sector, the European investment bank and other Government sources. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister knows that the European investment bank financed the second Dartford tunnel some years ago: there is a good precedent. If this sort of money is now up for grabs among the 12 Community countries, we ought to put in a quick bid at an early stage. Both projects would be good for local people, good for employment and good for Kent and the United Kingdom, and I believe that they are vital for Europe.

On the channel tunnel rail link, we want publication now; we want consultation as soon as possible; we want the very best environmental protection; and we want early construction. It really is time to stop the shilly-shallying.

6.45 am

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Sir K. Speed) has expressed admirably the sense of anger and frustration in his constituency over the handling of the channel tunnel rail link, and the sentiments that he has conveyed to the House are mirrored in that part of my constituency through which the rail link was at one stage designed to pass and which may conceivably still constitute one of the options now being considered by British Rail.

Let me start by giving a brief history of the link, up to the time of the announcement made by the then Secretary of State for Transport in October last year. Until that time, the channel tunnel rail link was formally designated from the channel tunnel portal up to Halling, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner), and the extreme north-west section of the route passed through my constituency. It passed through the charming hamlet of Kit's Coty; then travelled west, very close to the village of Eccles; then passed immediately to the south of the village of Burham, going close to the primary school there; then went along a visually very intrusive viaduct over the Medway.

In addition, British Rail planned to construct, in the last remaining rural lung between the Maidstone area and the Medway area, a new commuter station—the so-called Mid-Kent Parkway station—which would have been environmentally extremely damaging to that part of my constituency, quite apart from the fact that it would have been wholly unserved by suitable access roads and would have caused heaven knows what traffic mayhem if it had been brought into use.

Those plans were scrapped, as we thought, by the then Secretary of State for Transport in his announcement of 9 October last year. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford said, that announcement was originally made in very clear and precise terms. At that time, a formal map was issued by the Department of Transport, in which the clear line of the so-called Ove Arup route was designated. That line travelled partly over land and partly in tunnel. Its route was confirmed as far as Detling, although it was made clear that there was further work to be done in determining the route beyond Detling. The line was none the less set out in a formal Department of Transport map, which followed it all the way into London.

The new proposed line passed outside my constituency and—more significant—the Government had apparently accepted some of the central environmental arguments advanced by the Ove Arup team and had made the crucial decision that the line was to pass in tunnel under the north downs rather than travelling along the surface. That news was greeted with delight by my constituents—a delight which was added to just under a month later when, on 5 November last, the then Secretary of State issued directions cancelling the previous directions that he had made safeguarding the area of the line from Detling to Halling, which was now clearly redundant. The Secretary of State quite properly removed the blighting effect that his directions in 1990 had created. The position in my area is very similar to what was described by my hon. Friend the

Member for Ashford. The Government having established a clear position with the announcement of last October, as this year has progressed the position has become more and more muddied, more and more uncertain, with the blight becoming ever more maximised.

Of course, I accept that, if one is going to carry out public transport infrastructure projects, it is inescapable that blight will follow the publication proposals, but blight is an immensely damaging factor. In human terms, it is incredibly distressing. It makes it impossible for people to sell their homes, it causes them enormous worry and anxiety and it tends to be of long duration.

What I find quite intolerable about the present position in my constituency—from what my hon. Friend has said, it is also taking place in his constituency—is that in 1990, several hundred of my constituents were effectively formally blighted by the publication of the previous safeguarding orders designating the line between Detling and Halling. One year later, that blight was removed. One more year later, in 1992, it looks as though the blight will come back, with the endless circulation of rumours about alternative routes which British Rail is putting forward, possibly including going back to the very surface route between Detling and Halling, which the Government very clearly, in a statement to the House, scrapped in October last year.

It is quite intolerable to treat people in that way—to blight them one moment, to remove the blight the next moment and then possibly to put it back over them all over again. The Government must acknowledge that. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford said, they are duty bound not merely to remove the blight but to honour previous undertakings. People who were previously blighted should not be reblighted all over again.

Perhaps British Rail is being driven by purely financial considerations, but that in itself is not acceptable. We have had many assurances from the Dispatch Box that British Rail would not be allowed to adopt a cut-price route. We have had many assurances that environmental considerations are not simply going to be set aside but taken into account. The pages of *Hansard* are littered with assurances that have been given by a succession of Ministers to that effect. For example, on 7 November 1988, referring to the British Rail board, the then Minister of Public Transport, now Chief Secretary to the Treasury, said:

"I do expect the board to be extremely sensitive to environmental concerns".—[*Official Report*, 7 November 1988; Vol. 140, c. 69.]

Another previous Secretary of State for Transport, now Lord Parkinson, said:

"We recognise that there are special problems in Kent, and we must protect the environment."—[*Official Report*, 14 June 1990; Vol. 174, c. 490.]

The then Secretary of State for Transport, the present Secretary of State for Defence, in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), said:

"I entirely understand and sympathise with my hon. Friend's concern to ensure that the environmental implications for his constituents are properly taken into account."—[*Official Report*. 14 October 1991; Vol. 196, c. 32.]

This year, the present Secretary of State for Transport, in a letter to me, gave me the assurance that British Rail is

"applying environmental standards comparable to those for other major infrastructure projects."

That is just a short selection from an endless range of assurances from Ministers that the environmental protection of Kent will be paramount and that the Government accept that the necessary costs will have to be borne to ensure that environmental protection is achieved.

It is absolutely essential that the Government continue to tell British Rail that they will not accept a cut-price job. Basic environmental obligations must be met in Kent. That county is trying to hang on to its considerable and, in some areas, remarkable rural qualities. In those areas with large populations, people must be properly protected from noise and visual disturbance.

The critical requirement for the area of line that passes through my part of Kent is that the ministerial undertaking that we believe that we were given, and which was amply demonstrated on the map issued by the Department of Transport in October last year—that the line will pass through the north downs in tunnel—is adhered to. If there is any question of the Government reneging on that, the Minister will face absolutely determined opposition from me and others throughout the passage of any subsequent Bill that comes before the House.

6.55 am

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): It is very difficult to remain calm when one is so frustrated and angered. I should like to begin, however, by agreeing with my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Sir K. Speed) that one is at issue with the issue and not at issue with my hon. Friend the Minister, who has always behaved with great courtesy and consideration to us all.

As Christmas is approaching I thought that I might begin by trying to lighten the early hour with a modified Christmas carol:

"In their first Euro effort, British Rail gave to Kent the promise of no railway, but a blight trail across the county,

In their second Euro effort, British Rail gave to Kent four rail routes and a blight trail across the county,

In their third Euro effort, British Rail gave to Kent a line on greaseproof paper, four rail routes and a blight trail across the county,

In their fourth Euro effort, British Rail gave to Kent an international station, a line on greaseproof paper, half a rail route and a blight trail across the county,

In their fifth Euro effort, British Rail gave to Kent no international station, a line through the north downs, a station at King's Cross and a blight trail across the county,

In their sixth Euro effort, Ministers gave to Kent an international station, no line through the north downs, no station at King's Cross, a new freight line and a blight trail across the county,

In their seventh Euro effort, Ministers gave to Kent an international station, no line through the north downs, no station at King's Cross, many route options, no freight line and a blight trail across the county,

In their final Euro effort, will Ministers give to Kent an international station, a line through the north downs, a station at King's Cross, consultation on the route, a real freight line and the end of blight across the county?"

It is sad that, yet again, the debate is being conducted among Kentish Members only—with the exception of the gallant hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) who is sitting on the Opposition Benches. The proposal relates to the development of part of the infrastructure that will affect all the United Kingdom. It is a great shame that it seems almost impossible to engage consistently the attention of hon. Members from other parts of the country to examine exactly what is being proposed and what needs to be done to make our infrastructure satisfactory for the next century.

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

I want to discuss freight, blight and consultation. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), perhaps the most forceful of the Secretaries of State who have declared support for the transfer of freight from road to rail, said that it was the Government's intention to instigate such a transfer. Even in the time since he left that post—transport certainly seems to be the best way of transferring Secretaries of State from A to B, even if the Department experiences difficulty in moving freight from A to B—there has been an appalling haemorrhage of freight from the railway. Last week, Castle Cement announced that it will send 210,000 tonnes of cement by road. The week before, Blue Circle transferred half a million tonnes from rail to road. In the same week, British Rail refused to carry 75,000 tonnes of oil on its Highland line. We know that by the end of 1993 a substantial number of major companies that send freight by rail will have been priced off the railway, with the result that remaining users will face higher costs. Why have they taken these decisions? It is because in the depth of a massive recession, British Rail has increased the price on some pathways by more than 100 per cent. That smacks of exploitation of monopoly power.

British Rail has a habbit of responding to falling traffic by raising prices. It has happened to our commuters and it is now happening with increasing speed to freight. We know that the chairman of British Rail believes that rail freight has no future because he said so in public. Is it really the Government's intention to kill it? If not, why do they not change the rules?

For example, can my hon. Friend the Minister give any idea how much additional cost falls on the Government from 7 million extra lorry movements a year? The present policy flies in the face of Government assertions that freight should switch from road to rail, in the face of Kent county council's policy and in the face of the policy of local councils in Kent. There is an urgent need for a rethink on freight. It would be a mistake of massive proportions for the United Kingdom to accept Euro-money to build a passenger line while setting its face against similar support for freight.

I believe that the social, environmental and, eventually, commercial benefits of carrying freight by rail justify some short-term changes in Government policy.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I agree with every word that the hon. Member is saying, but is it his understanding, as it is mine, that British Rail is still bound by financial objectives laid down by the Government in December 1989, which oblige it, even in this time of recession, to seek an 8 per cent. return on investment on whole train freight, whereas road haulage would be happy to get perhaps 1 or 2 per cent. to get the business? Should not the rules be urgently changed and BR told that they have been changed?

Mr. Rowe: I am urging a change in Government policy, without which rail freight will cease to exist. The enormous expenditure incurred in creating freight villages will become a meaningless gesture. It would be rather like the legs of Ozymandias standing in the north of England.

It is vital that we seriously rethink how we finance freight. I shall give one example of the need to look to the future.

In recent years the controls on lorry drivers' hours have been considerably tightened, and there is every probability that over the next 20 years they will become tighter still, as will controls on lorry pollution. If that changes the economics of taking freight by lorry, there must be a sensible and viable alternative—as there is in every other European country.

As things are going at present, there will be no capacity left to handle the opportunities that the channel tunnel makes available. There is no doubt that, if present circumstances continue, the scenario that I remember sketching out in the House about four years ago will come to pass. There will be huge freight terminals in France to allow freight to be transferred from the trains that have carried it through the whole of Europe on to lorries, so that those lorries can come through the tunnel and rumble through the roads of Kent—in clear opposition, I repeat, to the wishes of every level of local government in Kent.

That will not do, I seek a clear assurance that there will be a change in the Government's perspective on the matter. Specifically, how meaningful is their commitment to a freight capacity on the channel tunnel rail link? Lord Goschen said in another place:

"we have great plans to carry freight from the Channel Tunnel on the high speed link."

However, he had previously said:

"British Rail has stated that existing lines have sufficient capacity for freight traffic well into the next century"—*[Official Report, House of Lords*, 25 November 1992; Vol. 540, c. 954-55.]

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister whether he is genuinely certain that the British Rail proposal, with its gradients, passing loops and curves, can create a genuine freight capacity on a line that BR wants to use primarily for passengers. There is clear evidence that the mixing of high-speed freight trains and high-speed passenger trains is difficult to achieve, and I believe that there is serious doubt whether British Rail will be able satisfactorily to carry any meaningful quantity of freight on the route chosen, which runs through villages such as Harrietsham, in my constituency.

We need a genuine assurance. I know that the Minister wants the line to be able to carry freight, because he has often told me so, but I want him to be certain that British Rail, with its indifference to freight, is not pulling the wool over his eyes to secure a line such as it has always wanted —purely for passengers.

I shall refer briefly to blight. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) has set out the argument well, supporting the case made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford. I add only that the blight caused by the project has been even greater than that caused by all the other current major infrastructure projects in Kent—and we know how many of them there are.

There are two principal reasons for that. The first is that British Rail had no skill or experience in handling such a matter. Its handling of public concern was clumsy to the point of shame. There was maximum confrontation with the public and minimum consultation. BR took no advice, nor did it listen to anyone. It was clear from an early stage that it had no serious intention of modifying its favourite proposal, and it is still cross that the Government made the route go east of London.

The second reason was the fact that BR hugely underestimated the intelligence, knowledge, commitment and hard work of the public affected. Large numbers of

people in Kent now know an enormous amount about where the line could go, and about gradients, locomotives and curves. In spite of all that, BR has tried to pretend that it can minimise blight by keeping its plans secret. Of course, the opposite is true. The flood of rumour and counter-rumour has made matters far worse.

Thirdly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford and my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling both said, the Government lifted safeguarding in terms which gave some people, including constituents of mine, a clear assurance that they were no longer on the route. That has proved to be a complete myth. I am glad to say that the ombudsman has accepted two examples of blight for investigation.

The most famous example is the Oak Hive estate in my constituency which was originally not noticed by British Rail when it first put its line across the map. British Rail then bought every house on the estate in compensation for its incompetence. Goodness knows what British Rail paid for the estate at the height of the market. When the safeguarding was lifted, BR gave instructions for the houses to be sold.

Two or three houses were sold before, about a month later, the Nationwide Anglia property agency, totally scrupulously, decided that it had to put a map of the original proposal, which was all that BR would let it have, on the wall because it became clear that the lifting of safeguarding meant nothing at all. We now have British Rail blighting its own houses yet again on an estate where it has already behaved disgracefully.

Fourthly, the massive increase in freight along the existing lines has blighted properties along them as well. How long will it be before construction on those lines starts? There is the possible scenario of people being blighted from now well into the next century. The misery of that would be intolerable.

I urge the Government to publish the proposals when they receive them, or very soon afterwards. Publication will not increase blight. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford said, it could not. Blight is universal anywhere near the line; it is unshakeable and it is soundly based.

The people of Kent and Essex are not stupid. They know where the options are likely to go. Designing a railway is not like putting in houses. Designing a railway is subject to strict parameters. Once one knows where some parts of the railway are, one knows that the rest is bound to go in one of two or three places. People are not stupid; they know that. Even if Union Railways sometimes behaves as if people were stupid, I can assure my hon. Friend the Minister that they are not. Most of the people I know in the action groups up and down the line and all their friends could draw a perfectly good set of options on the map which would look very similar to British Rail's options. I could not support more strongly the case for publication put by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford.

It is nonsense to suggest that there will be real consultation after the line has been chosen. The people along the route, who have done so much work and who have so many ideas to contribute, deserve to be allowed to make that contribution. I warn my hon. Friend the Minister that there will be much greater anger and much greater public hostility if people feel that whatever they say will make no substantial difference to the outcome. It is not enough to ask people to comment on where the trees should be planted. They need to be consulted about matters such as where the stations might be.

It is interesting that Kent county council, Rochester upon Medway city council, Ashford council, Maidstone council and Tonbridge and Malling council are all in favour of publication when the Government receive the plan from Union Railways.

7.13 am

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): This debate is opportune, given that we are about to head for yet another hurdle in this long and sorry saga. It is significant and should be noted that, despite the very early hour of the morning, many Kent Members are here to defend their constituents.

I cannot help but feel that this debate on the channel tunnel rail link has all the hallmarks of competing with "The Mousetrap". It goes on, and on, and on. It is now four years since British Rail first sprung the high-speed rail link route upon the people of Istead Rise and New Barn in my constituency. That caused major upset and public meetings of 700 very concerned residents who saw their only major asset—their homes—blighted and their value undermined.

The latest corridor, the so-called Ove Arup alongside the A2, lifts the blight on the people of Istead Rise and New Barn, but imposes it on people from Pepper Hill in Northfleet along Watling street to Hever farm in Gravesend. They are all very densely populated areas.

I note that BR, in its new guise of Union Railways, is doing a thorough job. Nevertheless, that thorough job is causing great anxiety. The message from the people of Northfleet and Gravesend to BR, Union Railways and the Government is simple: sink the link. Clearly, people in my part of the world did not want the link. However, if it has to be, if it is in the national interest and if it has to be in the corridor concerned, then environmental protection must be the order of the day. To achieve that environmental protection in my constituency, the line should be dropped vertically.

Originally, the Ove Arup plan was for a 30 ft high embankment opposite Northfleet. That is clearly unacceptable opposite a densely populated area. The line should be dropped to a very low level, preferably with cutting and covering and, in any event, shielding the urban area from noise.

Although those people already have noise from the A2, that noise dies away at night. If action is to be taken to get freight onto the line, which we are assured will happen, that freight is likely to move at night and that movement will be accompanied by noise. Therefore, abatement of noise by dropping the level of the line is absolutely essential to ensure that the lives of thousands of my constituents in Northfleet and Gravesend are not made intolerable.

The other point of concern in my constituency relates to the parish of Cobham. The crossing of the Medway by the high-speed rail link remains a matter of uncertainty. Ove Arup's original proposal had the link crossing the river flush with the M2 bridge. Later plans from Union Railways show the crossing being south of Cuxton in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner).

[Mr. Jacques Arnold]

The danger of despoliation of one of the most beautiful and historical parishes in Kent—the parish of Cobham—is clear. That must be considered by the planners. Union Railways must carefully consult environmental and heritage interests on its plans as they cross that parish.

The plans to date show that the passage across Gravesham remains south of the A2 line. Any suggestion of crossing to the north of the line within the borough of Gravesham would cause major problems by hitting the densely populated urban area. I take it that the statements made to date by Union Railways that it has no plans to cross the A2 line in Gravesham remain inviolate. I hope that the company will stick by those undertakings.

The A2 line east-west across Gravesham is a powerful boundary for the green belt between urban north and rural south. That line has been held firmly now for decades and the success of green-belt policy is clear. However, Union Railways must not see an opportunity to spread itself across the green belt adjacent to the urban area. Union Railways may see unbuilt land on a map as white. We see it as green and we fully intend to defend it. That is why I strongly discourage any passing loops in that area.

Nevertheless, there are rail transport opportunities in this area. People in north-west Kent rely on the old North Kent line to commute to London. The line was built in the 19th century to cheap specifications, and it is no longer adequate for the weight of thousands of daily commuters that it must carry.

The Government have taken steps to relieve the terrible conditions under which our commuters must travel by authorising construction of the Networker 465. British Rail, in its inimitable style, together with the companies that it uses to construct these vehicles, has caused delays on the introduction of the Networkers 465. I saw the first Networker 465 arrive in Gravesend only a fortnight ago. It seems that many months will pass before the vehicles are properly introduced. The Government should be congratulated on introducing the Networkers in Kent.

If we are going to have a high-speed rail link through this area, and if commuter facilities are to be developed with an interchange station or junction between Northfleet and Swanscombe, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), combined with fast links with the urban areas of Gravesend and Northfleet, there will be some compensation for my constituents from the proposed environmental impact. Indeed, we will enter the 21st century in terms of transport provision for my constituents.

The year 1993 will be fateful. The people in Kent wish to have an announcement that combines environmental protection with new rail transport opportunities. I expect the Government to honour the environmental undertakings referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), which have been given time and again. The whole proposal is a tall order. It must have essential pre-conditions, and I wish my hon. Friend the Minister well in achieving them.

7.23 am

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): First, I must apologise to my hon. Friends for missing the start of the debate. I was detained in the small hours of the morning by a constituency problem, which I have been dealing with ever since.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): The hon. Member was in bed!

Mr. Gale: I was not in bed. Because of that problem, I missed the speeches of my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) and my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Sir K. Speed), but I heard the rest of the debate.

I know that I speak for all of my colleagues in east Kent when I say that we support the belief of our friends in mid-Kent that the fast link is needed, that decisions must be taken, and that the programme must receive the necessary investment to be brought to a satisfactory conclusion swiftly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) forcefully said that it is time that we got the freight off Kent's road and on to the railways. That is vital. The roads in Kent from the ports of Ramsgate and Dover are saturated with heavy and dangerous traffic. Heavy lorries are breaking up Kent's roads and using country and side roads as rat runs to an intolerable and unacceptable level.

Let me give the House two examples. Only yesterday the M2 in the Chatham area was blocked for many hours while the police removed the wreckage of a lorry which had crashed through the central reservation. I was told that there was a 15-mile tailback on the coast-bound road, and I experienced a seven-mile tailback on the London-bound side of the motorway.

It is only a few days since my friend Anthony Garrett, who will be known to many hon. Members, was driving to his home just south of Ashford. He was pushed off the road by a German lorry. The lorry drove into the back of his car and pushed him through the central reservation. It is a miracle that he escaped with his life. His car was a complete write-off. The lorry did not stop; it was heading for the ports in a hurry. Those are simply two instances in the past 10 days of what is commonplace in Kent. It is time that we got the traffic off the roads and got it where it belongs—on the railways.

It would not be a debate about railways in Kent if I did not mention the Kent coast line. This is a debate about the channel tunnel link. Those of us who serve constituencies in north-east Kent look to the channel tunnel fast link as one of the means of speeding traffic from north-east Kent into central London. We believe that the time will come when our commuters will benefit from that and will be able to experience the faster, more comfortable journey to which we believe that they are entitled.

My hon. Friend the Minister will know only too well that just last week British Rail was compelled to recognise that the Kent coast line was the worst line in the Network SouthEast empire. It is the only line in the entire region on which people have had to receive a discount from British Rail under the charter because of its miserable performance in timekeeping.

I believe strongly that the rail link and especially that part of the rail link that will be needed to carry freight must receive, preferably from private sources, the necessary investment. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will make certain that any investment in the fast

link is at the cost of the vital improvements that must be carried out urgently to meet the needs of the commuters on the Kent coast line.

7.26 am

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): There is a convenient natural link here. I was pleased to be joined by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) just as the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) was talking about the Kent coast line. Conservative Members will remember with gratitude that my hon. Friend proposed using the Kent coast line as the model for a leasing project which would relieve them of all the worries with which they are unfortunately still burdened. Now that their Front-Bench team has somewhat timorously arrived at the view that leasing is not some far-fetched flight of socialist fancy, I am sure that they will all press for my hon. Friend's proposals to be implemented.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Ashford (Sir K. Speed) on initiating the debate. I am the only geographic outsider who has sat through it. It has otherwise been entirely men of Kent—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry—apart from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick), a Government Whip. I have found the debate extremely interesting. I agree entirely with the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) that the link is not a local Kent issue but a national one. It is one of the big infrastructure decisions which must be taken. It affects the whole country.

It will be something of a national embarrassment when the tunnel opens and high-speed trains come thundering across the continent and through the tunnel and arrive on a British Rail network when we are still thinking about where the route should go to carry high-speed trains direct even as far as London. The idea that we should have done anything about links north of London is so far-fetched that it does not even need to be contemplated at present. Presumably, the Government will get around to thinking about that at some time in the early decades of the next century.

Having caught up with some of the arguments in the debate, I find that the way in which the story has unfolded, even since last October, is astonishing. I have great sympathy with the constituents of the hon. Members who have spoken this evening. They must have thought, as I and any reasonable person did, that the Government were, at least on the surface, announcing some sort of decision last October. There was a great action-man exercise. We were given to understand that a decision had been taken. We saw television shots of street parties. We understood that something was to happen and that in other places it would not happen.

A clear-cut picture had supposedly emerged. I caught up with that story recently. No decision was made last October except a decision to give the false impression of a decision. People who thought that relief had been brought to them found that, in the words of the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling, they had been reblighted by the question being opened again in respect of their homes and areas. That is a grotesque injustice which is intolerable by any standards, but it will continue unless we have a decision.

Not only is the channel tunnel link called into question, but there is also the question of the method by which we go about arriving at major infrastructural decisions. We do not seem to get any of them right. They drag on for years, while we discuss routes and methods of funding. Strategic decisions cannot be taken within a reasonable time, or by a process that respects democracy and the national need for decisions to be taken so that we can get on with projects that are in the economic interest.

The idea that one is doing anyone a favour by prolonging uncertainty is false. As the hon. Member for Ashford said, people can live with a decision once it is taken, but they cannot live with uncertainty which seems to be removed and is then reimposed yet again.

A decision should have been taken long ago. The route should have been chosen, the means of funding it should have been defined and we should now be looking towards the opening of the tunnel, in the confidence that the project had been undertaken here in exactly the same way that it was undertaken in France.

The hon. Member for Ashford and I have made several visits to the tunnel and to the infrastructure on the other side of the channel. The French Government probably thought it a bit eccentric that the tunnel was to be built on a private enterprise basis, but, once they had accepted that, they obviously had to come in behind it. The channel tunnel and the approaches to it were treated as a national project, which clearly offered tremendous economic potential for the Pas de Calais area. It was to become the engine of economic regeneration. The private sector worked with the public sector, and investment was made available as strategic decisions were taken. The project was seen to have enormous potential as an engine for training people in various skills and they got on with it. The testimony to it is there and is fitting into place.

It is half-past seven in the morning, five years after we started talking about a fast rail link for the short distance between London and the tunnel, and this is as far as we have got. I do not think that one has to be politically partisan to measure the two approaches and to decide which has served national interests better.

In spite of the welcoming words of the hon. Member for Mid-Kent, I do not think that Conservative Members want to hear anything at great length from me. It is perfectly reasonable for time to be left for a comprehensive reply from the Minister—a reply which I also want to hear.

I strongly endorse the claim by the hon. Member for Ashford and his colleague the hon. Member for Mid-Kent that the Union Railways report should be published in full. Coincidentally, a written question of mine on that subject was answered yesterday. The answer made it clear that the report would not be published in full, but it suggested that some filleted version of that report would be published within a relatively short time. I do not think that most of the people represented by hon. Members here would regard that as adequate. People have the right to know, in full, what is going on, the arguments underlying any decision and where we go from here.

I cannot conclude without referring to freight. Several Conservative Members have made heartfelt pleas for the movement of freight from road to rail and that is obviously relevant to the debate. Conservative Members must realise—they cannot deceive their constituents on this point—that everything that the Government are doing, as opposed to what they are paying lip service to, is operating in precisely the opposite direction. Freight is being driven from rails to road at an astonishing rate and that will continue unless there is a definite change in policy.

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Mid-Kent to make a distinction clear. I do not think that there was any disagreement, but he said that the chairman of British Rail saw no future for rail freight. It is only fair to the chairman of British Rail to point out that he was reflecting not a desire on his or British Rail's part but the reality of the moves leading up to privatisation.

I understand—I should be delighted to be corrected—that British Rail's objectives are still governed by the statement made by the now Lord Parkinson in December 1989, which laid down the financial objective of an 8 per cent. return on investment for whole train freight. Rail freight is being asked to compete on that basis at a time of recession, when most businesses are happy to get 1 or 2 per cent. However misguided it might be, that conditions the pricing policy of rail freight. At the same time, the Select Committee has been hearing day after day from every witness that has come before it that if freight is asked to accept more of the burden of infrastructural costs, the only consequence can be to drive freight off the rails and on to the roads. Those are the realities.

I shall not prolong my comments now, but let there be no doubt that any Conservative Member who has been piously, and doubtless sincerely, saying this morning that we must get more freight on to rail should know that he cannot go along with that policy and at the same time support privatisation, which is the main driving force in precisely the opposite direction. Nobody can avoid that conclusion.

This has been an extremely useful and interesting debate. Along with hon. Members from Kent, I now await with interest some answers from the Minister. I have some sympathy with the Minister. Secretaries of State come and go, but he always seems to be there, trailing along behind them with a bucket.

7.37 am

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I am sorry if the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) thinks that I trail behind Secretaries of State with a bucket of cold water.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): May I point out that my hon. Friend the Minister trailed to Lancaster yesterday to show how well our rail line would do out of privatisation?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I hope that we shall see an early improvement to the infrastructure on the west coast main line, as I made plain to her yesterday when I visited Carlisle, Lancaster and Preston.

The debate has been sombre but important and I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Ashford (Sir K. Speed), for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) and for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) for reminding me of the great importance of ensuring that we build the channel tunnel link with maximum environmental protection and as speedily as possible. I accept that squaring those two difficult and sometimes conflicting pressures is ultimately the Government's responsibility.

When I approach that matter, I often seem to be treading on a sea of broken glass in the county of Kent. It is extremely difficult and I accept the need to move judiciously but firmly in completing the project. However, it is difficult in a country which, compared with northern France, has a high density of population, outstanding areas of countryside and many villages and historic towns which must be protected. I sometimes wish that I held the position of my opposite number in France, where Abbeville, Lille, Amiens and Fréthun are anxious to have the rail link through their municipalities. It must be different in Kent because of the need to protect the environment.

I do not have much time, so I shall deal briefly with the issue of freight and the Kent coast lines and then respond to the substantive matters relating to the rail link. Rail freight distribution loses a considerable sum of money—more than £100 million—so there is no question of British Rail meeting its financial objectives this year or next year. The freight that is being lost from the railways at present—a fact which I regret—does not make any contribution to the infrastructure costs. It is not meeting its marginal operational costs.

When the Government are informed by British Rail about the freight that it finds difficult to retain because the price increases are unacceptable to the customers, I do not accept British Rail's estimates of its above-track costs, but consider whether, even with substantial improvements in efficiency of operation, the freight would still not cover its marginal costs.

It would be difficult for some freight loads, which are hauled over relatively short distances in trains which are not full, to stay on the railway without direct subsidy. That is an important point of principle. There is a great opportunity for the rail freight industry to expand, but it must do so in the long-haul business, with full train loads. There is a great opportunity with the Channel tunnel to haul freight from the nine terminals which British Rail plans. In addition, when the private sector starts to construct new freight terminals throughout the country, the opportunities will expand.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced additional resources—£150 million—for the procurement of rolling stock. He has given permission for that rolling stock to be leased. He was able to do that because we have tabled our proposals for privatisation, British Rail is not the only operator of last resort—*[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) may laugh, but that is the position. If we had not announced our proposals for privatisation, there would have been only one operator. There would have been no difference between British Rail offering to lease trains and its offering to buy them outright, as there was only one operator. *[Interruption.]* I am explaining to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East the prudent financial and accounting rules in this country. I hope that British Rail will soon be in a position to make a judgment on ordering new rolling stock. It is not a matter for me, but I know that the Kent coast services are being considered.

I shall now deal with the important issues of substance raised by my hon. Friends. I ackowledge that what has happened since the general election has spread blight. We intended that Union Railways would take advice from planning officers and some leading councillors in Kent on discharging its remit, which was to come back to Government by the end of the year, 31 December—which

it will do—with its considered judgment on how to build a railway line from Folkestone to King's Cross. Much of that work has already been achieved.

I well understand the view of my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling when he says—as did my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent—that he will totally oppose any suggestion except that of a tunnel through the north downs. No such proposals have been made to the Government. I understand my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford when he says that he opposes any suggestion that involves taking the route north of the town, not through a tunnel through the town centre.

Union Railways has sought to discharge its remit. There has apparently been some success in parts of Kent. I believe that, as a result of confidential conversations, some intelligent light has been shed on how best to take the railway line under the Thames at Dartford with minimum impact on the borough. That is an example of the common sense of allowing Union Railways to get on quietly with preparing the details for the Government to consider.

I appreciate that through leaks or investigative journalism some of this work has entered the public doman, causing blight. I regret that. I agree with my hon. Friends that when we receive the Union Railways report, and the WS Atkins report on the methodology, they should be promptly published. My hon. Friends all agree about the desirability of that——

Mr. Rowe: I do not agree that this has all been done by investigative journalism. A great deal of the blight has been caused by the replies from Union Railways. When asked whether a person's house is out of danger of blight, it has answered in highly equivocal terms which could only be interpreted as meaning that the house in question was not out of danger.

Mr. Freeman: I was trying to help my hon. Friend by acknowledging the problems. The Government need to resolve them as quickly as possible. I accept the necessity for early publication. That is in the interests of proper public consultation with all hon. Members who take an interest in the matter——

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): Will the Minister publish all the relevant facts?

Mr. Freeman: All relevant facts except those that are commercially confidential—the Government reserve the right not to publish those, but it is important nevertheless that as much as possible of the information that comes to us be published.

The report from WS Atkins will be published, too. Everyone should be in a position to know the costs and environmental implications of the various options that Union Railways will have considered. Ministers have not yet seen the report; it is still under consideration by the British Rail board: but I have been given firm assurances that it will reach Ministers by the end of the year. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford will accept what I have said about publication.

The public consultation procedure may take many months. I undertake to talk to all hon. Members directly affected, in person and one by one. There will also be consultation with local authorities and interest groups. At the end of that, we should be able to safeguard a specific route all the way from Folkestone to King's Cross. Then the planning procedures can commence.

There are two ways forward: either a hybrid Bill or procedure under the Transport and Works Act 1992. The latter would be quite complicated, but it is an option. Once that procedure is completed, with the right finance construction can begin.

We want the private sector to play as big a role as possible in constructing and financing the link. I have no idea just how viable the link is. The Chancellor has said that he sees it as an example of public-private sector co-operation. It is important that commuters from the constituencies of my hon. Friends be able to use the link. We also remain committed to using the link to take as much freight off the roads of Kent as possible, and to relieve existing lines in Kent.

We shall examine carefully the extent to which the private sector can play a role in building the link. We want to involve it at an early stage so as to take the project forward.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Minister intend to seek access to the newly unleashed European structural funds?

Mr. Freeman: Any contribution from any Community source is welcome, but the participation of the European investment bank or any other source of European finance will not dramatically alter the viability of the scheme. It can help, however. The EIB helped with the second Severn crossing and the Dartford-Thurrock bridge, and I am sure that it will take part in any major transport infrastructural work in the future.

Addressing the key point, I acknowledge and regret very much that some blight has been created. It is important that we move on to the public consultation as quickly as possible. On behalf of the Government, I accept responsibility for accomplishing that.

Crime (Public Lighting)

7.49 am

Ms. Ann Coffey (Stockport): This is an important debate because crime, the fear of crime, and possible solutions to the pervasive fear of crime are of great concern to a wide range of my constituents. Only a few weeks ago, shopkeepers in Davenport whose premises were being systematically burgled came to see me, to express their concern at the state of affairs. Even Heaton Moor Conservative Club wrote to me because its members were worried about that neighbourhood's crime level.

Elderly people regularly come to my surgery seeking increased security in their homes, and council tenants complain about being threatened and abused by gangs of marauding youths. Parents are worried about their children's safety, and women are afraid to go out at night. Such complaints are not unusual, and neither are they isolated.

I wrote to the Home Secretary to convey the concern felt by Stockport people about rising crime. I pointed out that in 1980 there were 15,606 reported crimes, but by 1991 the figure had risen to 35,235—a considerable increase. Among those crimes was an endless catalogue of increasing burglaries, car theft, vandalism and concern in the community.

About a month ago, the Home Secretary replied, saying that the Home Office was approving an additional 179 posts for Greater Manchester police, and that he hoped that I would be reassured. I was, slightly. However, the right hon. and learned Gentleman wrote to me again two weeks later to say that, because of public expenditure cuts, there would be no extra posts.

The Stockport police force is under considerable stress, as are the police in other areas. Public expenditure cuts mean that the number of posts will not be increased and that can only worsen their difficulties and increase concern in the community about the ability of the police to cope with the ever-rising incidence of crime.

The police have to a large extent become a crisis force and, as a consequence, their preventive role in the community has much diminished. Police time must be prioritised. A sign of growing disorder in the community is the degree to which some crimes have become accepted as part and parcel of everyday life. It seems that if someone burgles a person's home and steals a television and video recorder, but does not cause any damage to the property, then, provided the householder is uninjured and his house contents are insured, there is no real problem.

That sort of crime cannot of course compare with some of the horrific incidents that make the news headlines. Neither do everyday occurrences of vandalism that involve wrecking buildings or slashing car tyres. Recently, a British Telecom exchange was set fire to, cutting off 700 lines. Such incidents have become so much a part of everyday life that people almost come to accept them—at least on the surface.

However, no one should underestimate the effect that such crimes have on the community or the cost to the individual victim. Feelings of invasion, insecurity, fear, and anxiety can linger for months, even years. One only has to ask our local victim support team, whose members spend a lot of time helping people to recover from the shock and trauma that are the consequences of being the victims of crime.

Those consequences cannot be measured only objectively, in terms of property being damaged or stolen —which tends to be the Home Office way of measuring problems. The consequences of crime go further. Every crime—every burglary and act of vandalism—sends further shock waves through the community. It increases the number of elderly people living alone who fret at night —sleeping fitfully, woken by every little noise, afraid of becoming a victim. It makes everyone more afraid in their homes and on the streets.

I shall not go into what I think has brought us to this sad and sorry state of affairs, except to say that if we create a society in which only the strong and successful are valued and status is reflected in material goods, while denying some people the opportunity of dignity, we destroy the very notion of community. The rising crime levels reflect the gradual disintegration of our community, and should be taken very seriously indeed.

Those rising crime levels also give rise to something else: the fear of crime that now pervades our community. No doubt the Minister will tell me that, statistically speaking, Stockport is quite a safe town—that, if we measure the number of assaults that take place on the streets or the number of serious injuries that are caused, the streets are quite safe. If he believes that those statistics make the town feel safe, however, the Minister is mistaken: people do not feel safe, and when they do not feel safe the fear oppresses their lives. Someone who does not go out at night because of fear of assault is as much a prisoner as someone who does not go out because they really will be assaulted. The fear of crime affects the quality of life as much as the incidence of crime.

Our streets are dark: they feel unsafe. The areas around our houses feel unsafe. Few people go out at night—certainly not women or the elderly. The streets become a no-go area after dark. Both crime and the fear of crime need to be tackled. I know that I cannot persuade the Minister to adopt some of the measures that I think would help to solve the problem in the long term, because they are essentially social measures, but I hope to win his support for improved street lighting, which has enormous benefits in decreasing crime and the fear of crime.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I hope that the hon. Lady will welcome one Government initiative, on car parking. Far too many towns and cities think that they can get away with providing just a piece of land, with no lighting or security. There is a pay and display machine ripping off the public. People are afraid to park there because of the lack of lighting and security.

The Government's initiative involves working with the police and local authorities to provide car parking security, with extra lighting, cameras and personnel to ensure that people feel safe about parking their cars, and ladies in particular feel safe about returning to their cars after parking late at night.

Ms. Coffey: Certainly I welcome any initiative that improves street lighting in car parks. The figures clearly demonstrate that improved lighting and other security measures in car parks not only diminish the incidence of car theft, but make people feel safer about returning to the cars at night.

I was about to produce evidence of the way in which improved street lighting has helped to reduce crime in certain areas—and, more important, has helped to lessen

the fear of crime. I also wish to mention some of the projects to improve street lighting and, subsequently, systematically to examine the effect of that improvement on the area concerned, in terms of crime and fear of crime. Such projects have been organised in a number of our major cities. In Hull, for instance, before the street lighting was improved the burglary rate was rising steeply. After the area was relit, the rate rose more slowly. There was also some evidence of a shift of burglary away from well-lit premises. Less theft and vandalism of cars occurred at night.

In another project area in Manchester, there were fewer reported burglaries, and they took place away from relit areas, which seems to suggest that the relighting of an area immediately acts as a deterrent to burglars.

In Strathclyde, there were substantial falls in the number of criminal and threatening incidents experienced by people.

The projects also had a great effect on the fear of crime. In Cardiff, 67 per cent. of people in a project area said that improved lighting made them feel safer in the streets around their homes. There were significant reductions in the worry felt by women about all types of crime—particularly burglary, attacks in the street and sexual assault.

In Hull, the proportion of women who avoided going out after dark fell from 38 to 7 per cent., and in Leeds, there was a 31 per cent. reduction in worry about having a car stolen or damaged. In Manchester, 54 per cent. of people felt safer in the streets and in their own homes. In Strathclyde, 32 per cent. said that there had been a reduction in the fear of crime.

The reduction in the fear of crime also affected people's behaviour. In Cardiff, the number of people willing to go out on their own at night increased by 26 per cent. In Hull, there was a 100 per cent. increase in the number of elderly pedestrians out at night. In Leeds, the number of women staying at home when they would have liked to go out at night fell from 34 to 7 per cent. In Manchester, there was an increase of 23 per cent. in the number of pedestrians on the street. In Strathclyde, there was a 75 per cent. increase in the number of women out on the streets between 10 pm and midnight.

The Home Office has been very dismissive of such statistics, feeling that the reaction was unscientific. But the findings, which followed relighting schemes in major cities and detailed survey work by academics from local universities and polytechnics, have shown that street lighting does, indeed, have an important effect on crime, the fear of crime and the quality of people's lives.

Some 65 to 70 per cent. of people regard fear of going out alone after dark as a problem. More than half deliberately avoid certain streets because of their fear. In a large 1960s council estate in Leeds, 95 per cent. of people believe that improved street lighting would be the most effective way to increase women's safety in the locality.

The Minister must listen to people's fears. They cannot be dismissed as irrational, even though they may be unscientific. He must listen because what people are saying makes sound common sense. The dark makes people afraid and, in the dark, criminals are encouraged to think that they can commit crimes without being caught. The dark keeps people in their own houses, and leaves the streets unsupervised by the community.

Those who go out only have their fears reinforced. The other night, I walked home from Finchley Road tube station to my flat, which is about 10 minutes walk away. It was very dark. That is not something that I normally do: like most women, I avoid the streets at night. I do not know how many male Members can understand what it feels like to be a woman walking home at night. Perhaps I may tell them. If one walks down a street, one watches all the time. One looks for the safety of the next lamp post because in between lamp posts, the road is very dark. One does not walk too close to front gardens. One walks well away from bushes. One gets concerned about cars slowing down. If one hears footsteps behind one, one crosses the road so that one can see the person. Similarly, if one sees a man approaching, one crosses the road. One is alert all the time, and the street feels a dangerous place.

I have little doubt that, objectively speaking, that street was safe and that it was unlikely that I would be assaulted. But that statistic was of no benefit to me or to hundreds of women faced with a walk in the streets at night, who do not go out because they do not feel safe. The streets stay deserted and unsupervised, and the fear of crime takes its toll on people's lives.

In these days of public spending cuts, among other priorities, street lighting must take its place in councils' budgets. Given the demands on highway repairs and maintenance, there is realistically very little money for improved street lighting. The situation would be greatly helped if the Department of the Environment and the Home Office assumed some responsibility for street lighting. It would help if, for example, in setting housing investment programmes, councils could borrow for improved lighting. After all, long gone are the days when housing was viewed in terms of bricks and mortar. Environmental works, including the design of estates, are crucial. Local authorities should be encouraged to consider street lighting as part of their bids, because it undoubtedly enhances the quality of council estates in particular.

In the long term, a tremendous amount of money could be saved by paying such attention to street lighting. The high cost of vandalism would be reduced. There would also be a reduction in the time taken by housing officers trying to deal with council tenants' requests for transfers because they do not feel safe and protected on their estates.

The Home Office should also take some responsibility. After all, the Home Office is concerned with the prevention of crime, and part of the prevention of crime is helping people to feel free of the fear of crime. The success of policing policies can be measured only in decreasing crime statistics and people feeling that their community is safer. Local police forces, together with local authorities, could submit bids for capital allocation for lighting. That would enable the community, the police and the local council to work together in a genuine partnership to combat crime. People would regard that as a visible demonstration of concern for the community. Street lighting is not expensive when we compare the investment with the long-term rewards. It is immediately visible by the community, and that is important.

In our residential areas as well as in our town centres, a decent environment demands freedom from robbery and burglary, harassment and threats, freedom from anxiety and fear, and freedom to walk the streets at night. I fear that that will be a long time coming. It is difficult to rebuild what has been broken. It is difficult to rebuild the community in its present state of fear and a lack of trust.

[Ms. Coffey]

However, some measures could be taken now to help to rebuild the process. One of those measures is improved street lighting, and we all could make a start.

8.7 am

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I am delighted to have the opportunity to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey). I am pleased that she has raised this important issue. I am pleased also that my Member of Parliament is working hard at this time of the morning. Like my hon. Friend, I represent partly Stockport and partly Tameside. In both local communities, one of the saddest aspects is the number of lives that are disabled by the fear of going about one's normal daily life because of the possibility of crime.

My hon. Friend described how women are frightened to go out on to the streets at night. I fully understand that fear, but many men find themselves in a similarly difficult situation. In our society there is almost an assumption that men are not frightened to go out on to the streets at night. In many cases, no provision is made to assist men to go out. People will try to help women. They make sure that arrangements are made so that women can go to and from meetings with someone. Women try to make sure that they do not have to go out at night. Often, that assumption is not made in respect of men. The assumption is that they can happily go out. Many men go out fearing what will happen to them.

I am also concerned about the fears that are expressed by youngsters who go out and the way in which that relates to crime. One of the things that distress me is the number of times that I have come across parents who are worried because their son or, in some cases, their daughter goes out with an offensive weapon. Those parents insist—I believe them—that their child would no more dream of attacking someone with that weapon than do anything violent. Those youngsters do not feel safe unless they are carrying a knife or a piece of metal. The trouble is that if an incident occurs and the police are called, often the person who instigated the incident has disappeared, so the person found to be carrying an offensive weapon and arrested is the innocent young victim.

It is a sad day when we have created a society in which young people cannot go out at night and, I am afraid, at other times, without carrying something that may be termed an offensive weapon. If we could simply make our streets feel safer for young people, it would be easier to persuade them just how stupid it is to carry any sort of weapon.

I agree with my hon. Friend that the problem is not just the possibility of attack; one of the most disabling factors is the fear that that might happen. There is a great deal that the Government and local authorities could do to reduce that fear. Not long ago, I was canvassing in the evening on a council estate in my constituency during a recent-by-election. There was a time when one thought nothing of knocking on someone's door at 7 or 8 pm, in the dark, because people were only too happy to respond. It is a sad reflection on the times that my recent canvassing was not too popular, obviously because an increasing number of people are frightened to come to the door.

The first problem that I encountered in the street in which I was canvassing was when trying to read the street name on the wall in poor street lighting. I looked down that street and I saw theoretically nice, landscaped areas with bushes. Sadly, those bushes were overgrown and I thought to myself that there might be someone lurking in them. It was just as difficult to walk down the street, while avoiding the dogs' dirt. That poorly lit street was uninviting. As soon as I opened the gate to a house, there was a burst of light from one of those lamps that light automatically when someone passes before them. The owner had installed that lamp because he realised that that lighting offered considerable advantages. Obviously, an unwelcome visitor would be discouraged by it.

Such public squalor and private affluence made an odd mix. All the way down the street I was in a gloom as I tried to pick my way along the street, but as soon as I approached an individual property I was treated to good illumination. It is sad that we cannot find that little bit of extra money for the provision of good street lighting to match that provided by an increasing number of house owners.

If the standard of lighting on our streets matched that provided by those home owners who can afford automatic lights, it would act as a major deterrent to crime and would reassure many of our constituents who are frightened to go out after they have heard about horrific crimes. Perhaps local authorities could consider whether it is necessary for street lights to be on all the time. I do not know the economics of such a decision and I do not know whether it would be more expensive to install lights that switch themselves on when people move in front of them rather than ones that are on all the time.

I notice that the authorities of the House have chosen lights that switch on as one walks along a Corridor. On a couple of Corridors, the lights are so designed that when one stumbles on the first step one's violent movement switches on the light. It might be easier if the light came on a bit quicker. Perhaps such lights offer a solution to the problem of lighting our side streets, but, whatever system is used, massive benefits result from good street lighting.

My hon. Friend referred to her feelings as she walked back from the tube station the other night. I have been walking back from the House of Commons for about 18 years at various times of night. Generally, I am not frightened to walk in the streets because there is high-quality lighting in most of central London. I walked through part of the City of London about 6 am, where most property has to be protected, and the quality of street lighting was marvellous. If the same lighting were available in parts of my constituency where people need to be protected, it would be a much better society in which to live.

I can think of a series of council bungalows that were designed in the 1950s and in almost every way are ideal for my constituents to live in. The only problem is returning to them late at night, because the porch is set back in a pocket of darkness. Anyone returning at night has to get from the street, which is not well lit, through the little pocket of darkness, put the key in the lock and get into the safety of his or her home. How much better it would be if the local authority could provide a light in the porch—preferably the sort of light that comes on as someone approaches the property. It would give pensioners the reassurance that there was not someone lurking in their porch trying to gain entry to their house.

The problem facing the local authority is finance. In one or two cases where they have been able to get money

to rewire a house, they have been unable to fit a light in the porch as an extra. It would make life better for many pensioners and other people if we could ensure good lighting on council property.

The hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) referred to car parking. It is worrying that so many car parks are badly lit. That encourages car crime and makes it very worrying for people to return to their car. One sees people looking around furtively as they approach their car to see whether it is safe. They then push the key in, looking around as they do so, and get into the car as quickly as possible. That is unsatisfactory and much better lighting would help. It is important to protect people who are able to travel in cars, but it is far more important to protect people who have to walk along streets.

I want to make a special plea about the way in which Stockport local authority has failed to meet the needs of my constituents. Stockport has a rigid policy for allocating school places. A group of constituents who live in the Station road area of north Reddish are forced to send their children to the Fir Tree primary school, which is situated across a piece of open ground about 300 or 400 yd from their houses. To get from the houses to the school by road, one must travel almost a mile and a half. During the day, it is perfectly easy for the children to walk across a footpath from the houses to the school, but at night the path is not lit, so for a couple of months of the year children have to come along the path at dusk or in the dark and anyone who wants to go back to school for a parents' evening or anything like that is forced to walk on an unlit path or travel around for a mile and a half.

When Stockport council insists on its rigid zoning policy for primary schools, I wish that someone would examine the problems that it creates. Two street lights on that footpath would make a tremendous difference, but Stockport says that council policy is to light only the highway, not public footpaths. That seems an especially mean policy. If the council insists that children go to that school rather than one slightly further away along a well-lit road, it should be prepared to provide the two street lights that would make such a difference.

I could give many more examples from my constituency of places in which improved street lighting would make a big difference. But I add one word of caution. Having raised the question of lighting during the election campaign, I was surprised when one of my constituents complained to me about what he called "light pollution". He was upset that his neighbours on both sides had lit up their entire back gardens to discourage crime. I do not know whether anyone has raised that issue with other hon. Members; I merely reflect that there is a danger that even when we press for better street lighting, someone—other than the criminals—will be disappointed.

I repeat the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport that if we want to fight crime effectively, the cheap solution is often to concentrate on prevention—and one of the best forms of prevention is to have well-lit streets.

It is ironic that in Greater Manchester a helicopter is now being used to pursue criminals, and I am told that one of the most useful things that it does is to light up areas with its searchlight. I realise that there is no prospect of street lighting in many of the areas in which the helicopter has to be used. Nevertheless, it is often used to light up a street that is supposedly already lit.

One of the things that I regret most is that during my time in the House I have seen a steady rise in crime. In 1979, when the Conservative party came to power, one of its election pledges had been the pledge to cut crime. We all know what has happened to crime levels, and to the level of fear among our constituents.

I hope that when the Minister replies he will tell us more about the cases that my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport mentioned and the experiments that local authorities have carried out into using better street lighting to reduce crime, and the fear of crime. I hope, too, that he will give us more news about how we can have extra policemen on the beat in Greater Manchester. I agree with my hon. Friend that it was disappointing to be told first that Manchester was to have extra police and then that it was not. Well-lit streets, with extra policemen walking them, would be the best deterrent to crime in Denton, Reddish and the rest of my constituency.

I want the Minister not only to say that we shall have more policemen but to tell us what discussions have taken place between the Home Office and the Department of the Environment to ensure that councils do not have to cut local provision. I suspect that street lighting has taken more of the cuts of recent years than have many other services.

Street lighting should be a priority. In areas such as Denton and Reddish there is still street lighting that was designed for the era of gas lamps, when someone came around on a bicycle to light the lamps and turn them out. Those lights no longer run on gas—they have been converted to electricity—but the level of lighting is still in what we could call the dark ages.

If the Government were prepared to give local authorities a little more money in their general allocations, it would be easier for them to put in extra street lighting and to improve the level of lighting. If local authorities were able to spend a little more from the housing allocations, it would be possible for them to light up many council estates, which were lit in the 1940s and 1950s on the basis of the contemporary level of crime. The crime rate has multiplied many times since. Much more lighting would be beneficial.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the things that we should be doing is pressing our own local authorities to prioritise some of the money that they already have for the provision of extra lighting? In far too many cases, local authorities spend their money on other things that the public may not consider to be priority areas.

There are examples in my constituency. The county council has lit up its own county hall, at a massive cost. It looks very nice aesthetically, but perhaps the money could have been spent better elsewhere. What guarantees can the hon. Gentleman give that if extra money were given to local authorities, they would spend it on lighting, rather than on other services, especially as they feel that it is easy to make cuts in areas such as street lighting because they think that those cuts will not be noticed?

Mr. Bennett: I trust local councillors to make decisions. One of the saddest things is that there are too many hon. Members who are prepared to say to local councillors, "We do not trust you to make decisions." In my constituency, whether in Tameside or in Stockport, if the local councils had the money, I have enough confidence in

[Mr. Bennett]

my local electors to believe that they would ensure that their councillors delivered the service. The problem over the past 14 years has been that the councillors have been continually told that they cannot really be trusted with decisions and that they must be restricted in their spending. There is a cuts scenario. Councillors are not able to make positive decisions about expenditure.

I argue strongly that if the local authorities in my area were told firmly by the Government that they could have some more money to improve street lighting, they would get on with the job with enthusiasm. That would have a significant benefit in reducing crime and it would be very important in reducing people's fear of going out at night.

I am delighted to have had the opportunity to say a few words in the debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport on raising the issue. I shall listen with interest to find out what encouragement the Government can give us. I fear that, as so often in the House, I shall be disappointed.

8.27 am

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): I rise to make a few brief comments in this important debate. I am not at my most cogent, rational or coherent after the 26 hours on the go that many of us have faced, and I still have the prospect of the Scottish Grand Committee before me. I am comforted by the fact that the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), the Scottish Office Minister with responsibility for industry, has suffered the same fate. That makes me feel a lot better.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey) on securing this important debate. I especially wish to congratulate her on the depth of her research. When the speech is printed in *Hansard*, it will be a useful summary of the problems facing communities throughout Britain. Better street lighting would go a long way towards helping those communities.

There can be no doubt that crime is soaring all over the country. The crime issue is in the top half dozen issues that affect most people. When I speak to constituents, young and old alike, they tell me that crime deeply concerns them. All the statistics prove that over the past decade crime has soared at an ever-increasing rate and has left many victims in its wake. Action needs to be taken. The Government, as their record shows, have failed miserably so far.

I had a conversation with my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) earlier today. He made the valid point that when the Government come to power, people were afraid to go out. Now that the Government have been in power for 13 years, people are also afraid to stay in. I do not say that simply in a jocular way. The reality is that many elderly people are afraid to go out on to the streets at night, partly because of the lack of lighting, but they are also afraid to stay at home because so many crimes occur at home these days.

Crime is a growth industry and there is no doubt that there are difficulties in respect of badly lit streets at night. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) referred to a culture within which young people believe that it is necessary to carry offensive weapons. When I asked young people in my constituency why they carried offensive weapons which would inevitably get them into trouble, the response was that others carried offensive weapons so they carried weapons for protection. That is no excuse at all and something must be done to break the vicious circle. Anything that would help would be welcome.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): My hon. Friend will be aware that just as there has been a growth in crime in his area in Paisley, there has been a similar growth in Lanarkshire. To what extent does my hon. Friend relate that increase to the lack of adequate street lighting and, in turn, to what extent is that related to cuts in public expenditure, under this Government, for the regional council?

Mr. McMaster: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. Our constituencies faced similar problems during the summer recess, particularly in respect of violent crime.

The hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) wanted to know whether local authorities were spending money on the wrong things and whether we should be putting pressure on them to make lighting a priority. Of course we should. We also put pressure on authorities to make the issues of disability, housing and the condition of our streets and pavements a priority. We always put pressure on local authorities and tell them to spend the same pot of money over and over again. At some point the Government will have to face the reality that that money cannot be spent time and time again. To argue as the hon. Member for Ribble Valley has argued is nothing more than a con trick that cons no one.

Many of our constituents are afraid to go out. My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) referred to problems in my constituency over the summer. The key division of Strathclyde police covers a population of about 200,000. So far this year there have been 12 murders in the area and that is a 1,100 per cent. increase over last year. That has worried the community greatly.

The detection rate for those murders is 100 per cent. and I want to take this opportunity to commend the efforts of the local police force. However, while, for understandable reasons, the police can never come out and say in public that they cannot cope, the reality is that they are so under-resourced that, in many situations, they cannot cope.

Many local authorities are, on the one hand, the police authority and, on the other, the local authority which has to decide on priorities—for example, whether to opt for street lighting which will help to reduce crime or to get more police back on the streets. The solution involves both those proposals, but the resources are not available to cope with the problem. The courts and gaols cannot cope with the increase in crime.

Although lighting is a very important problem, I hope that the Government will act as quickly as possible in relation to the extent of the presence of the drug Temazepam on the streets of Britain. I know that research into that problem is being carried out and I have had a meeting about that with the Minister in another place who is responsible for Scottish home affairs.

The problem with Temazepam is a national problem, not a local problem. Young people are dealing in what they call jellies which, when mixed with alcohol, can cause very violent side effects. As soon as the results of the research are available, I hope that the necessary action will be taken quickly. In the meantime I hope that the

Government will encourage general practitioners throughout the country not to prescribe the drug if another is available.

Strathclyde regional council made strenuous efforts over the summer to get extra police, but those resources will not be sufficient to tackle the real problems.

Many innovative schemes for street lighting can be developed. A scheme referred to earlier involved the use of heat-sensitive lights. From my days as a local councillor, I know that elderly people often demanded heat-sensitive lights. If they had such lights at the back and front doors, the lights would act as a deterrent if someone tried to intrude. If the lights came on, they warned the person in the home that someone was approaching.

The matter of lighting is not only for roading authorities; it is for housing authorities which are, of course, cash starved. I make that point because there is no way round the problem. The Government have no argument; it is a matter of resources. Local authorities know the job that needs to be done. They know that there are problems with lighting and a need for increased lighting and policing, but those things cannot be delivered without increased resources. This year, local authorites face cuts in public expenditure. How will they meet the competing demands?

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport eloquently said that it would be sensible for the Government to look at the true economy of crime. Might not the cuts be false economies? If street lighting and policing are cut back, there is a cost further down the line which the public must pick up. It might have been better in the first place to invest money to prevent crime and people from becoming victims of it.

Many authorities are examining the development of closed circuit television, especially in town centres. The use of closed circuit television would be good in Strathclyde, but civil liberty questions are associated with it. In cases in which I know that closed circuit televisions have been used, they have been used sensitively, although no specific resources have been made available. Local authorities must put out the begging bowl to find the resources to implement the use of closed circuit television. Sometimes the private sector becomes more involved and sometimes it becomes less involved. However, such involvement is innovative and helps to solve the problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport talked about the importance, not of people being safe in their homes and on the streets, but of feeling safe. That is an important factor because, even if the Minister were able to prove—which he cannot—that people are safer in their homes and on the streets than they were 10 years ago, we know that they are less safe. Even if the Minister could prove that they were more safe, that does not deal with the problem that they must feel safe. If elderly people do not feel safe in their homes, that is a problem.

I welcome this debate. The isssue of lighting and its relationship to crime is important. All sorts of other measures can be taken to reduce crime, although they deal with the symptoms. We must start to deal with the causes of crime. I would never say that anyone who is young and unemployed will inevitably follow a path of crime, because that is not true. Young, unemployed people with no prospects for the future have nothing to lose, and that is the reason why they stray into crime. Crime cannot be dissociated from the issues of lighting and poverty.

I welcome this debate because it deals with the issues. It will help, but essentially it deals with the symptoms of crime. At some stage we must deal with the causes of crime as well.

8.39 am

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey) on obtaining a debate on such an important topic. Perhaps it is appropriate that we should have been waiting through the early hours for the opportunity of debating the issue because many of our fellow citizens will have become victims of crime during those very hours of darkness. I commend my hon. Friends the Members for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) for their contributions. My hon. Friends the Members for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) and for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) were also present taking an interest and showing the importance that they attach to the subject.

I pay tribute to the parliamentary lighting group, which has stimulated interest in the contribution that street lighting can make to both safety and crime prevention, and in particular to my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who convinced me of the importance of the topic and recruited me to the membership of that group.

Good street lighting has implications for safety. It has implications for traffic safety. Those of us who travel out of the city of London on the M4 see that automatically, as we move from light to dark, back to light and into darkness again as we pass down that road. Street lighting has importance for the quality of life and for jobs in the lighting industry, something that is not to be sneezed at in the current state of the economy.

However, tonight we are concentrating on the way in which street lighting can help the fight against crime. I have been able to see the effects of good street lighting through a project in Tremorfa in my constituency. That is the Cardiff project to which my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport referred. From what constituents have said to me, I know that the project has been a success. One need only look at the images of the street before and after the installation of new lighting to see the difference.

More objective evidence has been provided by research conducted by Professor David Herbert and Dr. Laurence Moore of University college of Swansea. Street lighting is just one part of the environment in a residential area. One of the conclusions of the project, which in many ways is astonishing, was that the improvement of street lighting had an impact on the general attitude of residents. There are specific cases of improvement. Feelings of safety, a belief that there were fewer youths around the area and visibility are clear and quantifiable improvements.

The report on the research says:

"But residents seemed willing to go beyond the obvious and to recognise a general upward movement in their quality of life. There may be two parts to this awareness of positive change. Firstly, improved street lighting is highly visible and obvious. Secondly, the installation of new lighting acts as an investment in the future of the estate."

That confidence and that recognition of the needs of the community is as important as the lighting that is provided.

Reactions to the improved lighting were all of a positive nature, but we need to build on that success rather than see lighting as an end in itself. Design of estates and the type of services that are provided also help to create that confidence. I recognise the emphasis that my hon. Friend

[Mr. Alun Michael]

the Member for Stockport placed on the feeling of confidence. People feel safer and clearly welcome the change.

However, the report says:

"improved lighting is only one part of a solution to improving the total environment and wellbeing of people in their neighbourhoods."

The Government, and the Minister in his reply, must recognise that. The Government have undermined the feeling of well-being and the feeling that there is a total environment and that people are part of a community that is respected and supported by the Government.

The project in my constituency, like others throughout the country, improves the quality of life—in this case in the five streets involved. It inspired confidence in an area which has suffered increased pressure from crime and the fear of crime. It involved a comparatively small capital cost and minimal extra running costs. It made burglary, mugging and rape more difficult by increasing the chances of recognising the offender.

The research concluded that the change that improved lighting represents makes a positive difference. However, it also stressed the need for a wider local strategy if changes are to have a lasting effect on reducing crime and building confidence in the community.

I have referred to the positive influence on accidents, but that is beyond the scope of today's debate.

The Government do not seem to have understood that alarms, locks, recognising that there is a problem, and putting lights in streets will not deal with the whole job.

My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South was right to say that the Government need to recognise the value of the type of improvement that we are talking about, to tackle the root causes of crime and to recognise that their failures in recent years have undermined local efforts.

Street lighting will help, but it will only make a lasting impact if it is part of a local strategy for crime reduction, of the sort that the Government have signally failed to support. Robbery in England and Wales increased by 24 per cent. between June 1991 and June this year, and by 41 per cent. in the South Wales police area—the rates are also high in other areas—while police numbers have once again been frozen. So, goodness knows, the fight against crime needs some help.

Chief Inspector Gordon Shumack of the South Wales police, talking about the Tremorfa project said:

"The fear of crime is often greater than the fear of victimisation. It is important that both the police and the community make every effort to reduce this fear."

He reflected the theme that my hon. Friend developed and went on:

"The Police alone cannot hope to solve all the problems inherent in the community particularly escalating crime reported to them. Any measures which can assist the reduction of crime and its fear and therefore dispel the anxieties of those who are seen as particularly vulnerable such as the elderly, the infirm, or women walking alone can only be applauded."

It is significant that the project was sponsored jointly by South Glamorgan county council and Urbis Lighting Limited and that it received positive backing from the South Wales police and the parliamentary group.

As in projects elsewhere in the country, councillors, Members of Parliament, the industry and the police recognise the importance of the work, but where are the Government? Where is the Conservative party? Even with the improved lighting, they are nowhere to be seen.

Members give positive support to the all-party group, but it needs Government support and ministerial leadership to encourage effective initiatives. Look at the background of cuts, to which my hon. Friends referred, which makes the situation much worse. The tightening of the screws on local government makes it difficult to expand the scheme in my constituency or other worthwhile projects around the United Kingdom, which have had equal success.

At a time when the Government should be providing resources to allow the success of such projects to be replicated in many more streets throughout the country, Ministers are making it impossible to maintain what has been achieved so far. Reference has been made to the lighting of footpaths in dark corners. Yes, we should like them to be lit up, but is not the Minister aware that cuts in the finances available to local government threaten both the revenue and capital cash necessary to extend safety and confidence to our citizens?

Councils throughout the country have to consider unacceptable ways in which to save money to cope with the restrictions heaped on them by a Government who have failed to run the economy effectively, and, having run out of ideas, have reverted to Thatcherite dogma by cutting local government expenditure yet again.

To get within the financial cap threatened by the Government, councils are having to consider such steps as turning off the lights an hour earlier, or turning out every alternate light in many streets. We have been brought to that, rather than to the development of lighting projects that we need. Local authorities are having to consider those serious options, as they have been given little room for manoeuvre by a Government who do not understand the way in which the price for their short-sighted policies will be paid by ordinary citizens throughout the land.

The debate touches on only one aspect of the crisis. The closure of youth clubs, consequent on this year's revenue support settlement, has serious implications for crime, as well as for the health of the community generally. Unemployment, the cuts in training referred to by my colleagues, and the impact of so many other Government policies also play their part in defeating the police, councils and local communities in their fight against crime.

One has to consider all those problems against the background of inadequate finances for community care and the many other ways in which the Government are neglecting the physical and social infrastructure of local communities.

The debate will have been worth while if the Minister gives us something positive to take away from it and I challenge him to do so.

First, successful projects, such as the one that I described, should be one shot in our armoury in the fight against crime. What extra resources will the Government provide, now that both the need and the effectiveness of that approach have been recognised?

Secondly, will the Minister acknowledge that one cannot govern by projects alone? Once a pilot project has demonstrated the value of an approach, the Government must develop that idea into a national strategy, giving the resources to local authorities which know their area best and are therefore best able to target resources into areas of greatest need. Will the Minister accept the research's

conclusion that improved street lighting must be part of a general approach to crime where it occurs in the community?

Thirdly, will the Government enable a strategic approach to be adopted by the police and local councillors to crime reduction in their area? I challenge the Minister to set targets for reducing crime rather than echoing the Home Secretary's pathetic attempt to say that he is satisfied if the rise in crime is ever so slightly less than the astronomical increases of previous years.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport has highlighted an important element in the necessary strategy to create safer and healthier communities throughout the land. I appeal to the Minister to give firm and clear commitments on what the Government will do to help, with dates and cash figures, and to set those commitments in the context of a significant national strategy to fight crime—something for which our communities yearn.

8.50 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack): Those were firm words from the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and I hope that I shall be able to deal with his comments as well as with the excellent contribution by the hon. Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey), whom I congratulate on obtaining this debate. Since 1987, no hon. Member has raised this subject for debate, so she is unique in recent parliamentary history.

The hon. Members for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) also contributed to the debate, painting their own perspectives of this important subject. I am pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) sitting on the Bench alongside me because he, too, has taken an interest in this subject and corresponded with me many times—[HON. MEMBERS: "But he is a Whip."] The fact that he holds that position does not prohibit him from raising the subject vociferously on behalf of his constituents.

The principal point underlying many of the contributions to the debate was the relationship between lighting and the fear of crime. I am slightly disappointed—I am being generous to hon. Members in putting it that way—that no hon. Member has read or referred to the excellent crime prevention unit paper No. 29 written by the Home Office, entitled, "The Effect of Better Street Lighting on Crime and Fear: a Review". Had the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth spent less time huffing and puffing at me across the Dispatch Box and more time reading that report, he would have found that all the points that he raised regarding a strategic approach to crime prevention, with lighting as a key element, were not only well documented and researched but acknowledged. May I say in reply to some of the hon. Gentleman's specific points that that study has taken a part in continuing Government policy on crime prevention.

At the heart of the question of lighting and crime lies the standard to which local authorities adhere. I thought that the hon. Gentleman might have noticed that there is a British standard to which all local authorities are supposed to comply. Referring to the code of practice, the Home Office paper states:

> "The first point made is that, in areas with a 'high crime risk', it is important to ensure that 'any potentially dark areas, which may provide cover for a criminal, are lighted.'"

Referring to a second aim, the paper states:

> "To provide a sense of security it should be possible to recognise, in time to make an appropriate response, whether another person is likely to be friendly, indifferent or aggressive."

Thus the code of practice sets standards for lighting.

It is interesting to see whether local authorities have spent their money on fulfilling those objectives. We find that for those figures that are known—for example, when total local authority expenditure on lighting in the financial year 1989-90 is compared with expenditure in 1990-91—expenditure has risen from £198·1 million to £256·7 million, an increase of 29·6 per cent.

No one can say that resources have not been available. However, when I examined the figures for Stockport, I found that it had spent only 14·3 per cent. of its highway maintenance budget on lighting. That compares with 15·9 per cent. in Manchester, 18·1 per cent. in Bolton and 17·8 per cent. in Salford. There is a little room for improvement in Stockport. Contrary to the views expressed by Opposition Members, resources are available.

I want to pick up on issues raised about the Government's attitude to the subject. The matter cannot be better illustrated than by our commitment to street lighting as part of our integrated approach to crime prevention in the context of our safer cities project. The excellent Home Office publication on the subject—which I hope will be part of hon. Members' Christmas reading—details the projects in which we have been involved.

Since 1988, £1·75 million has been spent on more than 350 individual lighting schemes in the context of safer cities. In the north-west, there is the Fielding Court scheme in Birkenhead, which sought to improve lighting around many access points on an isolated council estate. The hon. Member for Stockport stressed the problem of isolation, the fear of darkness and what can happen on an estate. That scheme cost £20,000. At the time, the area housing office was receiving two or three complaints a week—predominantly about youths causing annoyance and damage. The number of complaints has significantly fallen since the lights have been installed. There are similar schemes in Bristol, Nottingham and Rochdale.

When we consider the scope of the sort of institutions that have benefited from the safer cities expenditure, we find everything from churches and mosques to women's centres, leisure centres, scout huts and garages—a broad cross-section. Time prevents me from going into more detail, but my brief comments show that we are committed to such schemes.

The Home Office document states:

> "Lighting has generally been introduced either as part of a package of measures, as in the Sunderland multi-storey car parks, or to allay the fears of vulnerable residents on housing estates (Bradford, Wirral, Sunderland, etc). It is undeniably a popular measure with those isolated and fearful of crime, enabling them to see who is at the door at night".

That tangibly demonstrates the fact that we accept the contribution of lighting schemes to those projects that are designed to reduce crime and we have put our money where our mouth is. As the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth will know——

Mr. Bennett: Not much money.

Mr. Jack: I am coming to that.

We are committed to expanding the number of safer cities schemes, which will be given the opportunity to take their place in the fight against crime.

[Mr. Jack]

The hon. Member for Stockport mentioned the use of city centres and the fear of going out at night. She was absolutely right to concentrate on that aspect. Clearly, as better lighting makes people feel safer—which Home Office research shows to be the case—more people use urban areas, their economic well-being improves and businesses are able to take individual crime prevention measures. Lighting acts as a catalyst to improve the security of such districts.

The Home Office research paper covers that important point, which relates to Hull. It also highlights the importance of lighting in making things light: closed circuit television and anti-crime schemes work because, put simply, better illumination enables one to see what is going on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) mentioned the secure car parks initiative which, in Bradford, with better lighting and closed circuit television, has already reduced car crime by 53 per cent. The safer cities programme helped to finance that initiative in partnership with the local authority. It is no good the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth pointing his finger at me and saying that the problem is down to the Government. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish chastised us for not having confidence. Local authorities have shown that they can accept responsibility because they, too, have worked in partnership with safer cities projects in Bradford and many other places in an enlightened campaign of crime prevention, combining street lighting with other policies.

Behind every one of the crime statistics that we have discussed is a victim. If lighting helps to reduce the fear of crime on the part of potential victims and to prevent crime itself, we must recognise that. The hon. Lady must recognise, too, that the partnership approach to crime prevention which Greater Manchester police have brought to her area through schemes such as estate action, which has played a part in many areas of her constituency——

It being Nine o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

PETITION

Pollution, Immingham

9 am

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I wish to present a petition from Mr. Victor Smith and Mr. Morris Evans, residents of the town of Immingham in the borough of Cleethorpes. The petition is signed by 2,516 of my constituents and it relates to the pollution in the area around the town.

The prayer of the petitioners reads as follows:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House gives all district and borough councils greater powers to control the companies responsible for causing pollution, that it revises the General Development Order under which these companies operate in order that more control can be exercised over their activities by the local authority and that it revises the Environmental Protection Act to further strengthen the powers of the Health Authority over such matters.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Naval Employment (South Dorset)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

9.1 am

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): I am grateful that the Minister and I can come fresh to this important debate after a long all-night sitting. I am pleased to see in his place my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer), who, I understand, will also try to catch your eye in this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We often read lurid headlines about the numbers of people who are about to lose their jobs or be transferred away from Dorset if the decisions pending or already taken by the Ministry of Defence are implemented. I should like to outline the figures as I see them and ask the Minister to give his estimates of those figures when he replies.

If operational sea training moves away from the naval base, I understand that 475 civilians will be affected, most of whom would lose their jobs. Four hundred and twenty service personnel would transfer away and 130 service posts would be lost altogether. That makes a total of 1,025.

The sea systems controllerate is a moving target. When it was thinking of moving away from Portland, it employed about 600 civilians and 100 service personnel, making a total of 700. The Defence Research Agency is planning to shrink its operations by 297 people, and another 70 would initially be transferred to the sea systems controllerate. Those jobs would be lost as well—367 of them. Five hundred and ninety people would either transfer to Bincleaves—still at Portland—or away to Winfrith. In south Dorset, 188 people at Holton Heath, at the Defence Research Agency site, would be transferred out of the constituency. That makes a grand total of 2,280 jobs lost from my constituency, and 2,600 jobs that would move away from Portland.

Even more important than the lurid-sounding headline figures are the total knock-on effects. The figures that I have listed do not include the many people who are part of the contractorised operations. They do not include all the people employed by other suppliers to the Navy who work almost permanently on the base, or those located in my constituency and that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West who are employed by defence manufacturers. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has a copy of the excellent report by Portsmouth university which suggests that the direct and knock-on employment in the Weymouth and Portland travel-to-work areas accounts for 43 per cent. of all employment—so such redundancies must be taken into account by the Government.

I am pleased that when I met my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister last evening, he was able to tell me that the Government are willing to fund part of a study into the consequences for Portland naval base if people moved away and to put some seedcorn money into the possibility of establishing some sort of enterprise agency. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Minister can tell me more about the initiative that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister mentioned last evening.

The sea systems controllerate is part of the procurement executive and is used by the Navy to liaise with all the different arms that need to be consulted when any form of equipment is installed for use by the Navy. It was relocated in south Dorset from Bath because it is sensible that an organisation involved in such liaison work should be located by the sea, so that it can work with the Navy, be close to the Portland research facilities and enjoy the excellent living conditions available at Portland.

It was therefore something of a shock to find that the sea systems controllerate has for five or six years been part of one study or another in relation to moving those jobs away. At various times, it was suggested that the controllerate should move to Bath, but that was knocked on the head by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when he was Chief Secretary to the Treasury and found, when he examined the case, that it did not stack up in terms of value for money. At that time, a 13-year payback period was being considered.

The project seemed to die a death for a while, until the powers-that-be decided that it might be a good idea to link that project with the relocation of the land and air systems from London to a cheaper area—ignoring the fact that it would involve moving personnel from the Portland area to Bath, Bristol or Keynsham—all of which are more expensive.

For a long time, we had difficulty getting from the MOD any figures on the costs and the number of personnel involved. Eventually, I was given some figures in confidence, which I shall not divulge now—but the figure in general circulation is that the co-location exercise involving the relocation of the procurement executive to its new site north of Bristol will cost £300 million for 5,000 civil servants. Not all of them will be relocated, because many in London and Portland will lose their jobs and be re-recruited back to the north of Bristol. The figure is equivalent to £60,000 per desk, so that will clearly be an expensive operation for the MOD's budget in these stringent times.

I am reliably informed that that whole exercise is being looked at again. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Minister can say whether there is any truth in that, and what he intends to do to ensure value for money. He may wish to refer to column 695 of *Hansard* for 2 June 1992, when he reassured me—perhaps unwisely—that the MOD would not go around buying new green-field sites for operations such as this. Perhaps he now wishes to eat his words: unfortunately, someone else in the MOD without his good sense promptly went off and bought one. That is a strange decision when the MOD is trying to sell a number of such sites.

There appears to be problems with the Defence Research Agency, which currently has a number of sites in my constituency. The largest "co-locates" at Southwell—a wonderful word; the MOD thinks that it is a good idea when it is happening in someone else's constituency, but apparently not when it is happening in mine—with the sea systems controllerate. The agency has been left with the thought that in three or four years' time the controllerate will move to a new site, leaving it like a pea rattling around in a very large pod and with the thought that it will cost a great deal to maintain the site. It needs 12,000 sq ft. and finds that 30,000 sq ft are available to it in Southwell.

The DRA now intends to spend £13 million of taxpayers' money co-locating on another site, which is likely to be at Winfrith. That, too, is in my constituency. I thank the agency for at least trying to co-locate within the same travel-to-work area; but the fact remains that a large amount of Government money is being spent on cutting employment. I wondered whether the right way of

[Mr. Ian Bruce]

tackling the matter would be to tell the Minister how delighted I was that we were to receive £13 million of Government money, £9 million of which would save £1 million a year, and to congratulate him on wasting so much money on my constituency. That, I thought, might make him think even harder about whether the move would provide value for money from the MOD's point of view.

The subject that has produced the biggest headlines is that of the naval base, because the question whether to close a naval base is more easily understood by the public. I well understand how the proposal has come about. Currently we have five naval bases—four of which have operational ships—and Portland naval base, which exists specifically to carry out operational sea training away from the other operational bases.

The Navy board is clearly under considerable pressure from the MOD and the Treasury to show real savings in the MOD budget. It therefore seems a good accountant's trick to say, "Minister, I am willing to cut 20 per cent. of your naval bases and save you some money. Aren't we doing well?" We must ask, however, why the Portland naval base—which, over the decades, has probably featured in dozens of studies about the possibility of closure—is constantly being found, after intensive scrutiny, to be the most cost-effective sea training centre.

It is interesting to note that, under the Navy's new costing system, Portland is much the most cost-effective place in the country in which to have a ship repaired—although it is the smallest base and would not be expected to operate economies of scale. But why is operational sea training done there?

I believe that what we are about to lose is Portland's greatest strength—the co-location of the helicopter station for Lynx helicopters with the operational sea training function. Even if there were no good financial case for retaining the Portland naval base, I believe that it would still be in the MOD's interest to keep the helicopters and the sea training exercise together.

The helicopter station was brought down to Portland because it was deemed essential, if one was to get a helicopter crew and all the necessary staff properly integrated with a frigate or a destroyer, to have the helicopter station next to the place where the ships were working up.

The partnership between the Navy and the helicopters has gone from strength to strength, and my right hon. Friend the Minister will see from the record of the Navy in action in recent times that, at least in respect of the non-aircraft carriers—the destroyers and so on—the helicopters are not only the eyes and ears of the Navy but its teeth. It is not the 4·5-in gun on the front of a ship or its self-defence missiles that are the real weapons system but the helicopter that goes out and attacks other ships. That is what makes the Navy the potent force that it is. Any attempt to split the helicopter activity from the naval training side simply would not work; it would be a false economy.

Will my right hon. Friend the Minister tell the House about one aspect of the detailed costing figures that we have been given? How is it that, whereas we shall need even more service personnel and even more spending on fuel and on helicopters, the civilian labour force of some 475 people is almost magically to be absorbed into the current staffing levels at Devonport, with fewer than 100 additional posts being created? Either there are 400 spare bodies down at Devonport who are just waiting for the work to arrive in two or three years' time or the figures are wrong. I hope that, having been asked that question on a number of occasions in the past few weeks, my right hon. Friend will have a good answer for us.

I am conscious of the time and I know that my hon. Friend for Dorset, West would like to comment. Moreover, we should like a response from my right hon. Friend the Minister. Without further ado, therefore, may I ask my right hon. Friend most earnestly to reconsider all the facts and figures surrounding the three possible moves for Dorset; to check the MOD's case, which in itself is too weak to convince us that we should go ahead with the moves; and to look at the knock-on effects for the whole south Dorset economy? I know that other Secretaries of State would be extremely concerned if they saw the figures, which no doubt my right hon. Friend the Minister will give us later, in respect of the knock-on effect on their budgets in the coming years.

9.17 am

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): I am conscious of the time, and I shall therefore come straight to the point. The lead has rightly been taken in this matter by my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce), who has performed a doughty task in supporting his constituents.

The words "peace dividend" have a very unhappy ring to them in south-west Dorset. As far as we are concerned, it has all turned sour. Three years ago, none of us ever envisaged that the effect of the peace dividend would be felt so starkly in our area.

It is not in my nature to prepare a fall-back position. My nature has always been to go forward and win. On this occasion, however, I shall deal only with the fall-back position. I hope that the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset will be taken on board clearly by the MOD. In terms of employment, the effect of the changes on south and west Dorset is quite shattering. I am not yet sure whether our right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Trade and Industry have taken that point on board. That is why I direct my plea to that point.

There is no area in the country where house prices have been higher than in south and west Dorset. Therefore, because of the very nature of the fall of house prices, people will not be able to move if all the changes take place. They will be locked in there and be unable to move. The effect in our area will be disastrous.

I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister has written to our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry about assisted area status. I beg him to write again and to get my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to write as well. If we do not have assisted area status, we will have an area of desolation, unseen in the south of England in the past 50 years. I beg my right hon. Friend also to do all in his power to ensure that all Ministers are aware of the situation.

9.20 am

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I advise my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) that of course I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to his demands for assisted area status.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) produced the figure of 2,280. My figure for civilian job losses in the area is about 1,400. My hon. Friend is adding in all the service jobs on top of that figure. Clearly, that will have an impact on the economy in Portland—there is no doubt about that whatsoever—but it is unfair to suggest that that will add to the unemployment totals in his area, as most of those jobs will be moved away. However, I must take his point about the effect of the service jobs on the local economy in terms of spending power. Also, there are my hon. Friend's points about contractors in the area who would be affected as well, and they do not show up in our figures.

I cannot give my hon. Friend figures relating to the overall financial impact on the area about which he is talking, but I shall certainly see whether we can work up a figure for him. Of course, the figures are somewhat speculative, but we will see whether we can do something.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset because he has worked tirelessly to represent the interests of his constituents who may be affected by the extensive restructuring of defence facilities in his constituency. The end of the cold war, which the whole House and, indeed, the whole country welcome, means that we can reduce the share of our national resources devoted to defence.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West made a point about the peace dividend not being altogether welcome in his part of the world. I am afraid that the peace dividend means that the Government have resources to spend on other things, but, at the same time, it inevitably means that we start cutting defence facilities. That affects to a deleterious degree the south, south-west and south-east of England, because, by an accident of history, that is where most of our defence facilities are located. The Royal Navy is reducing in size, but we intend to ensure that it is equipped and manned to meet the tasks that it will face.

Reductions in the front line must be matched by savings in support provision if we are to achieve value for money from what is still a great deal of taxpayers' money. If we fail to achieve that, we will face the prospect of further reductions in the front line to pay for the cost of maintaining excess support facilities. That is not an acceptable alternative. I acknowledge that the period of transition will be painful for a number of communities, including Portland, whose economies have relied heavily on defence-related expenditure.

We must face hard decisions if we are to achieve value for money, but those decisions must be based on a wide range of factors, not just the savings offered. That is why we announce proposals as the basis for consultation before final decisions are taken. My hon. Friend is right to probe our proposals in depth. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is committed to ensuring that the process of consultation is as open as possible, subject only to issues of security or commercial confidentiality. That may sometimes be uncomfortable for Ministers and their officials, but if there are flaws in the proposal they must be identified.

The proposal to close Portland naval base and transfer operational sea training to Devonport in 1996, announced on 12 November, is at present the subject of such consultation. We have opened a dialogue with my hon. Friend—he will acknowledge that I have had a number of meetings with him—the trade unions and the local authorities. Many detailed questions have been raised already and no doubt there will be more. We shall do our best to answer them fully and promptly.

The purpose of operational sea training is to bring ships to a high state of operational readiness, ready to cope with any eventuality. The crew must learn to operate together as a team, making the best use of all the ship's sensors, systems and weapons. Ships need to work up in that way whenever they come back into service after a refit, with new equipment and new crew members.

In addition to the training of ships returning to service after refit, there is also the role fulfilled by flag officer sea training in providing continuation training for ships in commission. That is used to ensure that ships and their crews are maintaining adequate standards of readiness. The transfer of operational sea training to Devonport would provide useful opportunities for the ships based there to work with ships under training, thus enhancing the opportunities for this important continuation training.

By the end of the training, ships' crews will be trained to meet, as individual units or as members of a task group, the full range of submarine, surface and air threats. A team of instructors moves between ships, monitoring standards to ensure that the crews of every Royal Navy warship and Royal Fleet Auxiliary support vessel are fit for their task. The value of such training has been amply demonstrated in the Falklands campaign and in the Gulf.

Operational sea training at Portland began in 1958, when the flag officer sea training was moved there for five years, although no money was then available for capital expenditure. In 1961, the dockyard closed and the Portland harbour area was designated as a naval base. In 1963, at the end of the initial five-year period, it was decided that operational sea training should continue to be based at Portland, where it has remained since.

As my hon. Friend said, no warships are base-ported at Portland on a long-term basis—they remain at the naval base only when undergoing training. The naval base provides only the infrastructure and personnel needed to provide day-to-day support and minor repairs and maintenance. It does not offer the range of facilities available at Devonport, Faslane, Portsmouth or Rosyth.

It is true, as I have said on many occasions to my hon. Friend, that Portland provides an extremely good centre for operational sea training. However, we are convinced that the move to Devonport will result in significant savings and certain gains in sea training. Any lack of facilities that we may suffer at Devonport would not be enough to make any difference to the savings that we reckon on making.

No doubt those supporting the Portland case will continue to draw attention to the perceived disadvantages of transferring operational sea training to Devonport. Whatever new information may emerge during the period of consultation will be considered before a firm decision is taken. We will take on board the points that my hon. Friend has raised this morning.

[Mr. Archie Hamilton]

I am pleased to confirm to my hon. Friend the message given to him by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that, following my hon. Friend's representations, we have agreed to extend the consultation period until the end of January. That decision recognises the fact that the consultation period that we have envisaged covered the Christmas period. One must accept that, over Christmas, things quieten down and there is a fortnight of lost time. Our decision to extend the consultation from the middle of January to the end of it takes that factor into account.

My hon. Friend mentioned the undertaking given to him by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that the consultants' report would be jointly funded by the Ministry. We expect contributions to be made by local councils, the Crown Estate, which owns much of the real estate, and the Ministry of Defence. We thought that the solution might be to use the working party that is considering the future of the area to draw up the terms of reference for a consultancy firm. I do not like to anticipate a bad decision for Portland, but, in the circumstances, it might be sensible to work out the terms of reference of the report now so that if the decision went against Portland we could get the consultants working quickly thereafter on the future of the area.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on obtaining this debate and bringing this important matter before the House. I am aware of its enormous importance. It gives me absolutely no pleasure to have to take these very hard decisions. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West said, although we look forward to spending the peace dividend on other areas of public expenditure, it means that we have to take these hard decisions. Areas that have relied on defence expenditure in the past, such as Portland, suffer from the cuts and closures that we envisaged in the proposals that were put to my hon. Friend in the middle of last month.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 15 December 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

University Buildings

1. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he will make a statement on the sums available in the new financial year for capital expenditure on buildings for United Kingdom universities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): Provision for capital expenditure on United Kingdom university buildings forms an integral part of the respective Education Departments' higher education capital programmes.

In the light of the Chancellor's autumn statement, figures have been made available for the resources in England and Scotland for higher education capital in 1993-94. Details of the provision for Wales are being published this afternoon and figures for Northern Ireland will be announced later.

The autumn statement also provided for universities to increase their scope for capital funding by enabling them to borrow on the security of Exchequer-funded assets.

Mr. Trimble: I thank the Minister for that reply and have pleasure in welcoming him to the Dispatch Box.

The Government's policy is to try to increase the number of people in higher education, and certain penalties attach to an increase in numbers. I recall, many years ago, when I started my first-year university course, there were 55 in the class. A former colleague told me the other day that he is starting a lecture course next year with 215 in the class, although the lecture theatre still accommodates only about 70 people.

It is possible to use some facilities more efficiently, but there comes a point, with the expansion of higher education, when there must be an expansion in funding, too. Will the Government now accept that need and make substantially more public resources available for that purpose?

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his personal remarks. I apologise to the House for having exchanged only too recently the relative Trappism of the Whip's Office so I have not yet achieved the fluency and elegance which I hope is appropriate to my new Department.

The answer to the hon. Gentleman's substantive point is that it is important that higher education is conducted in adequate buildings. Much better use is now being made of buildings, as the hon. Gentleman said, and that is right. Where there is a continuing shortage of space, it is open to universities to apply for capital funding for a particular project. We are maintaining the state-funded capital project programme in the coming year, and universities now have the additional benefit of being able to borrow in the commercial market on the security of their existing assets.

Student Incomes

2. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the expected cost of the study being made into student incomes.

Mr. Boswell: The estimated cost of the student income and expenditure survey is £200,000, including VAT.

Mr. Etherington: I, too, welcome the Minister to his new post and wish him well in these somewhat troubled times.

Will the hon. Gentleman consider extending the investigation to part-time students? Is he aware that it is my experience, which includes representations made to me by the parents of part-time students, that many students attending colleges and the Open university are suffering severe financial hardship? Is he further aware that many of them are looking after children or members of their families and that many of them are unemployed or in poorly paid part-time jobs? The Government should look into the plight of part-time students on the basis that, if we are talking about expanding education, people other than full-time students are involved.

Mr. Boswell: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks.

The survey is being carried out broadly on the same basis as before, in relation to full-time students, although we have slightly widened it in some respects. The issue of part-time students is separate. I have heard what the hon. Gentleman said, but I must remind him that other sources of income, such as employment or even social security benefits are open on occasion to part-time students. Part-time students involve a separate consideration and should not be confused with the current study.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I also welcome the Minister to his new post and can assure him that he was always extremely fluent behind the scenes. I suggest that one way of getting funds to students as money in their pockets would be to press ahead with making the membership of the students union voluntary. I see no reason why the students at my local university should pay £16,000 for a rent strike and £45,000 for sabbaticals and various other things that they may not wish to have.

Mr. Boswell: I know my hon. Friend of old and I am very grateful for her personal remarks. I shall take most carefully into account the suggestion she has made, but it may be for another occasion.

Mr. Rooker: In the spirit of welcome for the Minister, may I ask him if his survey will include the case of Neil Bennett, a mature student of Witney, Oxfordshire, whose details I have already sent to the Department? Mr. Bennett faces the imminent decision between continuing to study for his degree and losing his home and furniture, for which

he has worked eight years, and abandoning his studies, returning to the dole and keeping his home. How can students be expected to work and study under pressures of that kind?

Mr. Boswell: Certain numbers of students always suffer hardship. Indeed, I have two student daughters, one of whom graduated this morning, so I have some personal advisers on student hardship. If the hon. Gentleman has submitted a particular case to the Department, I can assure him that it will be fully and carefully considered.

Madam Speaker: Mr. Fabricant.

Mr. Fabricant: I am very surprised, Madam Speaker.

Several Hon. Members: We all are.

Madam Speaker: It is Christmas.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my hon. Friend realise that when I was at university, which was only a very short while ago, I and my colleagues had to take out loans from banks such as Lloyds and Barclays at very high interest rates? Does he not realise how much I would have welcomed the opportunity to take out student loans issued by the Government at low rates of interest?

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. His problem is different from mine; it just seems to me that it was only a short time ago that I was at university. Certainly, at that time, finance was expensive. Student loans are excellent value for money, because there is no interest other than the rate of inflation, and that is very low at the moment. Many students have used those loans when they have needed and chosen to.

Schools (Essex)

3. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make an official visit to Essex in order to discuss with parents and teachers the future funding and levels of education in the county's schools.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): My right hon. Friend hopes in due course to visit all parts of the country, including Essex. I had the opportunity to talk to teachers from schools in Chelmsford and Basildon and county councillors and local education authority officers during my visit to the county earlier this year. The funding of schools and the level of service provided is primarily a matter for the Essex local education authority.

Mr. Mackinlay: What advice will the Secretary of State give to the thousands of parents in Essex who have received letters from their children's headteachers saying that their schools are facing a funding crisis and that they do not have enough resources to fulfil the requirements of the national curriculum, particularly in respect of books, equipment and, in some cases, teachers? Who is to blame? Is it the Conservative-controlled county council or the Secretary of State, and, above all else, what does he intend to do about it?

Mr. Forth: For some reason, Madam Speaker, the good will seems to have evaporated. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that it is, of course, the local education authority which, like all authorities throughout the country, is responsible for making local decisions about how resources are allocated to schools and as between primary and secondary schools for those schools which remain within local education authority control. For grant-maintained schools, of which I am delighted to say there are a growing number in Essex, the matter is quite different and has to be treated differently. I am sure that Essex will look to its own resources, make its own decisions and be accountable to parents throughout the county. I am satisfied that the funding of education in Essex is perfectly satisfactory, as it is in the rest of the country.

Mr. Whittingdale: Is my hon. Friend aware that if he comes to Essex he will find the second highest number of grant-maintained schools in any local education authority area? Is he also aware that his own Department's school performance tables show some schools in Essex achieving some of the highest standards in the whole of the country? Will he therefore congratulate both the governors and the teachers of Essex schools on the excellent results they have achieved and on their wisdom in taking maximum advantage of the Government's education reforms?

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and join him in rejoicing at the number of schools which, through free parental balloting, have decided to opt for grant-maintained status. It is a very encouraging trend which we hope will continue. The figures that he has given to the House show that it is for local education authorities, heads, governors, teachers and everyone involved to ensure that they get the best possible value for money and that the relationship between resources and results, which is often alleged by some hon. Members, does not exist and probably never will.

Teachers' Work Load

4. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received regarding the administrative work load on teachers as a result of measures to implement the national curriculum and testing.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received about 75 letters about this matter since the beginning of the new school year in September.

Mr. Nicholson: That figure does not surprise me. Although I and, I think, all my colleagues vigorously support the Government's objective of raising standards in schools, will my hon. Friend make a new year resolution to ensure that his Department helps the Government's drive against excessive bureaucracy, regulation, red tape and reams of white paper? Is he aware that the burden of paperwork on teachers is not a six-week wonder but has been reported to me on my school visits throughout my time in the House and is becoming a great concern? One hears of glossy brochures being introduced for the curriculum or testing, but, almost before there is time for teachers to study them, they are withdrawn and replaced by new ones. Will he work hard with his officials to deal with that matter?

Mr. Forth: Of course I share the concern that my hon. Friend has expressed so eloquently about excessive burdens of administration, bureaucracy or paperwork in schools or anywhere else in the public sector. However, I am sure that he will understand that it is very much in

everyone's interest that we get the definition of the national curriculum correct, that we are able to review it where necessary and that the National Curriculum Council, in particular—that independent body which we have charged with the very important task of defining the national curriculum—is free to advise teachers, heads and parents on the curriculum, its content and development as it sees fit. I will ensure that the National Curriculum Council is made aware of my hon. Friend's points so that we can get a firm grip on the matters about which he expresses concern.

Mr. Don Foster: Will the Minister convey my welcome to his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education on taking up his new appointment? Will he confirm that among the representations that he has received about this matter have been those from teachers of English who are worried about the rapid introduction of the key stage 3 standard assessment tasks for English? Will he advise the House whether it is likely that he will accede to their requests for a postponement of the introduction of those tests for one year?

Mr. Forth: No. When a difficulty arises it is always tempting for some people to go for a postponement, but that will not help. We are concerned above all to establish a level of quality in education, to define the framework within which it should operate and to give teachers the maximum support to help them define the needs of pupils and to be better able to deal with those needs. We are, of course, most concerned to ensure that those developments take place properly. They are carefully piloted and monitored, and we shall undertake to work with the School Examinations and Assessment Council and others involved to ensure that the assessments and tests are introduced with the maximum effectiveness and the minimum of trouble.

Mr. Allason: Does my hon. Friend recall that there was almost universal hostility from the teaching profession to the national curriculum when it was first introduced? Does he recognise that there is now tremendous support for it in all schools, but that there is also some anxiety about key stage 3, in not only English but technology? Will he at least consider a pilot scheme for a year so that teachers can get hold of the necessary paperwork for the key stage 3 exam?

Mr. Forth: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's very important point. It is remarkable that when we announce radical new measures to improve quality in education the knee-jerk reaction, certainly from members of the Opposition and often from others involved in education, is routine opposition. When they are introduced and prove to be workable, successful and helpful to parents and pupils, fortunately many people are prepared to take a different view and to support them. I hope that that will continue. I understand the concerns that my hon. Friend expresses. We are well aware of them and I give my hon. Friend the undertaking that, wherever possible, we will ensure that such matters are dealt with properly when the new tests are introduced. That has been the case in the past, and it will continue to be so in future.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Does not the Minister realise that the national curriculum is overloaded and far too prescriptive and is, therefore, not workable or successful as he implied a minute ago? Does he also recognise that the burden on teachers is made worse by the constant chopping and changing at the instigation of Ministers?

Will the Minister think again about the problems that have been raised by hon. Members in all parts of the House today because there are genuine concerns among those who know what is happening in the classroom that it will not be possible to go ahead with key stage 3 in English and technology? As there is so much concern throughout the House, will the Minister reconsider his statement on that matter?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Lady must be careful not to eliminate the possibility of review and change where appropriate. When I talk to teachers, as I do often, as do my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend the Minister of State, teachers do not say, "Don't change anything in the curriculum." They say, "If there is a justified need for review and for change, please will you do it?" That is the response that we are prepared to give. That is why the National Curriculum Council is currently involved in a review of the primary curriculum to assess the kind of concerns raised by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). Its interim advice will be with us very soon.

I will certainly not give undertakings at this stage, because of allegations of the kind that have been made today, summarily to stop the progress of testing in its tracks. We will take due account of the anxieties that have been expressed, take the advice of the NCC and then press on with proper testing.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that the teaching profession has made a magnificent effort to implement the national curriculum and the testing that goes with it because it believes in the national curriculum and sees the high value of the testing?

Mr. Forth: Yes. It is a delight to see my hon. Friend in his usual place, full of vim and vigour as always and expressing his knowledgeable interest in matters educational. My hon. Friend is right and he knows so much about the matter. The teaching profession has responded magnificently to the challenges that we have laid down. Teachers are getting on with the national curriculum; they are enthusiastic about it and want to see it work. Our job in the Department for Education, like the job of the NCC and the School Examinations and Assessment Council is to work together with the profession to ensure that we all serve the interests of pupils.

EC (Ministerial Meetings)

5. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what meetings of institutions of the European Community Education Ministers have attended during the United Kingdom presidency to date.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State chaired the Council of Ministers of Education on 27 November. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) and my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) represented the United Kingdom. The previous day my right hon. Friend, accompanied by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary

Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, had appeared before the European Parliament's Committee for Culture, Youth, Education and the Media.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to the Minister and I, too, welcome him to the Dispatch Box. Will he give the House an assurance that at every meeting of the Council of Education Ministers a Scottish Minister will be present to represent the separate, distinct and, in my view, better Scottish education?

Mr. Boswell: It is remarkable that, as I understand it, it has not been normal practice hitherto for Scottish Education Ministers to attend. I understand that it was most successful on this occasion and I very much hope that it will help and happen again in the future.

Mr. Clappison: I also welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box. With regard to consultations in Europe, how usual is it for the President of the European Council to meet Members of the European Parliament?

Mr. Boswell: It is certainly not unusual for them to meet. However, it was distinctive on this occasion because the presidency and my right hon. Friend briefed the European Parliament the day before the Council meeting. I am sure that the exchange that evening was successful and fruitful and that it contributed to a very successful tone in the Council discussions the next day.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Why is it that, after 13 years of this Government, half a dozen Secretaries of State for Education and numerous reforms and Education Acts, Britain still lags a long way behind the rest of western Europe in the number of 16 to 18-year-olds who stay in full-time education or vocational training? Why do we have one of the worst trained work forces in western Europe? Will we have the same complacency from the new Minister that we have had from his predecessors over those 13 years?

Mr. Boswell: I have to say that I agree with one of the hon. Gentleman's remarks in which he made a reasonable conjunction between education and training. That conjunction is important, but the hon. Gentleman is way off beam in every other respect. We are expanding the numbers in further education and training much faster than most of our counterparts. We attach the greatest importance to further education and training, and we shall continue to build on such programmes.

Grant-maintained Schools

6. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his target for the number of primary schools to obtain grant-maintained status by the end of 1993.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): I hope that as many parents as possible will consider the potential benefits of self-governing status for their primary schools.

Mr. Atkinson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that some urban primary schools, having considered grant-maintained status, have decided against it because they are concerned about the future provision of their special needs and do not believe that grouping is the answer for them? Will he embark on a new information campaign aimed at the governors of all primary schools and secondary modern schools, telling them of the distinct advantages of grant-maintained status for their schools and the amazing results that have been achieved by those schools that have opted for grant-maintained status?

Mr. Patten: I am grateful for the opportunity to reassure my hon. Friend that more than two thirds of grant-maintained schools have increased their provision for special educational needs above the level previously provided directly by the local education authority. About 186 primary schools have balloted on whether to become grant maintained. In eight out of 10 cases—exactly the same figure for secondary schools—the result has been a resounding yes.

Mr. Barnes: When that petition for opting out takes place on the ballot, no restriction is placed on the lists of parents' names and the uses of those lists for commercial or other purposes. Should not that matter be examined? Should names be generally used for any purpose other than that for which they were given?

Mr. Patten: I am much more worried about the apparently illicit way in which some local education authorities have got lists of names from schools and used them to incite others to circulate intimidatory literature to stop schools from going grant-maintained. Needless to say, Derbyshire is in the lead.

Examination Results

7. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on his assessment of the relationship between spending by local education authorities and examination results.

Mr. Patten: High spending is no guarantee of good examination results. Some authorities obtain good results at much lower cost than others. I have looked at the relationship between the percentage of pupils in each LEA achieving five or more A to C grades at GCSE, and find that some of the highest-spending authorities gain relatively poor results.

Mr. Congdon: I thank the Secretary of State for that answer. Does he agree that the publication of school examination results and other research confirms that the level of achievement for schools with children from similar backgrounds is widely different? Is it not time that schools improved their performance, rather than seeking excuses for failure?

Mr. Patten: Indeed, schools in inner-city areas, such as Mulberry school in Tower Hamlets, Stockland Green school in Birmingham and Archbishop Blanche school in Toxteth, Liverpool, have shown that schools can perform well in apparently adverse circumstances. We should all look to those schools as beacons of excellence. I congratulate them, and other schools in those areas should draw lessons from them.

Mr. Eastham: Is the Secretary of State aware that about three years ago a study carried out by York and Sheffield universities concluded that when poverty and social deprivation were taken into consideration the results of most inner-city schools were as good as those of schools anywhere?

Mr. Patten: It seems very odd to me that the Labour party, which historically has liked measuring statistics of poverty, housing need or alleged social deprivation, so much dislikes the Government's pioneering radical measurement of school performance.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: In rejecting the Opposition's apparent obsession with equating spending with standards, does my right hon. Friend agree that time and again reports by Her Majesty's inspectorate have shown that the factors that lead to higher standards are high expectations from teachers and parents and some investment from parents? Does he agree that the investment that parents make in grant-maintained schools through their participation in balloting is likely to lead to such investment and, therefore, higher standards?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is entirely right. I would only add to those factors the leadership qualities of the headteacher, whoever she or he might be. A correlation seems to be emerging in some areas between poor examination performance, high public expenditure and a high level of surplus school places. I shall investigate that. Those three factors linked together seem to point to poor management of public resources and hence bad education of our children.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Does the Secretary of State agree that the publication of school examination results generally reflects the social and economic make-up of England and Wales? His reference to beacon schools in inner-city areas is worth examining in great detail. In deprived areas, where examination results are generally bad, will he make efforts to ensure that proper funding and good advice are available to enable teachers in hard-pressed schools to achieve even better results than at present?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman must surely have noticed that I took the trouble a few moments ago to praise three named schools, one in a Liberal-controlled area and two in Labour-controlled areas, which have performed exceptionally well. Even at the season of good will, I find it hard to take the assumption that because a little boy or a little girl comes from a difficult background —perhaps from parents who are not well off and in an area with high unemployment—we should automatically have low expectations. That shows just how out of touch the Labour party is in the 1990s with the aspirations of ordinary working people in Britain.

Parents (Information)

8. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure an increase of the information available to parents about their children's education.

10. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to make more information available to parents following publication of the examination results tables.

Mr. Patten: I shall shortly be publishing, LEA by LEA, the assessment results for seven-year-olds and expenditure on primary pupils. Under the parents charter, the comparative tables of school examination results issued this year will be extended next year to include national curriculum assessment results, truancy rates and information about what happens to pupils over school leaving age when they go on to their new careers.

School prospectuses are already more informative than ever before, and will include more information from next year. From 1993, parents will begin to receive summary reports of the inspections which will take place every four years in each maintained school.

Lastly, and importantly, parents are now guaranteed a written report on their child at least once a year. Last Friday I made further regulations about these reports to take effect next year—requiring all school-leavers to be given the highly successful national record of achievement as a passport to working life.

Mr. Butler: Does my right hon. Friend accept that in my constituency and throughout Britain the results have been greatly welcomed? I have to say that his Department's mark for accuracy has come out as "could do better", but that has not detracted from the usefulness of the exercise. For the first time eyes have been opened to the relative performance of schools. In addition to the other information that my right hon. Friend proposes to publish, will he consider including results in other public examinations such as British Amateur Gymnastics Association tests for athletics, swimming awards, music examinations, and so on, so that we can get a clear picture of the child in the round at individual schools?

Mr. Patten: We certainly intend to do all that we can to publish more information, which enables parents to make a sound judgment about the schools to which their children go or may go. We hear a lot from the Opposition, and in a few days' time, in an effort to be helpful, I shall publish results of the tests on seven-year-olds for last summer and further information including, for example, public expenditure per head on primary school pupils.

Mr. Hendry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that his welcome announcement that more information is to be made available, including the publication of school prospectuses, shows that the claim that the publication of examination results alone may mean nothing is one which can be fairly squashed? Does he also agree that that shows that socialist claims that parents could not or would not want to understand information about their children's education is nothing more than patronising socialist waffle?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend from Derbyshire is absolutely right. It is very patronising to treat parents in that way. What amazes me is how the Opposition continue to fail to understand the aspirations of ordinary working people. In the 1970s and 1980s, they did not understand the aspirations to home ownership—*[Interruption.]* The chattering classes who inhabit the Labour Benches these days do not understand the aspirations of ordinary working people to good education for their children, hence the publication of the league tables.

Mr. Spearing: Will the Secretary of State not review his somewhat arbitrary limit of five O-levels on one occasion as the criterion of performance in any school? What has he to say about the slow-learning pupil for whom I was once responsible, who got one O-level in the summer, two more the next Christmas and two the following summer? That pupil could not possibly have got five O-levels at one time

at the first attempt. What does the Secretary of State have to say about the performance of that school and that pupil?

Mr. Patten: I would not cast any aspersions on the performance of the teacher involved, and it was probably a triumph for the slow learner. In the White Paper we said that it might be easy for academically gifted children to get a number of O-levels, but that a small number of qualifications may represent a triumph for other boys or girls and for the teachers who help them to get those exam results.

Mr. Dafis: Does the Secretary of State recognise that there might be problems with league tables in relation to the publication of A-level results because the standards set by schools for accepting pupils in A-level classes may vary considerably? Some schools lay down minimum GCSE result requirements while others have a more open policy. Is there not a danger that schools will be discouraged from accepting pupils in A-level classes because they fear that when the results are published they may not be so good? Will the Secretary of State at least consider revising the method of publishing A-level results?

Mr. Patten: I shall treat the hon. Gentleman's question seriously, reflect on it and write to him. It is important to bear in mind that most professional teachers who take on a child who is perhaps a slow learner—such as the pupil mentioned by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing)—or has special educational needs, realise that they represent a considerable professional challenge. I applaud teachers who do such excellent work and the good results produced by teachers who help pupils with special educational needs.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, given the broad welcome by parents for the publication of examination results, we can clearly develop the system further by including such matters as vocational qualifications in years to come, as so many Conservative Members have requested?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right. I can announce to the House that next year we shall publish results of vocational qualifications. I hope that that will be greeted rather more warmly by the Labour Front Bench than the publication of tables which they condemned on the day of publication but six days later they had done a complete U-turn and were in favour of the tables.

National Curriculum (Primary Schools)

9. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent representations he has received in relation to the national curriculum in primary schools.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend regularly receives representations from parents, teachers and others in relation to the national curriculum in primary schools.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that many primary school teachers, while recognising the basic objective of the national curriculum, believe that they do not have sufficient time to listen to young children read or to encourage them to read purely for pleasure? Will he ensure that the national curriculum is less rigid and allows for a slightly more flexible approach to reading?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. That is one reason why the National Curriculum Council is conducting its current review. In my experience, some teachers share the view expressed by the hon. Gentleman, while others seem to have been better able to accommodate the demands of the national curriculum—we must balance the one against the other. I do not want us to rush into changes, and we are keeping an open mind as to how much things may have to be changed to accommodate the difficulties mentioned by the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Anthony Durant: Does my hon. Friend the Minister agree that it is grossly unfair to children that they are not able to obtain good results in the three Rs, which are so important for secondary education and future jobs? Surely that is the purpose of the national curriculum.

Mr. Forth: That is, indeed, one of the important purposes of the national curriculum. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be reassured by the great emphasis that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend the Minister of State have placed on setting the highest possible standards for mastering the basics of education so that young people may be better suited to maximise their educational potential. All education Ministers are, and will continue to be, concerned about that.

Cleaning (Competitive Tendering)

11. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received regarding cleaning standards in schools since competitive tendering became operative.

Mr. Forth: The Department receives representations from time to time on various compulsory competitive tendering issues. I am not aware of any recent correspondence specifically relating to school cleaning.

Mr. Michie: Is the Secretary of State aware that the current contracts given out for the cleaning of schools are totally inadequate? The standards of one of the schools in my constituency, Herdings junior and nursery infants, are not up to scratch. That is not a criticism of the school cleaners; it reflects the fact that the local authority did not have enough money to include better specifications in the contract. Will the Minister review the position of schools and, I hope, improve it?

Mr. Forth: Where appropriate, it is for local education authorities to set standards for themselves and put the work out to tender based on those standards. They have responsibility for monitoring whether the standards are being achieved. The hon. Gentleman should return to his local education authority and satisfy himself as to whether it is setting proper standards, tendering properly and monitoring the achievement of standards in schools.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend confirm that compulsory competitive tendering has saved local authorities a lot of money? Should not education budgets be used to educate children rather than to preserve jobs in the National Union of Public Employees?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Recent research by the Institute of Local Government Studies shows that cost savings of about 6 per cent. have resulted

from compulsory competitive tendering for local authority services while providing the same or higher standards. I trust that local education authorities will be considering the matter carefully to see whether they can redeploy into education the resources saved.

Testing (Seven-year-olds)

12. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has for further consultation on national curriculum tests for seven-year-olds.

Mr. Forth: We shall consult in the spring, as usual, on the next assessment order governing tests and assessments for seven-year-olds in 1994.

Mrs. Roche: Will the Minister consult the Secretary of State for Scotland, given that the Scottish Office has recently announced a system of testing which is based much more heavily on teacher assessment? If that system, which is overwhelmingly supported by parent-teacher associations, is good enough for children in Scotland, why is it not good enough or appropriate for children in England and Wales?

Mr. Forth: I would be the last person to deny the validity of the adoption of different approaches, where appropriate, in Scottish, English, Welsh and Northern Irish education. One of the great glories of the United Kingdom is that we can take different approaches to these matters when we think it appropriate. The timing of the tests in England is dictated by the Education Reform Act 1988. Scottish Office colleagues have taken the view that, although the principle of testing is accepted, the timing may be more appropriately judged by those involved in schools. I believe that that is right for my colleagues north of the border.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Does the Minister agree that most seven-year-olds very much enjoy doing their assessment tests? Will he congratulate the primary school teachers who have made the national curriculum work so effectively—in particular, my constituent Anthony Wates, headteacher of Tavistock primary school, who is on the National Curriculum Council?

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that important point. We must not forget that if the tests are properly applied and if the pupils are given proper leadership and inspiration by teachers, young pupils of all ages enjoy taking the tests and find them useful and stimulating. In some of the pilot tests carried out last year, it was found that in many schools attendance on the day of the tests was higher than normal. That is ample and eloquent testimony to my hon. Friend's point.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 December.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mrs. Knight: May I tell my right hon. Friend that taxpayers in my constituency—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is finding herself in a rowdy House because we expect a question from her.

Mrs. Knight: May I let my right hon. Friend be aware that taxpayers in my constituency of Erewash and across the country are delighted that he successfully defended the rebate for Britain at the Edinburgh summit? May I also congratulate him——

Hon. Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Order. The House should have a little more tolerance. I am sure that the hon. Lady has taken to heart what I have said and will try again.

Mrs. Knight: Will my right hon. Friend also accept our congratulations on so successfully holding down the increase in the Community budget which was sought by the European Commission and some European leaders?

The Prime Minister: I can sense that it is a Christmas House today. My hon. Friend is right: it was vital that we defended the rebate, worth £2 billion a year. It is now protected until the end of the century. It was an issue on which our European partners knew that we were not prepared to compromise. It is fortunate that we were not represented by the Labour party. The shadow Chancellor would have negotiated on the rebate, and the Leader of the Opposition would have signed up the complete Delors 2 package, costing us hundreds of millions of pounds.

Mr. John Smith: In view of the appalling suffering being endured by the inhabitants of Sarajevo and other besieged towns and cities in Bosnia, will the Prime Minister join the French and United States Governments in urging the speedy adoption of the United Nations Security Council resolution to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia?

The Prime Minister: There has been a great deal of comment about enforcing the no-fly zone. The issue is being discussed at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe meeting in Stockholm and it will be discussed further at the London conference in Geneva tomorrow and the North Atlantic Council on Thursday. The imposition of a no-fly zone by the United Nations has already had the effect of stopping combat flights by the Serbs; so far as we can see, there are still breaches by helicopters and small aircraft, but no clear evidence of their being used for combat purposes.

We are considering our policy with our allies and partners, but we must weigh the desirability of enforcing the no-fly zone against the possible impact of that on the United Nations humanitarian effort and on the safety of our own troops. If enforcement of the no-fly zone put the United Nations operation at risk, the main losers might well be the people of Bosnia, and we need to consider that carefully before a decision is reached.

Mr. John Smith: While appreciating the concern that the Prime Minister expresses for the humanitarian efforts, and for the safety of our own troops on the ground, does the right hon. Gentleman not appreciate that there is a growing feeling in this country, as there is in the international community, that there is no point in a no-fly zone which can be defied with such impunity? The time has come for effective international action. I hope that the

Prime Minister will take the message from the House that he would be widely supported if Britain supported the other countries in making the resolution effective.

The Prime Minister: We have never ruled out the possible need to enforce the zone, but, with our allies and partners, we must consider very carefully how the zone is to be enforced and what the effect of enforcement would be on the maintenance of humanitarian effort, which none of us wishes to see end, either this side of Christmas or long after, and on the safety of our troops. Other measures may be brought to bear, and those are all being considered.

Q2. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in addition to the great success of the Edinburgh summit, we have seen a further example of European co-operation —the successful agreement on the development of the European fighter aircraft? Does my right hon. Friend also agree that that aircraft is vital to Britain's defence interests, and is good news for the defence industry and for the 40,000 people throughout the country whose jobs are closely associated with the project?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The agreement reached by the four Defence Ministers on 10 December means that the development of a new fighter—to be known as Eurofighter 2000—will go ahead. I warmly congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on his part in ensuring that. The agreement is very good news for our aerospace industry and for everyone who works in it. It will also mean that the Royal Air Force will have a combat aircraft with the capabilities required in the first quarter of the next century.

Mr. Beith: Can the Prime Minister give miners and their families an assurance that not one of the pits recently closed will be prevented from reopening by failure to maintain them while the review takes place? If the right hon. Gentleman cannot do that, what value can we place on the review?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman can place great value on the review. It is open, and we have made it perfectly clear that it is open. It is clear, too, that British Coal is perfectly aware of the undertaking given by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to maintain the pits during the interim period, and I believe that it is doing that.

Milton Keynes (Visit)

Q3. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will pay an official visit to Milton Keynes.

The Prime Minister: I am making plans for a series of visits to all parts of the country, and I hope to include Buckinghamshire among them.

Mr. Butler: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the past 12 months the private sector has invested a record £374 million in Milton Keynes, helping to create 6,500 new jobs? Is that not an excellent example of something that we are seeing throughout the country—a fully justified growth in business confidence?

The Prime Minister: I think that we shall see a good deal more of that in the months to come—not least because of the very good news on inflation, which on Friday fell to 3 per cent. We also had figures today to show that factory gate inflation is at its lowest level for a generation. That is the clearest possible sign that we have yet seen that we are winning the battle against inflation, which is vital to industry, commerce, investment and jobs. It is precisely because of those successes that we now have the lowest interest rates in the European Community and a very solid platform for industrial recovery next year.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wardell: As Christmas approaches and we witness the crisis of despair among the homeless not only in London but in cities such as Swansea, will the Prime Minister recognise that his vision of a classless society is rapidly receding and that our failure to embrace a growing underclass is beginning to undermine the very basis of Britain's being considered a democracy?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman may not know that the latest count by voluntary organisations last month found a drop of nearly 60 per cent. in the number of rough sleepers since the Government's initiative some time ago. The hon. Gentleman appears not to have heard about that initiative: with Government funding of nearly £100 million, it is providing new hostel places in central London and 3,000 more permanent places are being provided or planned. More action is being taken to help the homeless now than has been taken for many years.

Mr. Trend: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the Housing and Urban Development Bill, especially the parts that establish rent-to-mortgage schemes? Does he agree that it will create an excellent low-risk opportunity for young people to begin the process of owning their homes?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. We certainly want to continue to expand home ownership for young people and others. *[Interruption.]* Labour Members heckle, but then they have fought all our reforms of choice and ownership, time after time. They fought the right to buy, and now they are fighting the rent-to-mortgage scheme. The fact is that they do not trust people to make their own decisions about housing. They do not want people to be independent of the state, but we do: we believe in independence, home ownership and low taxation. That is why we are here and they are there.

Q5. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Enright: Is the Prime Minister aware that his right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Thatcher has been gallivanting through the United States of America, rubbishing Her Majesty's Government's presidency of the European Community and making huge sums of money out of it? Will he persuade her to give some of that money to the miners, who have been cruelly deprived——

Madam Speaker: Order. I hardly think that someone's travels have much to do with the Prime Minister. I think that we had better move on now.

Mr. Deva: I welcome the agreement secured by my right hon. Friend in Edinburgh, which will lead to the immediate start of negotiations for the entry into the Community of Austria, Sweden and Finland. Does he agree that the British agenda is now an agenda for the whole of the EC?

The Prime Minister: I agree: that is increasingly the position. We have achieved a significant turnaround in attitudes to the enlargement of the Community. At Edinburgh we won agreement for the immediate start of negotiations with Austria, Finland and Sweden, and for negotiations with Norway before too long. As my hon. Friend will be aware, we also won support for the eventual membership of the Visegrad countries. When I first proposed that in Paris less than two years ago, very few people supported it; now it is Community policy.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Q6. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

The Prime Minister: The treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, of which the United Kingdom is a depository state, remains the cornerstone of international efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation. Ten states have become parties in 1992, bringing the total to 155. We continue to work for universal adherence to the treaty, and for its indefinite extension in 1995.

Mr. Dalyell: Can the House have a clear, unambiguous statement—given the contrary views of Mr. John Gordon, who was head of the Foreign Office nuclear energy unit from 1986 to 1988—that at no time did Britain infringe either article 1 or any other article of the 1968 non-proliferation treaty in relation to the sale of arms to Iraq or other countries in the middle east?

The Prime Minister: It is Government policy to meet all our obligations under the non-proliferation treaty. Allegations that the United Kingdom may not have done so will be matters for Lord Justice Scott, and I think that that had better wait for his inquiry. I am aware of Iraqi claims. They are matters for Lord Justice Scott to investigate.

Engagements

Q7. **Mrs. Jacqui Lait:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Lait: Has my right hon. Friend seen today's reports that 1 million more free eye tests were given in 1991 than in 1990, and that there were 7 million more private tests? Is that not a demonstration of the success of the Health Secretary's publicity policy on free tests?

The Prime Minister: Indeed, it is. In this, as in much else to do with the national health service, the Labour party got it wrong in everything that it said at the time. It peddled stories that people would not have eyesight tests, but the reality is now clear: more people than ever before are doing so. They know that there is no purpose in listening to the Labour party on the national health service —it is always wrong.

Transport Supplementary Grant

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the financial support that the Government will give to local highway authorities in England in 1993-94 through the local roads capital provision.

Local authorities need to know now of the annual allocation of transport supplementary grant and capital approvals for their roads, and I know of the great interest which right hon. and hon. Members take in these schemes.

We are providing £1,047 million for capital expenditure on local roads in 1993-94. This is a substantial sum by any standards, and is particularly notable because it is a record despite being in a difficult year. It amply demonstrates the priority which the Government are giving to capital expenditure programmes.

This sum will enable 41 major new schemes to be started at a cost of £93 million in 1993-94—55 per cent. more than in 1992-93. The total cost of these projects will be £318 million spread over the next few years. I am arranging for a list of the schemes to be included in the *Official Report* and in the Vote Office.

The list strikes an appropriate balance between the needs of rural and of urban areas and provides a fair share-out between the counties. There are 24 new bypasses and relief roads. They range in value from the Blackwater valley route linking the M3 with the A31 at Farnham, costing a total of £57 million, to phase 1 of the Werrington to Glinton bypass near Peterborough at £1·3 million.

In London, six new major schemes have been approved for grant. They are Croydon, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Wimbledon, Newham and Waltham Forest.

I have accepted large new projects in the conurbations of the west midlands and Greater Manchester, and in Merseyside in support of local authorities' success in the city challenge competition. In addition to the named major schemes, there is £310 million for bridge works and structural maintenance of principal roads. Support for bridge works has increased by 24 per cent. compared with the current year.

Within the minor works programme., £50 million is being earmarked for local safety schemes. Money was first reserved for such schemes in 1991-92 to a total figure then of £31 million. So the £50 million allocated next year represents an increase of about 60 per cent. in three years. Since the average cost of a local safety scheme is about £15,000, this could mean the financing of up to a further 3,000 or so schemes. Assessment has shown that they give an excellent return for the money in terms of safety benefits, lives saved and injuries prevented.

There is also an increase in the support given by borrowing approvals. This is for work which is either outside the scope of the TSG—town centre traffic management improvements, for example—or which provides help on the early expenditure of large schemes not due to start construction for a few years.

Earlier this year, at their suggestion, we invited seven west midlands authorities to submit a joint bid for their major projects for local roads, rail and buses. I have concluded that that "package" approach has some benefits for planning local authority transport expenditure in urban areas, and that there should be greater flexibility, within the constraints of existing legislation, to switch resources between different forms of transport. We shall now consult the local authority associations in detail about that, and aim to introduce new arrangements for 1994-95.

Funding for measures to encourage use of the bus will total £15 million. Schemes will include "park and ride" schemes in Chester, Norwich, Bristol and York, experiments on innovative bus projects in Leeds and Bradford, and measures costing approximately £3 million in London. The bus priority measures represent a threefold increase on the present year and demonstrate our commitment to improving bus use in our urban areas. I intend to announce the allocation of resources for public transport schemes, other than buses, in January.

This is a very good TSG settlement in the circumstances. It clearly demonstrates the Government's priority of maintaining strong capital investment, and it will bring welcome new road and safety improvements to many areas around the country.

[Following are the schemes:

Authority	*Scheme*
East Sussex	*A22 Nightingale Farm to A27*
Surrey *Hampshire*	*A331 Blackwater Valley route (centre portion)*
Oxfordshire	*A44 Woodstock bypass*
West Sussex	*A24 Ashington bypass*
Avon	*Weston-super-Mare primary distributor road stages 4B 5C & 6*
Cornwall	*A388 Carkeel – Callington phases 1,2,3*
Devon	*B3199 Tiverton southern relief road*
Dorset	*A350 Sterte Road/Hungerhill improvements*
Somerset	*A39 Cannington southern bypass*
Coventry	*A444 North-South Road phase 2*
Wolverhampton	*A4124 Wednesfield bypass and industrial access*
Staffordshire	*A527 Tunstall western bypass phases 1 & 2*
Staffordshire	*A520 Stone bypass*
Manchester	*Manchester/Salford inner relief road phase 2 – Chester Road roundabout*
Liverpool	*Russell Street – Berry Street link*
Wirral	*A5027 City challenge – Birkenhead Freeport route*

Cheshire	*Chester park and ride phase 2*
Lancashire	*Squires Gate link road phase 2*
Newcastle	*A1058 Cradlewell bypass*
Cumbria	*A689 High and Low Crosby bypass*
Durham	*A6072 Bishop Auckland/Shildon link*
Northumberland	*A1061 South Newsham diversion*
Sheffield	*A61 Penistone Road/Middlewood Road junction improvement*
Bradford	*A650 Canal Road stage 1*
Leeds	*City centre loop road phase 2*
Humberside	*A16 Grimsby Peakes Parkway*
Leicestershire	*A563 Braunstone Way underpasses*
Lincolnshire	*A52 Grantham inner relief road*
Northamptonshire	*A45 Nene Valley Way – widening*
Nottinghamshire	*A6009 Mansfield inner ring road*
Buckinghamshire	*A421 Buckingham – Milton Keynes various improvements*
Cambridgeshire	*A15 Werrington to Glinton bypass – phase 1*
Essex	*A133 Little Clacton bypass and Gorse Lane link stage 2*
Hertfordshire	*A414 Cole Green bypass*
Norfolk, *Suffolk*	*A143 Scole/Stuston bypass*
Croydon	*A232 Chepstow Road – Fairfield Road – Barclay Road widening*
Hillingdon	*A437 Bournes Bridge Hayes*
Hounslow	*A315 Hounslow town centre – Urban relief road*
Merton	*A219 Wimbledon town centre – Alexandra Road junction improvement*
Newham	*A11 Stratford gyratory modifications*
Waltham Forest	*A503 Forest Road/Blackhorse road junction.]*

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): The House will be surprised to note that the annual TSG statement, which normally comes in a written reply, is now to be treated with the full authority of an oral statement by the Secretary of State. I suspect that that has much more to do with the possible replacement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer than with transport. The statement clearly proves that the Secretary of State has that ability to create an illusion which is so essential in a Tory Chancellor, and which we have come to expect from a Secretary of State who is a distinguished member of the Magic Circle.

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the extra £60 million in TSG first announced in the autumn statement represents not new money for local authorities but a transfer from the revenues in the highway standard spending assessment for structural maintenance, and that it will thus force local authorities to spend less on local and residential roads, which will lead to poorer standards?

Does the right hon. Gentleman not accept that that policy will undermine, through poorer maintenance in our local road programmes, the welcome statement about the extra £7 million to be made available for safety schemes? Is not a more integrated approach to urban transport problems needed? It is all very well to offer resources to improve road systems—as no doubt the scheme for the Sheffield supertram will do—but the right hon. Gentleman should notice that, in the centre of Sheffield, bus deregulation has increased the number of buses per hour from 180 to 320, producing considerable congestion, environmental damage, and an unsafe city centre, where the Department's traffic commissioner has had to intervene to regulate the transport system.

The House will welcome the limited increase in resources for yet another Labour idea—bus priority schemes. But the red routes are not a good example of bus priorities. I welcome, too, the Secretary of State's endorsement of the Birmingham integrated balanced transport package. I note that no resources are yet available, although the right hon. Gentleman says that he now intends to conduct discussions with the authorities—perhaps it would have been better had he made a statement about the money available for the Birmingham metro, as was promised before the election. The announcements seem to reflect a U-turn in Government thinking on transport, which I welcome, because they now recognise that we need to plan and integrate urban transport policy—an idea which the Government have rejected for the past 10 years.

Finally, does the right hon. Gentleman not accept that, although planting trees next to roads is important, like his statement it does not constitute a transport policy or deal with the real and growing transport crisis facing many of our cities? Would it not be better to increase local authorities' powers and resources to control their urban transport expenditure, because, as the Secretary of State has acknowledged by adopting the Birmingham package, they have shown the drive and imagination which the right hon. Gentleman and his Department clearly lack?

Mr. MacGregor: Once again, the hon. Gentleman is grudging, and on many of the issues, he has got it plain wrong. The reason for making the statement is that expenditure next year of more than £1 billion is clearly a matter of great interest to the House. I know from the many representations that I and my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic receive that there is acute

[Mr. MacGregor]

interest in many of the schemes among colleagues in the House and among their constituents—hence the statement.

The figure of £1,047 million is not an illusion—it is actual money—and when people see the benefits on the ground and the bypasses that have been built, they will not think that it is an illusion. It is new money——

Mr. Prescott: It is not.

Mr. MacGregor: Of course it is new money, which will produce new schemes next year.

Mr. Prescott: It is an illusion.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman has an extraordinary idea of what an illusion is when we are spending over £1 billion and when we have 41 major new schemes. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that, when my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic and I go around the country opening bypasses, nobody thinks that they are illusions. People are extremely grateful for them, even if the hon. Gentleman is grudging.

The hon. Gentleman has got it wrong on the question of the transfer of funds from the highway maintenance account. Although some funds are being transferred across to the figure, it is money from central Government, which was meant to be spent on bridges and on principal roads anyway. All we are doing is ensuring that the money is being spent on the bridges and on the principal roads. It is very necessary to do so. In addition, local authorities will be spending about £1·7 billion on highway maintenance next year, in addition to the figures that I have given today.

I believe that, as deregulation in Sheffield settles down —we have a traffic commissioner there to enable that to happen—the benefits will come through clearly for the population of Sheffield. The hon. Gentleman referred to the number of extra buses on the streets there. He will see that there is a bus priority measure for Sheffield in the proposals.

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely wrong on red routes, which are an excellent example of improved transport measures in urban areas. The scheme has been successful so far in improving traffic flow and in a number of other ways, which is why we are bringing it in formally across London.

The hon. Gentleman has again got it wrong on the package for the west midlands. There are two schemes, totalling some £38 million for the west midlands authorities in Coventry and in Wolverhampton, which are the two top priority schemes. Those schemes are in the figures.

The whole purpose of the package is not to take the hon. Gentleman's approach. He believes that the right way in which to tackle transport matters is for them to be planned from the centre in the socialist way. The schemes are designed to enable the seven authorities to look at their area as a whole and to come up with their idea of priorities, instead of dealing with them one by one. That is the sensible way forward, and that is why we shall develop it further next year.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): In contradistinction to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), may I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend has decided to make an oral statement in the House, because it gives us the opportunity to ask him questions? The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East thinks that an "illusion" is a Russian aeroplane.

May I ask my right hon. Friend a specific question about his phrase "different forms of transport"? Is he aware that there is growing concern about the effects of road transport on the creation of pollution? Would it be possible at some stage to require either his Department or local authorities to provide at least a couple of sentences on the likely effects on air pollution of any new schemes that are produced?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who talks about an important aspect of the schemes. Bypasses in themselves will substantially reduce air pollution in the towns and villages that they go round. Improved traffic flow also substantially improves pollution.

My hon. Friend will know that we are introducing compulsory catalytic converters in a fortnight's time. That will also have a major effect. Overall, I believe that it is essential to go on with a substantial road building programme as living standards improve. More and more people own more cars and wish to move around the country in them, and we have to cope with that. Nevertheless, the kind of schemes we are talking about today, and the other measures that we are taking, will undoubtedly help to deal with the roads pollution aspect.

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): I welcome the 41 new starts that will be made as a result of today's announcement, and the emphasis on safety in the Minister's statement. Is it not a fact that, although the funds for structural maintenance are real, by the time allowance has been made for them, there will be little new money over what was announced a year ago? Does the Minister agree that small projects which are ready to go represent a main way of trying to bring the country out of recession, because of their effect on the construction industry?

While I also welcome the new packaging of funding for urban transport, the Minister's comment that his statement amply demonstrates the priorities that the Government are giving to capital programmes is something of an irony, for while they are going ahead, too many public transport projects have had to be shelved as a result of the autumn statement.

Mr. MacGregor: They have not had to be shelved, because we are spending the same amount, or rather more, on public transport schemes next year than we are spending this year, and I shall be making a further statement about that. Equally, there is substantial capital investment in British Rail and in London Underground.

The hon. Gentleman is right in what he said about the effects on the construction industry. Not only the major new schemes, and many of the minor ones that I have announced today, but also the schemes that will be in the national roads programme, which is now at record levels, will be of considerable assistance to the construction industry.

I also welcome what the hon. Gentleman said about road safety schemes. I am impressed by the impact that such schemes can have on road safety, and in particular on helping people in urban areas. Their considerable expansion will be widely welcomed all over the country.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will the Secretary of State confirm that the financial arrangements for the county of Kent will enable proper regard to be had for the needs of a new and improved roads infrastructure in relation to the channel tunnel? On the other hand, will it enable many of the urgent, non-tunnel-related projects to go ahead in the county of Kent?

Mr. MacGregor: There continues to be substantial expenditure in the county of Kent. Indeed, about £75 million overall will be spent next year. In particular, in relation to the Medway tunnel, we have included in the special supplementary credit approval nearly £8 million for the Wainscott northern bypass, the Gillingham northern link and the Sittingbourne industrial route stage 4.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): I am disappointed that the Witton Gilbert bypass scheme in my constituency has not been included. That project has been a priority for about five years. If funding is not forthcoming in the near future, that scheme could fall because of the complications of compulsory purchase orders and so on. I have written to the right hon. Gentleman about the matter and am wondering whether it is still possible for that project to be included in the scheme. I urge him to re-examine the matter.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think it would be possible to include it among the major new schemes for the coming year, because we have decided those. A large number of bypass and other schemes that all counties desire are included in the TSG, but we must set priorities. That is why, as far as possible, we try to abide by the individual highway authorities' priorities. But I shall look at the scheme to which the hon. Gentleman refers, although I must advise him that we have already decided on the projects for major new schemes next year.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for the extra money that he has announced for Buckinghamshire, and I am sure that my gratitude is shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington), who represents a congested town. My constituents in Tingewick will no doubt hope that the money will hasten the construction of their bypass, because at present in that village, when walking along the pavement, one is likely to be flicked by a lorry mirror. My constituents in Wing will greet the announcement with mixed feelings, because their bypass has resulted in a three-lane major route——

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Member that we are not dealing with a 10-minute rule Bill. He must ask a question.

Mr. Walden: I was explaining the background. I am anxious to encourage my right hon. Friend to examine the Wing bypass, which is in danger of wrecking a village.

Mr. MacGregor: There are, as I said earlier, many bypasses that constituents of most hon. Members would wish to see carried forward, which is why we have such a substantial road-building programme. This year, we can accept the Buckingham-Milton Keynes A421 scheme, which includes various improvements, and there is also, under the special SCA, a scheme for the Aylesbury inner relief road phase 2. There are opportunities sometimes for very much smaller schemes for local authorities to undertake under another part of the package that I am announcing today.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does the Minister understand that many people outside the House will be very disappointed that less than 1·5 per cent. of the sum that he has announced is to be spent on bus priority measures? Does he not understand that there has to be a limit on the use of private motor cars in our cities; that there is a limit to the amount of pollution that we can continue to tolerate from it? We need from his Department a strategy for transferring traffic on to rail and environmentally friendly forms of transport, rather than this vast expenditure on roads, the money being transferred instead as far as possible to rail and public transport?

Mr. MacGregor: We announced in the autumn statement very substantial sums indeed for public expenditure, way ahead of what I am announcing today, for British Rail and London Underground, but that came out at a different time. I am concentrating today on local authority supplementary transport grant schemes. The figure for bus priority measures is a threefold increase on the figure that has been spent so far.

Many other things are being done to assist London public transport, so the hon. Gentleman cannot say that this is 1·5 per cent. of the total figure. I believe that what he says will be rejected by a very large number of people throughout the country because of the very big improvements that they will receive as a result of the expenditure that I am announcing today. Incidentally, that includes six major schemes in London.

I noted the hon. Gentleman's comment about congestion in London, and I take that very seriously. That is why we are undertaking the most extensive research that has ever been undertaken on road pricing, to see whether that can make a contribution in London. I intend that all the research, as its various stages are completed, should be published, to encourage public debate, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take part in that.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the announcement today, including the Tiverton inner relief road in my constituency, will be very much appreciated by my constituents, not least because it will enable the town of Tiverton to become more pedestrianised, thus making it much safer for people when they are shopping? It will be warmly welcomed by the Tiverton chamber of commerce.

Mr. MacGregor: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend, and I am delighted that we have been able to include that scheme this year, at a cost of £9 million. I am sure that she is quite right about the benefits that it will bring to Tiverton.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Is the massive 24 per cent. increase in bridge works, from £111 to £137 million, simply because of old bridges, because of the effect of juggernauts, following the Government's policy of encouraging transfer of freight from rail to road, or is it in anticipation of the draft European Community directive to increase the maximum vehicle weight to 44 tonnes in this country when the derogation comes to an end? If it is

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

not for the latter reason, will the Secretary of State assure the House that the Government will resist any attempt to increase goods vehicle weights?

Mr. MacGregor: It is for all those reasons, with one exception, which I will come to. It is a fact that many old bridges in this country need substantial structural maintenance and repair. Also, in this country, as in all countries, heavy goods vehicles are getting larger. That brings considerable benefits to consumers when they visit supermarkets, and so on; there are real cost benefits to be derived from that, and we have to take it into account.

The hon. Gentleman is correct to say that, in 1999, we have to meet the requirements of the EC directive to which we have signed up. We need to prepare for that, and it means a pretty substantial programme of work on bridges. Where I disagree with the hon. Gentleman is that it is no part of the Government's policy to encourage more transfer of freight from rail to road. We are trying to achieve the reverse.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that today's statement, taken with the previous statement on expenditure on underground and other travel services in London, means that the capital city has an exceptionally good deal out of the Government? Will he also comment upon the state of London's bridges, some of which are very difficult to cross? Is any part of today's statement likely to lead to an improvement in the bridges, particularly in central London?

Mr. MacGregor: I would not want to comment on any particular bridge, but I agree with what my hon. Friend said and welcome his support for the considerable increase over the previous three-year period, and certainly previous decades, which is now taking place in capital investment in transport in London. As for bridges, it will be for local authorities to decide what precise use they make of the additional money, but I am sure that some of it will benefit London.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Although I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement that the Newsham bypass in my constituency will go ahead, what news has he for the A1 in Northumberland, which, as he is aware, is the scene of carnage and death? Has he any money for that road, will it be improved or what is going to happen to it?

Mr. MacGregor: That road is not part of today's announcement——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Oh, dear.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) once again demonstrates his ignorance by saying, "Oh dear." It is part of the national road network and the £2 billion to be spent on that, not part of today's local authority announcement. We are committed to dualling the A1, and we are proceeding with parts of it now.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that today's announcement that the Squires Gate link road phase 2 in my constituency is to go ahead will be welcomed by residents and businesses in my constituency, especially because it will enable further and better access to the business park which is already being developed on otherwise surplus land at Blackpool airport and to which it will be a very important feeder?

Does he also recognise the work done over many years by my predecessor, Sir Peter Blaker, and county councillors representing this party to get the road back at the top of the priority list where it was ten years ago, when this party was last in control of Lancashire county council, only to be put back to the bottom of the pile by the Opposition, who showed a lack of concern for my constituency's interests?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, I agree with everything that my hon. Friend said, and I pay tribute to his work and that of his predecessor in drawing attention to the priority of this particular scheme. He has been successful in making it a priority for Lancashire, and I am pleased that we have been able to agree to it at a cost of nearly £9 million. All the benefits that he mentioned will certainly be brought about as a result of the scheme.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I thank the Secretary of State for providing the money for the bypass at High and Low Crosby near my constituency, but does he agree it will put more traffic off the A69 into the north of the city? Does not that strengthen the case for the north-west bypass of Carlisle as opposed to the southern bypass? I have not found anyone who agrees that we need a southern bypass, but we shall need a north-west bypass more than ever if the bypass at Crosby goes ahead.

Mr. MacGregor: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's welcome for the bypass, which I know has been much demanded. Some of the other schemes he mentioned would be eligible for the national road programme rather than for this programme. I note what he said, but the important point is that we are going ahead with the bypass now.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): Does my right hon. Friend recall that, when bus privatisation was first mooted, the Opposition told us that there would be hardly a single bus left on the road? Now, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) complains that there are too many. Is not that ridiculous criticism the final endorsement from the Opposition that our transport policies are on the right track?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is entirely right, and what he says applies not only to buses. I made a speech about aviation at lunch time today, drawing attention to the tremendous improvements in aviation, the huge increase in traffic and the much better services for air passengers brought about by the privatisation of British Airways and the British Airports Authority. My hon. Friend is correct to say that it is the right way to get better services for passengers.

Mr. Skinner: Will not the Secretary of State admit that he has been advised by his public relations people, who said, "Look here, Minister, you have got to improve your profile if you are going to become Chancellor of the Exchequer. Make a statement in the House of Commons. Go and speak about aviation." That is what the crack is all about. Will the Secretary of State now do something for people who ride bikes? Would it not be a great opportunity in the middle of this slump to have cycle routes all round Britain? That would be labour-intensive, and it would

increase the Secretary of State's public profile. God knows what will happen when he is Chancellor of the Exchequer, though.

Mr. MacGregor: Once again, the hon. Gentleman has got it completely wrong. I have made the statement because there is a large number of projects which have been much requested by hon. Members and which I am sure they will be delighted to see happening. I am sure that the hon. Member for Bolsover would also agree with that.

On cycles, I hope that the hon. Gentleman has noticed my emphasis on local road safety schemes for which there has been a considerable increase in expenditure—up by about 60 per cent. since we began the emphasis on such schemes three years ago. That money will undoubtedly help cyclists. It is also possible to encourage cycle schemes in the minor works programme.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be considerable relief locally about the inclusion of the first three phases of the A388 Saltash-Callington road improvement? However, having raised expectations, will my right hon. Friend reassure me that on this occasion there will be no subsequent slippage as has unfortunately been the case in the past with similar schemes in my constituency?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's welcome for that scheme of nearly £8 million, which will also bring great benefits, as my hon. Friend said. I cannot give a guarantee about slippage; we will just have to see how the construction progresses. However, I very much hope that there will not be any slippage. Over recent years, we have seen not slippage but an acceleration of the completion of many such road projects, many of which are now being completed ahead of the original completion date.

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): Does the Secretary of State accept that the package approach will be viewed with interest in coalfield areas like north Nottinghamshire? Does he also accept that the package on offer is very limited for the Nottinghamshire coalfield? Perhaps he will give an undertaking to talk to other Ministers and colleagues about a package of investment to bring new jobs, new investment and a new future to declining coalfield areas.

Mr. MacGregor: The package approach will be of great interest to many urban areas, and we will certainly be consulting the local authority associations and representatives in the west midlands—with whom I discussed the matter when I was in the west midlands recently—before we take any final decisions.

With regard to the coalfields, the hon. Member will be aware that the coal review is still in progress, and I clearly do not know what its outcome will be. However, the Mansfield inner relief road scheme is in the current set of projects. Of course other areas would have liked projects. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will notice that we have focused on that scheme because we are well aware of the need for it in the area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): There will be a great welcome from highway authorities and from the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety for the welcome increase in funds for local casualty reduction schemes. Will my right hon. Friend find some way of providing further publicity during the year for the effects of those schemes and how they can help to protect the vulnerable on foot or motorised or pedal-driven bikes and how they can integrate with priority schemes for buses? By having through roads, through traffic, other people and the majority of journeys would be better protected.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I am aware of the interest that he has shown in those schemes and the pressure that he and the council have applied on us. I hope that the council and my hon. Friend will believe that the statement is a very good response to their requests.

I am very impressed with the impact of those road safety schemes. I will certainly consider how we can provide a good deal more publicity of the effect of those schemes, because we are now talking about a substantial sum of money and a large number of schemes. The point that my hon. Friend raised about integration is a matter for the local highway authorities to work out.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): I welcome the inclusion of the Manchester-Salford inner relief road phase 2. However, before the Secretary of State goes off to become Chancellor of the Exchequer, will he consider further TSG-supported schemes within the Manchester-Salford conurbation, which would prevent the construction of the Greater Manchester western and northern relief road, which no one in the locality wants and which many of us feel is not needed? The problems of gridlock that we are experiencing now on the Worsley-Braided interchange have more to do with commuter traffic than traffic moving from Yorkshire, to Birmingham and to the south. If there were more concentration on TSG-supported schemes, I believe that £300 million could be saved on that route.

Mr. MacGregor: Clearly, one must examine the impact of schemes of the sort that the hon. Gentleman is talking about in relation to the national road network, not just in terms of the locality—although there is often a big improvement for the locality in taking traffic out of their environment. We must also examine the matter from the point of view of improving traffic flows for business as well as passengers. That is an important contribution to easing congestion costs, and hence other costs for businesses.

I do not think that I can agree with the hon. Gentleman about the switch. However, I am glad that he has acknowledged the importance of the scheme which we have accepted at a cost of £14 million. Of course, there are similar schemes in the north-west.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his announcement today. I hope that I do not sound too churlish when I say that it will receive a mixed reaction in my constituency. Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be a warm welcome for the Scole-Stuston bypass, which he and I know well and which will do an enormous amount of good?

Sadly, there will be bitter disappointment in the villages of Rickinghall and Botesdale, which badly want a bypass. That bypass has been on the stocks for a long time, and the villagers thought that they would get it this year. Can I urge my right hon. Friend to give that bypass the most careful consideration for subsequent years?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's co-operation in helping to bring about the Scole-Stuston bypass, which affects his constituency as well as mine. It is an important bypass, which has been long awaited.

As far as the Rickinghall and Botesdale bypass is concerned, I know the problem well because I travel through Rickinghall and Botesdale on my way home to my constituency every weekend. The bypass is a high-cost scheme, and was the fourth priority for the county; hence it was not possible to accommodate the scheme this year. When my hon. Friend looks at the details of the special supplementary credit approval part of the package, he will perhaps note that phase 1 of the Haverhill bypass will receive £1·3 million.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Although I am a little disappointed that the Secretary of State could not stretch the £50 million for the local safety schemes to, say, £55 million, I welcome the considerable increase from the previous figure of £31 million. In doing so, I ask the Minister whether he could have a word with the Secretary of State for Wales to see whether a local road safety scheme can be put in place from hypothecated money. Transport supplementary grant schemes in Wales must be a minimum of £5 million before they qualify.

Mr. MacGregor: That is true for major work schemes in England as well. Road safety schemes come from our minor works allocation.

Mr. Wardell: Not in Wales.

Mr. MacGregor: In England they certainly do. I notice that the hon. Gentleman would have liked more, and I am sure that that would be the case for many other hon. Members. However, we must bear in mind the fact that the taxpayers are funding those works. I hope that the hon. Member will agree that the fact that we have moved from £31 million to £43 million, and now to £50 million, shows that we are giving the matter considerable priority. The schemes are often small in terms of costs but big in impact.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I tell my right hon. Friend that, with good news of this sort, he runs the risk of being the longest-serving Secretary of State for Transport since 1979, although that is not too difficult to do.

I thank my right hon. Friend for coming to Hayes in September and opening the Hayes bypass. Contrary to the views of Opposition Members, the bypass has led to a great reduction in congestion in Hayes. Because the Minister has included the Bournes bridge in the programme, it will be a massive improvement to have the bridge at least straightened, if not improved and widened. My constituents and businesses in my area, especially Thorn EMI, will be grateful for that.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his opening remark. I certainly intend and hope to be the longest-serving Secretary of State for Transport since 1979. My hon. Friend is right about the Hayes scheme, which I opened in September. I am very much aware of the benefits to his constituents, as well as to the many people who can take advantage of the bypass when travelling around London. I am glad, and I am sure that my hon. Friend is delighted, that the A437 Bournes bridge/Hayes scheme has been accepted and is one of the schemes announced today.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): Is the Secretary of State aware of the acute problem of congestion in central Greenwich, a problem which the Minister for Transport in London saw at first hand during a visit earlier this year? Can the Secretary of State give a positive response to the applications of the London borough of Greenwich for transport supplementary grant to explore the feasibility of a bypass to get round the problem and, in the short term, measures to effect a ban on heavy goods vehicles in the area?

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. Gentleman knows, my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London is very much aware of that issue. The Woolwich road improvement scheme would have started too late to be included in this year's announcement. I do not know what will be possible for next year, but the scheme has been given some annual capital guideline to help with the design costs, of some £400,000. I hope that he will find that helpful. My hon. Friend the Minister is well aware of the importance of the town centre bypass feasibility scheme. He will continue his discussions with Greenwich borough council.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): I welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement, which will improve access to Wimbledon town centre and at the same time improve safety at a notoriously dangerous junction. Will he welcome the fact that this expenditure will complement the efforts of local residents, who have upgraded the area by a tree-planting exercise entirely from their own efforts, in conjunction with voluntary groups and with the co-operation of British Rail but without a single penny of help from the Labour-controlled Merton council?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend. I too pay tribute to the work that the local residents in Wimbledon are doing. I am sure that it will be a good scheme, and I am glad that my hon. Friend has welcomed it.

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): Does the Secretary of State accept that Sunderland in particular and the north-eastern region in general probably have the worst road system to link it with other parts of the country that it is possible to imagine? Although the improvements on the A66 are welcome, two inferior roads go south—a two-lane motorway and the A19 trunk road—a dangerous road goes to the west of Carlisle and a dangerous road goes north to the A1. Much more is needed to bring the region into line with what one would expect for other parts of the country with similar populations. What is going to be done to bring the region up to that level?

Mr. MacGregor: I was in and near Sunderland twice recently. I am aware of all the improvements that are currently taking place. Some parts of the country would look with envy on some of the road improvements that are taking place there. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that one of the keys is to improve routes to other parts of the country. Business men in the north-east tell me that one of their biggest obstacles in transporting their goods to their customers is the M25, which they must use to transport goods to major markets elsewhere. That is why there is heavy emphasis in the national roads programme on the motorway schemes.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the A66, which I know well. It has been substantially improved recently, and is very much a changed road. Those improvements

will continue. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the massive investment that will take place to bring the A1 up to motorway standard from London to well up into the north.

Mr. Iain Sproat (Harwich): I warmly welcome what my right hon. Friend has said this afternoon and thank him in particular for including the Little Clacton bypass. He will be aware that, with over 14 per cent. unemployment, Clacton has the highest unemployment in the south-east. Does he agree that the improved access via the Little Clacton bypass will be of great benefit and will generate more jobs and investment in the future? Will he also bear in mind for next year the dualling of the A120 to Harwich?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot make promises about future schemes, but I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments about the Little Clacton bypass. That is a scheme costing some £6·7 million. I am sure that it will bring the benefits to which my hon. Friend referred. He will also be aware that the TSG for Essex as a whole this year will be some £16·6 million, compared with £13·7 million last year.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In a response to his hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) the Secretary of State asserted that compulsory catalytic converters would have a great effect. We wish that that were so, but remain unconvinced. Would he be prepared to give us the evidence that he has received from his Department or to put it in the Library? Is not the truth of the matter that, with the 140 per cent. increase in cars during the past 25 years—my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) assures me that those are departmental figures—the only way to combat pollution is to transfer much more traffic to rail? Is he satisfied that some catalytic converters are not merely the racket that we are told they may be?

Mr. MacGregor: The scientific advice that I have, which I am happy to put in the Library, shows that, while convertors do not deal with CO_2, they deal with about 80 per cent. of the other pollutant effects of emissions, which is an important contribution.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I readily acknowledge that my right hon. Friend has done outstandingly well to obtain major new investment for roads and rail. However, from the list of major new schemes it is noticeable that not a single project has been approved for the county of Kent next year. He will understand that there will be tremendous disappointment in many areas in my constituency and other parts of the county because many of them are desperately in need of bypass relief. Under the present TSG rules, there is virtually no prospect of a bypass being constructed for many environmental sensitive areas if a project is too expensive for the council but is not on a primary route.

My right hon. Friend will know that I sent him a list of 36 villages in the county which have no prospect of relief. Will he comment on that, with a view to re-examining the criteria for much-needed environmental schemes, especially for the relief of many villages in Kent and other shire counties? In Kent, the figures are totally distorted by channel tunnel-related expenditure.

Mr. MacGregor: I take note of my hon. Friend's remarks but, among the projects that I am announcing under the special supplementary credit approval list is a scheme costing nearly £8 million—the Wainscott northern bypass, the Gillingham northern link and stage 4 of the Sittingbourne industrial route. I have to take into account the fact that Kent gets the highest TSG of any county—£75 million this year. That is a high TSG figure and will obviously have some effect, although I acknowledge that the channel tunnel link is a factor.

I also take note of my hon. Friend's remark about large schemes. There is a problem, and we have to get the balance right. If one simply concentrates on a comparatively small number of large schemes, which carry on from one year to another, it will pre-empt the ability to deal with smaller bypass schemes, which are often needed in many other countries for environmental reasons. I am trying to strike a balance between large schemes that flow over a number of years and new schemes, which could take place in a single year and benefit many towns and villages.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the decision to go ahead with the A16 Peakes parkway to Grimsby will be warmly received in my constituency? Does he acknowledge that the scheme has been on the stocks for far too long and that we are delighted that he has been able to agree the application from Humberside county council? Does that not put final seal on the excellent road network that we now have in my constituency, which started with the A180 dual carriageway about 10 years ago and the A15 Ermine street link, and will it not be the completion of an excellent road package?

Mr. MacGregor: I note my hon. Friend's considerable efforts to bring about the improvements to which he has referred, including the Grimsby Peakes parkway. He will know that in TSG terms that is a major scheme costing £13·5 million. Like him, I am glad that our efforts—and his—have been able to bring it about.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): May I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement that there will be additional funding to deal with traffic problems in Norwich? Having pressed with the local councils, for "park and ride" and similar schemes, can I ask whether my right hon. Friend can give a little more detail of that help, which is so welcome in Norwich and the surrounding area?

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend will know, I understand the problems to which he refers, as I am frequently in Norwich. The Norwich "park and ride" scheme around the airport will come under the special supplementary credit approvals and will cost a total of £3 million. My hon. Friend will note that the scheme is in his part of Norwich, not mine, and I hope that he is pleased that we were able to bring it about.

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): Is my right hon. Friend aware how warmly the people of Hounslow will welcome the new proposals on the Hounslow centre urban relief road? It is a much-needed scheme in an area that is highly congested. Will my right hon. Friend get on with it and start the scheme as soon as possible?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, indeed.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his overall statement, and I particularly thank him for making possible the new "park and ride" scheme in Chester. That is an invaluable

[Mr. Gyles Brandreth]

initiative for historic cities such as ours, and will be welcomed by everyone in Chester—including, I suspect, the mother of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who is a treasured constituent of mine.

Mr. MacGregor: I am glad that there is some agreement across the House on that issue. As my hon. Friend knows, I visit Chester fairly frequently, and I am sure that the scheme will being great benefits.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many of my constituents in Eastbourne and Polegate will be delighted that the A22 Nightingale farm scheme is on the list? Without wishing to seem churlish, I hope that my right hon. Friend will look kindly on other transport infrastructure projects in east Sussex.

Mr. MacGregor: I note what my hon. Friend says, and I hope that he will agree that the scheme—at a cost of £4 million—will bring big benefits in the coming year.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on extracting additional money from the Treasury. He knows that I have lobbied him and his colleagues before breakfast in Whitehall and before tea in Loddon in his constituency for a bypass around Stone, which is much needed due to the traffic congestion and the desire for pedestrianisation. Are we or are we not to have a bypass around Stone?

Mr. MacGregor: I remember my hon. Friend's lobbying, and I am pleased to tell him that the bypass around Stone is included in the programme. I am well aware of the special reasons why it is desirable. Its inclusion in the list means that Staffordshire has two major schemes in the programme for this year.

BILL PRESENTED

Declaration of War (Requirement for Parliamentary Approval)

Mr. Harry Cohen, supported by Ms. Diane Abbott, Mr. Graham Allan, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Jim Callaghan, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Ken Eastham, Mr. Neil Gerrard, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Robert Parry and Mr. Dennis Skinner, presented a Bill to provide that war may not be declared, nor troops committed or kept abroad, by Her Majesty's Government without the approval, by a two thirds majority, of the House of Commons: And the same was read the First time, and ordered to be read a Second time upon 22 January 1993; and to be printed. [Bill 105.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Parliamentary Constituencies (Wales)

That the draft Parliamentary Constituencies (Wales) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Question agreed to.

Welfare of Animals

4.23 pm

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prohibit the keeping of fur-bearing animals under intensive conditions; to make new provision with regard to the treatment of animals; and for connected purposes.

I have chosen to introduce the Bill in an attempt to eliminate the most heinous of farming practices and to modernise the law governing the treatment of animals. My Bill has two aims: first, to end fur farming in this country immediately; secondly, to make the welfare of animals the yardstick by which farming practices should be judged in future.

Hon. Members will remember that, a fortnight ago, the House debated the Mink Keeping Order. Unfortunately, hon. Members were unable to take into account the welfare of mink and Arctic fox in reaching a decision on the future of fur farms. I believe that there is widespread support in the country and on both sides of the House for an end to animal abuse on fur farms.

A recent survey by Lynx showed that 78 per cent. of the population wanted a ban on fur farming. British people believe that fur coats are out of fashion, and they do so for all the right reasons. The fur of animals belongs on their backs, not on ours.

This morning, accompanied by some of my hon. Friends, I had the pleasure of presenting a petition to 10 Downing street, calling on Her Majesty's Government to end the practice of fur farming, with immediate effect. The petition was signed by 500,000 people and was organised by Lynx, Compassion in World Farming, the World Society for the Protection of Animals and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Despite the strength of public opinion on this issue, however, there are still 24 mink factory farms and two Arctic fox farms in the United Kingdom. That is 26 too many.

The conditions in which mink and Arctic fox are kept could not be more unsuitable to the nature of the animals. Mink are semi-aquatic. They spend much of their time in the wild either in the water or patrolling their territory, which can be up to 22 acres wide. They are solitary, and they have a tendency to avoid others of their kind.

Yet on the fur farms, mink are forced to live on top of one another in cage sizes recommended by the Fur Breeders Association of the United Kingdom—just 24 in long by 15 in high by 12 in wide. The cages are so small that the mink cannot rear up on their hind legs, something they do continually in the wild. They are denied access to water, except through a drip, and are deprived of the opportunity to perform even the most basic of functions written deep into their genetic code.

This leads to chronic stress, resulting in what animal behaviourists describe as stereotyped behaviour patterns. Mink and foxes kept in these conditions mutilate themselves, and cases of infanticide and cannibalism are widely reported. From birth to death, mink and Arctic foxes are incarcerated in conditions that drive them mad. Born in May, taken from their mothers and caged in groups, they are killed in November at the age of six or seven months when their first winter coats emerge.

The fur trade likes to describe these places as farms, but that is the last thing they are. They are factories—wildlife hellholes where animals are mass produced and treated as pieces of machinery for making skins for coats that

nobody needs. Each year, 250,000 mink are killed in these factories, usually by gassing in large killing boxes linked to the exhaust of a tractor or car.

It takes 65 mink and 24 foxes to make just one full-length fur coat. Ironically, since fur sales in this country are in rapid decline, most of the pelts are shipped to Scandinavia, where they are auctioned. This is one export trade of which I hope all hon. Members will agree this country should be ashamed.

The conditions in which mink and Arctic fox are kept in Britain's fur factory farms have been universally condemned by animal welfarists, by vets, by animal behaviourists and by zoologists. They have all concluded that it is impossible to rear and kill these animals for fur without causing undue suffering. Indeed, the Government's Farm Animal Welfare Council will not issue a welfare code for fur farming in case that gives the factories a stamp of approval.

Fur farming also contravenes article 3 of the European convention on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes, which states:

"animals shall be housed and provided with food, water and care which ... is appropriate to their physiological and ethnological needs".

This requirement is echoed by the Farm Animal Welfare Council in its list of freedoms which encompass the fulfillment of an animals basic needs: freedom from discomfort, by providing a suitable environment; freedom to express normal behaviour, by providing sufficient space and proper facilities; and freedom from fear and distress, by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

Unfortunately, the current law—by ignoring those freedoms—allows the Government to license people to keep a range of animals in appalling conditions. There is widespread public concern about battery cage hen production, the de-beaking of poultry, and multi-tier pig cages. There is also public abhorrence of the international trade in primates. Those naturally wild animals are kept in cages no larger than a filing cabinet.

Right hon. and hon. Members may know of a recent case at Shamrock (GB) Ltd. where primates were kept with no bedding and exercise, and their treatment breached Home Office guidelines—yet that place remains open for business, licensed by the Government, licensed to torture, and licensed to kill.

All those practices should be ended. None of us needs a coat made of mink or fox, and we do not need to keep hens in battery cages to fulfil our lives. In fact, most people in this country and right hon. and hon. Members would have the quality of their lives dramatically improved by the ending of fur farming and the intensive rearing of animals in overcrowded and inappropriate factory farms.

Thankfully, public opinion is ahead of the law when it comes to concerns about animal welfare. Wearing a fur coat is no longer seen as a status symbol: it is regarded instead as a badge of cruelty and shame. Just as the trade in elephant ivory and in baby seal skins was ended by public outrage, it is time that the law caught up with public opinion and banned the trade in fur.

My Bill will do precisely that. It will also update the Protection of Animals Act 1911 to incorporate the FAWC freedoms, so that the conditions in which animals are kept will meet their behavioural requirements. The Bill will ensure that farming takes place without inflicting unnecessary cruelty, will give a new meaning to animal welfare, and will make society that much richer as a result. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Alan Milburn, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Mrs. Jane Kennedy, Mr. John Hutton, Mr. Alan Meale, Ms. Tessa Jowell, Mr. Elliot Morley, Mr. Don Dixon, Mrs. Barbara Roche, Mr. Brian Wilson, and Mr. Tony Banks.

Welfare of Animals

Mr. Alan Milburn accordingly presented a Bill to prohibit the keeping of fur-bearing animals under intensive conditions; to make new provision with regard to the treatment of animals; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 January and to be printed. [Bill 2.]

Education Bill (Allocation of Time)

4.32 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Education Bill.

Committee

1.—(1) The Standing Committee to which the Bill has been allocated shall report the Bill to the House on or before 9th February.

(2) Proceedings at a sitting of the Standing Committee on that day may continue until Ten o'clock whether or not the House is adjourned before that time, and if the House is adjourned before those proceedings have been brought to a conclusion, the Standing Committee shall report the Bill to the House on 10th February.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on consideration shall be completed in two allotted days and shall be brought to a conclusion at Nine o'clock on the second allotted day.

(2) The proceedings on Third Reading shall be completed on the second allotted day and shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock.

(3) For the purposes of Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on consideration such part of each of those allotted days as the Resolutions of the Business Committee may determine.

(4) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolutions as to the proceedings on consideration not later than the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(5) The Resolutions in any Report made under Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (4), and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(6) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on consideration are taken.

Proceedings in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be made in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatory statement from the Member who makes, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

(3) The Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are taken in the Standing Committee.

(4) On the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill in the Standing Committee the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Order of proceedings

4. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings in the Standing Committee or on consideration of the Bill are taken, except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Dilatory Motions

5. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time

6.—(1) On the first allotted day, paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings for two hours after Ten o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to that period of two hours.

(3) If the first allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) stands over from an earlier day a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion shall be added to that period of two hours.

Private business

7. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

8.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings on the Bill which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or the Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(c) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment is moved or Motion is made by a Member of the Government; and

(d) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or the Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(a) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(b) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which under this Order are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

9.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to those proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before the time appointed for bringing proceedings to a conclusion under this Order, no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

10. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(a) prevent any proceedings to which the order applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order; or

(b) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Recommittal

11.—(1) Reference in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, recommittal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and the Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

12. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day, provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day, or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Education Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

I do not intend to detain the House long, but clearly the House will expect me both to explain the background to this timetable motion, and to say something about the arrangements for which the motion provides. The House is, of course, familiar with the purpose and content of the Bill itself, and it would in any case not be appropriate for me to describe it at length as if this were a Second Reading debate.

I will therefore merely remind the House that the Bill provides in part I for the setting up of new funding authorities for schools in England and Wales; sets out in part II arrangements for grant-maintained schools; reforms in part III the existing provisions affecting children with special educational needs—as a matter of great importance to many parents; lays down in part IV provisions designed to help ensure pupils attend school; provides in part V for education associations to be set up to run schools that fail to provide an acceptable standard of education; and provides in part VI for the establishment of the school curriculum and assessment authority. Those purposes clearly command considerable support in the country; indeed, they follow commitments given in the election campaign earlier this year, and in the White Paper "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools", published in July, which people rightly expect to see implemented. The aim of the motion is to facilitate that, in what I believe to be an entirely sensible and responsible way.

To explain why we have thought it right to table the motion, I need do little more than set some simple facts before the House. So far, after 65½ hours of consideration —including this morning—the Committee has dealt with only 14 clauses, and at the end of its sitting this morning was still debating clause 15. That leaves 230 clauses still to be considered in Committee. As my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) noted when I announced the timetable motion in my business statement last Thursday, at this rate of progress the Committee stage could occupy around 1,500 hours.

The same point can be put still more graphically. I am told that, if we assume that progress in the other place —given that, at this rate, it ever reached the other place —proceeded at the same pace as the Committee stage in this place until last Thursday, the Bill would not reach the statute book until the year 2001. No doubt some of my hon. Friends who have had the opportunity—I hesitate to call it a privilege—to witness these deliberations at first hand will wish to add their own observations if they catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I think that I have said enough to show why I have absolutely no doubt that, whatever may be said in the debate this afternoon, any Government—and certainly the previous Labour Government, with their record of five guillotines in a single day—would now be inviting the House to consider the position in a similar way. There was, perhaps, one alternative—to let the process that I have described drag on for several more weeks, come forward with some even more striking figures on the protraction of proceedings, and then provide for a very short timetable to bring it to a conclusion. I do not believe that that would have been right, not least because it would inevitably have meant—as with a number of such timetables in the past—that there might have been little or no discussion of some parts of the Bill.

Opposition Members will no doubt argue that this is a large, important and complex Bill. There is no dispute about that: indeed, we signalled our recognition of it, and of our wish to see the Bill properly discussed, by providing—very unusually—for a two-day debate on Second Reading.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): Will the Leader of the House set the record straight, and correct the impression given by the Under-Secretary of State in Committee? Will he acknowledge that the request for a two-day debate came from the Opposition? When I asked the Secretary of State to support that suggestion, he said:

"I do not think that it would be appropriate for me to seek to influence that".

Mr. Newton: I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—who was very supportive of the idea of a two-day debate—did no more than acknowledge the accepted fact that such decisions are matters for discussion in the usual channels. Indeed, it was following discussion in the usual channels that the Government responded by providing the two-day debate that had been requested.

It is for precisely the same reason—our acknowledgement of the Bill's importance, against the background of developments in the Standing Committee—that we decided to take a motion that does not impose some immediate, drastic curtailment, but rather provides a sensible framework for the considerable further discussion that can legitimately be sought. The motion provides for a further full month in the new year for the Committee stage alone, with Committee not being asked to report to the House until 9 February. Within that period, we have not

[Mr. Newton]

sought to dictate to the Committee how it should divide its discussion. It will be for the Standing Committee itself to decide how much of the considerable additional time it chooses to spend on which parts of the Bill.

The same approach is reflected in the motion's provision for Report and Third Reading, for which two full days are allocated, with the first of them running until midnight. In the same way as we have not sought to dictate the pattern of discussion in Committee, the motion does not seek to determine, at this stage, the pattern on Report. I entirely accept as reasonable the argument that, when we do not know how the remaining discussion in Committee will go, we cannot say with the necessary certainty where we might want dividing lines—knives, as they are sometimes known in jargon—to fall. Instead, and entirely in line with the normal practices of the House, the motion provides for a Business Committee to consider how best to divide up the time allocated for Report, with its recommendations to be put for approval by the House at the commencement of the Report stage.

In conclusion, without attempting to pre-empt the speeches that we may hear from Opposition Members, I say that any suggestion that we are acting in a draconian or dictatorial fashion or are trying to prevent adequate discussion simply will not stand up. The proposals in the motion are reasonable and sensible, and provide appropriate time for further consideration of this important Bill. As I have said, we have already provided, in a departure from precedent, two full days for Second Reading. We continue to approach the Bill in the same spirit, recognising that the House should have a proper opportunity to debate its provisions. The motion clearly provides for that, and I commend it to the House.

4.40 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I beg to move, as an amendment to the motion, in paragraph 2(1), to leave out 'two' and insert 'three'.

The amendment proposes three days on Report. The Leader of the House said that he wanted sensible arrangements, but he did not refer to our amendment. It would have been helpful if he had said whether he intends to accept it as a contribution to more sensible arrangements for this most unsatisfactory state of affairs.

The speech of the Leader of the House, brief though it was, was a half-hearted attempt to justify what the Government are doing. He showed little awareness of the proceedings in Committee. Perhaps he was briefed by the Secretary of State, who knows very little about the Bill, not least because he has never attended the Committee.

I almost felt sorry for the Leader of the House, who had to try to defend the indefensible. As the business manager of the House, he probably has an eye on the problems that he may encounter later in the year, which might be one of the reasons for today's motion.

The Leader of the House acknowledged that the Bill is important. We therefore suggest that it should have proper and full scrutiny. That is one reason why we are very unhappy with the timetable motion. As the right hon. Gentleman said, two days were allowed for Second Reading as a mark of the Bill's importance—but at the request of the Opposition.

The Secretary of State—I am glad to see him this afternoon; we see him so rarely—claimed that the Bill is the most important education Bill since 1944, that it is the longest and that it will set the scene in education for the next 25 years. Indeed, he went so far as to say that it is the last piece in the jigsaw of Conservative education reforms. If so, it is obvious that the Government do not want us to see clearly the picture that will be revealed when the jigsaw is complete, because they do not want us to scrutinise the provisions of the Bill in detail.

I accept that guillotines have a part to play in our constitution, but they should be used only when there is a good reason, and that is not true of the Bill. I remind the Leader of the House that, when in government, the Labour party has never guillotined an education Bill in Committee. The Bill went into Committee on 17 November. The guillotine was announced, with the usual lack of courtesy to the Committee, on 10 December. We have had 58 hours of work.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): The hon. Lady is incorrect when she says that her party has never guillotined an education Bill.

Mrs. Taylor: I said "in Committee".

Mr. Pawsey: That is an interesting and fine point. I recall that, when Michael Foot guillotined five Bills, one of them was an education Bill.

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman does not show his usual accuracy. He should re-read his brief from Conservative central office, and perhaps read the Library's figures. The only time that a Labour Government guillotined an education Bill was on remaining stages, after considerable debate on the Floor of the House and in Committee. A Labour Government have never guillotined a Bill in Committee. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that correction.

The Leader of the House spent some time complaining that we have debated the first chapter of the Bill at length, yet on previous occasions the Government have boasted that the first chapter contains all their key measures. I do not understand how Ministers can boast about the purpose and importance of the Bill yet complain when we spend time scrutinising it.

Our job in Committee has been made more difficult by our not having all the information that was promised earlier, such as details on formula funding arrangements for grant-maintained schools—I suspect that an announcement will be made in the next day or two, with a barrage of other statements. When there is bad news to announce, the Government always do it in a package, and preferably in the run-up to Christmas.

Despite those problems, the Committee has made progress. Indeed, we have raised problems that the Minister has acknowledged as legitimate. He has promised to consider several of our points and to table amendments—for example, on the need for local authorities to take the lead in the provision of nursery provision and on the need to ensure compliance with legislation on racial discrimination. Indeed, more than once he has promised to consider amendments to meet our arguments about special needs. If we had not raised those issues, there would have been gaps in the legislation. The Minister has acknowledged the positive contribution that Labour Members have made in Committee.

In Committee, we have had the kind of debate that is essential if parliamentary democracy is to work properly. Yet, here we are in December, with 10 months of the parliamentary Session remaining—ample time for the Bill to have a proper Committee stage without resort to a timetable motion.

I should have hoped that some Conservative Members would agree with us; after all, some of them have not found time to make their maiden speech in Committee. They have come to life only when we have discussed corporal punishment, which seems to have excited the attention of several Conservative Members.

The Opposition have taken the Committee very seriously and have attended assiduously. We were shocked when on one occasion Conservative Members and Ministers placed the Chairman of the Committee in a very difficult position, because not one Minister was present when the Committee was due to resume after a Division in the House. That shows the casual approach of Ministers to the Bill. I must pay tribute to my colleagues on the Committee, who have highlighted so many problems and drawn on their own experience as parents, governors and teachers to try to improve the Bill. There can have been few occasions when so many new Members made such a contribution to a major Bill.

That may be one reason for the motion. The Under-Secretary, who has been carrying the Bill in the absence of the Secretary of State, obviously does not like being put on the spot. Time and again, he has not been able to answer the questions asked. Clearly, after only four weeks, he has had enough.

However, I doubt whether the junior Minister carries enough clout to secure a guillotine, however uncomfortable life may have been for him in the past four weeks. We must look for other reasons for the guillotine. Why have the Government chosen to curtail debate now? What debates and issues might they fear?

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Before my hon. Friend reaches that point, may I, as a non-member of the Committee, suggest that the Government may have their eye on other Bills in Committee, too? Does my hon. Friend not agree that the Government have no case on the Bill? If they allocated two hours for each clause—half the time that they say has been taken—that would amount to 500 hours' debate. At 10 hours a day, which is going some, that would mean as long as 50 days. But taking one hour per clause, forgetting the schedules, would give 250 hours of debate—or about 25 days. At two days a week, that would mean just over 12 weeks. Surely that is too little time, if anything—yet the Government want even less. So, as my hon. Friend says, there must be another reason why the Government want a timetable. They have specified a date, but not necessarily the hours to be spent in Committee.

Mrs. Taylor: My hon. Friend is right. I believe that he may have a particular interest in one of the reasons why the Government are so keen to move quickly, and I shall come to that later.

I was wondering which aspects of the debate due over the next few weeks worried or frightened Ministers. It is interesting that the guillotine has been introduced just as we reach the clauses on grant-maintained status, which is supposed to be one of the main planks of Government policy yet which is clearly one of their main failures. We are keen to highlight that failure, and the facts that while 1·5 per cent. of schools have gone for grant-maintained status, 24,500 schools have not done so, and that in an increasing proportion of the ballots people are voting no.

We want to highlight the anti-democratic nature of the proposals—for example, the proposal to allow a resolution for grant-maintained status to be taken at a governors meeting.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): I am sure that the hon. Lady does not intend to mislead the House, but I remind her that current statistics suggest that almost 80 per cent. of ballots decide in favour of grant-maintained status. I hope that she will consider withdrawing, or at least rephrasing, the rather misleading statement that she has just made.

Mrs. Taylor: I shall not withdraw the statement, because I said that an increasing proportion of ballots were going against grant-maintained status. That statement is true, and has been recently checked. I understand why Ministers are so touchy on the subject——

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten) *rose——*

Mrs. Taylor: No, I shall not give way to the Secretary of State. If he wanted to participate in the debate, he should have come to the Committee. The right hon. Gentleman seems to be taking an unusual interest in the Bill. We would have welcomed his interest in Committee, but obviously he was not sufficiently interested to spend 60 hours with us.

I was saying that I was unhappy with the anti-democratic nature of the Bill, and the fact that, at a governors meeting, a resolution for grant-maintained status can be taken under any other business, with no advance notification. I was also about to mention the intimidation about which members of the Conservative party have complained. Conservatives who do not want to promote grant-maintained status have been put under pressure by other Conservatives. Apparently, Councillor Jenny Langston, the Conservative who chairs the education committee of East Sussex county council, complained recently that

"a right-wing member of her own party should advocate local authorities, such as hers, should employ strong-arm tactics to beat off opposition in the parental and governing body lobbies."

Councillor Langston said:

"We prefer to let parents make the decision and I think it's important we don't push them either way".

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): I hope that the hon. Lady was present when I spoke on Second Reading —[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] She probably was not. I cited letters from East Sussex county council which made it palpably clear that the education authority was distinctly unkeen on schools being able to choose grant-maintained status, and was encouraging schools, governor and parents not to consider the subject.

Mrs. Taylor: I am interested in the hon. Lady's view of local democracy—and I am sure that many Conservative councillors will be interested in it, too. Conservative councillors are complaining about what they consider to be intimidating letters from other Conservative party

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[Mrs. Taylor]

members warning them what may happen to them if they do not start promoting grant-maintained status. So much for local democracy.

The next section of the Bill, which we were hoping to debate in detail over the next few weeks, aims to boost the chances of more schools becoming grant maintained. In the week before Second Reading we heard that parents at the Prime Minister's old school, Rutlish, had rejected grant-maintained status. But the last straw for the Government, which meant that they could not face long discussions on the Bill, may have been the ballot last week at Warberry Church of England primary school in Torquay—hardly in Labour's heartland. There was an 86 per cent. turnout, and the result was: those against grant-maintained status—399; those in favour—five. Perhaps that was the last straw for the Government.

Other parts of the Bill, too, need time for proper scrutiny. The problems of children with special educational needs, which were mentioned by the Leader of the House, are important. As we made clear on Second Reading, we welcome some parts of the Bill, and we hope that the special need provisions can lead to an improvement in the provision for many children.

However, we are worried, and we want to explore the likelihood that without proper resources, either the new proposals will not work, or they will work for children with statements, at the expense of most children with special needs, who do not have statements but who nevertheless have considerable needs. Such serious and essential issues should have proper consideration, and we fear that they will not be fully explored if the Bill is guillotined.

We need time to discuss other issues, too, such as the Government proposals for specialisation. Specialisation increasingly seems to be the Government code word for selection. In Committee the Under-Secretary spoke in less coded language than is sometimes used. He talked about the "dead hand of comprehensivisation"; clearly he favours selection—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members are saying, "Quite right." Obviously it would have been worth while to discuss the matter in great detail, so that we could find out exactly what the Government mean and bring it out into the open.

We need time to discuss the issue of surplus places. I understand that the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), the Under-Secretary of State for Education, had what may have been a constructive meeting on surplus places yesterday with representatives of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. We should use our time in Committee to try to build on that.

There are complex issues associated with clause 244, which concerns the provision of goods and services by local authorities. Everyone in local government, on both sides of the political divide, regards that as an important issue, and one which will need a great deal of clarification. I suggest that those are serious matters which require serious consideration.

There is another reason why the Government are moving the guillotine motion, and that reason has nothing to do with education. The Government are so desperate to keep time on the Floor of the House for the European Communities (Amendment) Bill that they will sacrifice the scrutiny of any other legislation. Debate on the Education Bill is being sacrificed because the Government cannot manage their business properly. It is being sacrificed regardless of the impact on the education system. It is remarkable that Ministers, who are only too keen to interfere in the day-to-day running of our schools, are not prepared to embark on a day-to-day defence of their education policies. We oppose the guillotine.

4.51 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me so early in the debate. I shall speak in support of the timetable motion.

As a result of the Opposition's tactics, time for debate has already been severely curtailed. The timetable motion will ensure that there will be better scrutiny of the Education Bill than would otherwise have been the case. No amount of argument from the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) will convince anyone listening to our debate to the contrary. There is no doubt that the Opposition's tactic is to oppose the Bill by all means possible. As I am sure everyone will accept, that is not the same as scrutinising the Bill thoroughly and properly, which is what the Government intend. That is why Conservative Members will support the Government and vote for the timetable motion tonight.

If the Committee continues as it has during the many hours so far, there is no way in which the Bill will have proper scrutiny.

Mr. Spearing: Like myself, the hon. Gentleman has a past professional interest in the matter. Did he notice that Ministers did not challenge my arithmetic in an earlier intervention—*[Interruption.]* They did not. I said that 12 weeks would be reasonable on the basis of giving one hour to each clause. Does the hon. Gentleman realise that he is supporting a motion that will mean 20 minutes per clause? Can he really sustain that timetable? Can he defend it to parents and to teachers in his constituency?

Mr. Thompson: What I cannot defend to my constituents and to my former colleagues in the teaching profession—like the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), I was a teacher for many years—is that it could be right for us to spend four hours in debate on every clause of a Bill that contains 255 clauses. How could anyone defend three and a quarter hours of debate on clause 4 when the Opposition failed to table an amendment to it? That is indefensible, and that is the answer to the hon. Gentleman's arithmetic. I do not accept his point. The point is that we shall have better scrutiny of the Bill by accepting the timetable motion.

I am not surprised that the hon. Member for Dewsbury has been so impatient with the proceedings. There has been so much unnecessary talk that the hon. Lady—I know that she has been very busy—has not been able to spare very much time for the Committee. Not everyone in the House is aware of that. I wonder whether she has not been able to spare much time for the Committee because she has found great difficulty in coming to terms with the Labour party's U-turn on the issue of grant-maintained status. I remember well the statements made a month or so after the general election. I know that the hon. Lady has great difficulty with the topic in the light of what has preceded the Bill.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will check the record and that he will confirm that I have

missed two sittings of the Committee. The reason was that I was visiting schools, which is apparently a legitimate exercise for the Secretary of State. I also remind the hon. Gentleman that I was one of the Committee members present at 10.15 pm when the sitting resumed after a Division. Only two Conservative Members were present and the hon. Gentleman was not one of them.

Mr. Thompson: I took a careful note of the amount of time that the hon. Lady spent in Committee this morning. I watched the Opposition Front Bench and I know that she was absent for the vast majority of the morning.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): The hon. Gentleman has spoken for four minutes so far, including two minutes for interventions. Will he tell the House when he last spoke for that length of time in Committee?

Mr. Thompson: I shall come to the way in which I believe a Bill should be properly scrutinised a little later, and I shall talk about the support that I and many hon. Members of all parties have for considering the possibility of introducing procedures to timetable Bills from the outset. The way in which Bills are conducted now is nonsense and the hon. Member for Dewsbury knows that. Hon. Members of all parties know that.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Thompson: No, because I want to proceed with my speech. I realise that time is short and I want to allow time for other hon. Members to speak.

No amendments have been tabled by Labour or by Liberal Democrat spokesmen which would improve the education system.

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Thompson: I shall give way when I have completed this point. If I do not make progress, there will not be enough time for everyone.

I have listened to the debates carefully. Perhaps I should pick and choose between Opposition Members, but I should rather make the general point. I will then give way to the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster).

The Bill is about the education of our young people. Opposition Members have failed to appreciate in their lengthy speeches on the Bill that what really matters in education is the quality of the work by our teachers in the classroom. There are many highly skilled teachers whose work in the classroom should be better recognised in the House because that is what counts in education. Education is about the leadership provided by head teachers in good schools and in schools where there are difficulties where head teachers do a magnificent job. That is what education in our schools is about, along with the wisdom and good sense of our governors.

I will give way to the hon. Member for Bath, because I think I know the point he is about to make.

Mr. Don Foster: The hon. Gentleman says that the Bill is about education. Indeed it is. Does he agree that it is not really about the quality of education?

Mr. Thompson *rose*——

Mr. Foster: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can intervene at this stage.

Does he agree that that concerns the quality, rather than the structure, of education and that the Bill will do nothing to improve the quality of education? Further, the hon. Gentleman's claim that Opposition amendments have done nothing to improve the Bill is not borne out by the Minister, who has acceded to a number of our amendments.

Mr. Thompson: My hon. Friends and I have listened carefully to the contributions of Opposition Members in Committee and, taken as a whole, the quality of argument concerning education in general and the provisions of the Bill in particular has been deficient. In more than 65 hours of debate, we have heard little from them about the intentions of the Bill, which are designed to increase choice and variety in schools and provide incentives for good schools.

Mr. Don Foster *rose*——

Mr. Thompson: I shall not give way again.

I welcome the statement today by the Under-Secretary on ways to increase variety in schools by allowing in pupils who want to study particular subjects, such as the arts, music and so on. In other words, increasing choice and variety is fundamental to the Bill, which is why I support it and want it to receive proper scrutiny.

The evidence shows that in grant-maintained schools there is a feeling of freedom. Staff turnover has gone down, especially in primary schools, and staff of high quality are applying for jobs. That is no reason to point to one type of school and set it against another, but those are the sort of points we should be raising as we discuss the Bill. Opposition Members say much about the structure of education. When discussing structure, we should examine the effect that funding, structure and mechanism have on the quality of education. I hope that we shall debate the matter in those terms once the motion has been approved.

When I first entered the House, I served on the Standing Committee which examined what finally became the Telecommunications Act 1984. That measure was in Committee for many hours, and as a new Member, I had the impression then that that way of conducting our business had to be changed. The same procedure has occurred with the Education Bill in recent weeks, with long, time-wasting speeches. I hesitate to use the word "filibustering" to describe those speeches—*[Interruption.]*—even though my hon. Friends think that I should describe them in that way.

That cannot be the right way to scrutinise a measure of such importance. It is why I support the idea of timetabling Bills from the outset. That would enable measures to be properly scrutinised, for the way in which the Education Bill has been scrutinised so far has been a sham and a disgrace. The Opposition's tactics have done nothing for education. I am pleased to see the Leader of the House in his place. I hope that a reformed system will be introduced without delay.

5.14 pm

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): We have been told of the importance of the Bill. The Under-Secretary described it as a landmark piece of legislation. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) called it a Christmas cake of a Bill. The Secretary of State referred to it on Second Reading as a far-reaching measure that would affect the framework of education, especially for primary

[Mr. Stephen Byers]

and secondary schools, into the next century. For those reasons, the Bill needs detailed consideration and scrutiny, the sort of treatment it has been receiving in Standing Committee.

Opposition Members are anxious to scrutinise the Bill in detail, because we recognise its implications for education. There is a danger that, as drafted, it will create in Britain an educational underclass made up of disappointed and disillusioned parents, rejected and bitter children and blighted and failed schools.

So far, we have spent nine sitting days examining the Bill, involving 55¼ hours of debate. Those are the figures that matter, so it is clear that the Government want to work in the fast track for this piece of legislation. After all, the White Paper was published on 28 July, the Bill was published in October, it had its Second Reading in November, and it is now being guillotined in December. Why the haste? Is there some coincidence—is it written in the stars?—which necessitates the Bill being considered in that way, particularly given the significance attached to it by the Secretary of State and most informed commentators?

The Government do not want the measure to be scrutinised in detail, and they have not been prepared to embark on real consultation with those in the service who will be responsible for its implementation, because they are not prepared to discuss their proposals in public. The Secretary of State in particular, and the Government in general, will not defend the Bill in public. The Secretary of State has failed in his responsibilities by not serving on the Standing Committee, even though he claims that the measure will lay the foundations for education into the next century.

The right hon. Gentleman has refused to meet deputations from a range of organisations which want to discuss the Bill with him. He has shovelled off responsibility on to the shoulders of his Parliamentary Under-Secretary. Indeed, the Secretary of State has acquired a reputation for declining invitations to speak at important education conferences—*[Interruption.]*—or, when he has accepted invitations to speak, he has cancelled them, often at short notice.

The body representing local education authorities met in Liverpool in July. The Secretary of State was to have spoken there, but cried off. The European Trade Union Committee for Education met a couple of weeks ago. The right hon. Gentleman cancelled the speech that he was to have made there. A north of England education conference, to be held in January, was expecting the right hon. Gentleman to address it, but received a note recently to the effect that he would not be keeping that speaking engagement.

Mr. Forth: I remind the hon. Gentleman that this debate is about the timetable for deliberations of the Bill here in Parliament. I fail to see the possible relevance to that discussion of the matters to which he is now referring.

Mr. Byers: I appreciate the Minister's sensitivity. He is having to bear a heavy responsibility for the measure. The Bill needs careful scrutiny because there has been no real consultation. The Secretary of State has not discussed the detail of the measure with those who will be responsible for its implementation. Indeed, he is not even prepared to stand on a public platform and defend the policies in this Bill in front of an audience that will know what he is talking about.

Mr. Spearing: Of course, this is in direct contrast to the late R. A. Butler and the 1944 Bill. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that that Bill was taken in a Committee of the whole House and that Mr. Butler saw it right through?

Mr. Byers: I thank my hon. Friend for that information. I believe that one of the reasons why the Butler Act has stood the test of time is precisely because of the detailed consultations that took place before the Act appeared on the statute book and on the Floor of the House.

The Secretary of State has a responsibility, and he has opted out of it. We have a Secretary of State who has had more cancellations than Network SouthEast in the last few months. The nine sitting days that we have had scrutinising the Bill have already been deeply embarrassing for the Government. The Under-Secretary has had to accept that the Government can no longer support parental choice; he has had to acknowledge that all the Government can now talk about is allowing parents to express a preference for a school. That is a fundamental difference between Conservative rhetoric and what happens in practice.

The Under-Secretary got into some difficulties last week on the question of selection—whether it is on ability or aptitude, whether it should be 10 per cent., or more, or less, and what we mean by a significant change of character which would require a request under the statutory provisions to the Secretary of State. Such difficulties did the Under-Secretary get into that yesterday the Government had to publish a consultation document so that people could consider the options available to the Government. At last some consultation was to take place, but too little, too late, and consultation only because of the difficulties the Under-Secretary got himself into in Committee. It is the detailed scrutiny in the Committee that is throwing up these difficulties and problems.

A third problem identified very clearly in Committee was the funding of grant-maintained schools. What are the Government's intentions with regard to the future when schools opt out of local education authority control? Will those schools continue to be funded on the basis of the present levels of spending by the individual local education authorities, or will the link be broken?

Just a few weeks ago, the Under-Secretary made a very important statement, when he said that the link could not be retained. That is bad news for those schools in the 65 local education authorities that spend above their Government standard spending assessment on education. If the link is broken, those schools, if they achieve grant-maintained status, will get less money under the funding agency than they get under their local education authority.

We also saw revealed the absurd position whereby, in some cases, the funding agency would have dual or parallel responsibility with the local education authority, even though only a handful of parents would have had the opportunity to vote on whether the school should opt out of local authority funding.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) gave an important example in Committee—that of the Jewish free school in Camden, where only 54 pupils out

of 1,000 live in Camden local authority area. If that school were to opt out—they are about to start the balloting process, I understand—the funding agency, under the Bill as it stands at present, would share the responsibility with Camden for the strategic planning of education within that area, although only 54 Camden parents would have been able to vote in that ballot. So much for democracy; so much for parental choice.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury has said, it is no accident that the guillotine is to be introduced just as the Committee begins detailed scrutiny of the provisions relating to the opting-out procedures. It is because the Government are only too aware that opting out, whether in principle or in practice, has not been the success that Ministers would like it to be. Indeed, in many cases, we have seen intimidation of parents, and schools facing very real difficulties in terms of meeting the requirements with regard to their funding budgets.

The position is this, and I will give just a couple of examples. In Codsall school in Staffordshire, those who were supporting opting out wrote to individual parents saying that, if they did not vote——

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I cannot for the life of me see what these examples have to do with the motion that we are debating.

Mr. Byers: I can understand why Government Members are finding the details difficult. The hon. Gentleman may have an opportunity to contribute to the debate, which is more than he has been able to do in the Standing Committee.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I have taken about as much of the intimidation angle as I can. Last week, a school in my constituency voted to go grant-maintained. Over 57 per cent of the parents voted in the ballot, and 85 per cent. of those who voted were in favour of going grant-maintained. There was no intimidation as far as that school was concerned, but there certainly was blatant intimidation from the Labour-controlled Lancashire county council, which threatened all sorts of things if the school went grant-maintained. I am pleased to say that the parents ignored that intimidation: they voted to put the pupils first and go for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Byers: That is an interesting contribution, but it is unfortunate that, in the example just given, less than half the parents entitled to vote voted in favour of opting out. Nevertheless, had the hon. Gentleman been in the Chamber at the beginning of the debate, he would have heard my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury giving some recent examples of the way the ballots have gone against opting out in the last few days.

I return to the position on intimidation, and I am relying on a reply I received to a question I put to the Under-Secretary. The reply was very clear and simple, and it is worth having it on the record in this debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I have been very tolerant so far with the hon. Gentleman, but he is not referring very much to the motion. I should be grateful if he would get back to it.

Mr. Byers: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was trying to reveal the importance of the detailed scrutiny which has thrown up some of these difficulties, but I will, of course, take your guidance on that.

The important point which the House needs to recognise is that the timetable motion before us today will restrict the detailed scrutiny that can be given to the Bill as at present before the Standing Committee. The timetable allows about 20 minutes per clause. I do not believe that that sort of time will allow the detailed scrutiny that is essential if we are to get legislation on to the statute book that will meet the challenge of the future.

We will not have the opportunity to debate in detail the whole question of special education needs. I believe that most hon. Members recognise that the Education Act 1981, which did so much to raise the issue of special education needs, now needs to be amended. This Bill is an opportunity to do that. Many of us have reservations about whether, as at present worded, it would meet existing needs. Many of us feel that it will not.

A matter which has been little debated is the proposed merger of the School Examinations and Assessment Council and the National Curriculum Council to bring into one body not only examinations and assessment but the decisions about what happens in our schools. Under the Bill, that body will be appointed solely by the Secretary of State, which causes many of us great concern. It smacks of the 1984 thought police of George Orwell rather than an enlightened democracy of the 1990s.

The parliamentary procedure that we are debating will not deceive parents. They will know that no additional money is being made available under the Bill. They will also know that the Bill does nothing to reduce class size, repair leaking roofs or provide new textbooks, and that it does nothing to raise standards.

Parliament cannot discharge its responsibilities under the timetable. It may be politically convenient for the Government, given their difficulties over the Maastricht treaty, but it puts at risk the education opportunities of future generations. It represents a triumph of dogma over reason, for which the Government will rightly stand condemned.

5.30 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): However important the Bill is—and there is no doubt that it is a major plank of the Government's legislation for this Parliament—this debate is unnecessary. I say that with due modesty. It would have been unnecessary if the House had had the wisdom or foresight to adopt the recommendations of the Select Committee on Procedure, which were made as long ago as July 1986.

The Opposition no longer need to prove their virility by forcing the Government into timetable motions on the Floor of the House. The present system of timetabling is old-fashioned and archaic, and a major waste of prime time. In the previous Parliament, 14 half days were wasted on debates such as this which do nothing to help Bills or to create press publicity. In the early 1960s, the House was absolutely crowded for a timetable motion. It was a full day's debate and caused massive uproar. Today it is dealt with like any other minor procedural matter.

I quickly remind the House how the recommendations of the Select Committee on Procedure would apply to the Bill. This is a good opportunity to show how the methods

[Sir Peter Emery]

which we suggested and which, thank goodness, were approved by the Jopling Committee, would work on such legislation.

First, I shall rid the House of a major procedural shibboleth—the concept that the one option which the Opposition have to beat the Government is time, especially time in Committee. Since 1945, no piece of legislation introduced by a Government of either party and which has appeared in the Queen's speech has failed to reach the statute book in a full Parliament. The Telecommunications Bill did not get through and had to be introduced in a new Parliament, but that was because the election was in May—if it had gone to a full Parliament, it would have been passed.

It is false to believe that a delay in Committee wins anything for the Opposition. It merely means that poor Back Benchers and Opposition spokesmen spend a great deal of time trailing through hours of what I regard as unnecessarily lengthy debate on major matters.

How would the Procedure Committee's recommendations have applied in this case? Paragraph 16*(a)* on page vii of the Committee's report of 9 July 1986 states:

"Proceedings in standing Committee should not continue beyond 10 pm".

But the most important point is:

"A Business Sub-Committee of nine Members or one third of the standing committee's membership (whichever is the greater) should be nominated by the Committee of Selection when a standing committee is nominated and should be chaired by the Chairman of the standing committee".

If that had happened, the Under-Secretary of State for Schools and my hon. Friends the Members for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay), for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and for Westbury (Mr. Faber) and the hon. Members for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy), for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) and for Bath (Mr. Foster) might have been nominated as members of the business sub-committee.

The report continues:

"The Business Sub-Committee should meet after the sixth sitting of the standing committee and should report to the standing committee . . . the date by which the standing committee should report the bill".

That describes exactly the current situation. What is more, anyone who knows anything about the workings of this place will know that from the moment the Queen's Speech is announced, the authorities have named dates by which time all legislation must pass out of Committee to go to another place. There is no secret about that. If the Opposition force a guillotine, they do not put back the date any further but reduce the time available for debate on the remainder of the Bill.

The Select Committee's recommendations continue:

"the number of sittings which would need to be allotted to the consideration of the Bill"

should also be decided by that Committee

"in order to ensure that there would be time for all parts of it to be adequately scrutinised".

That means that it is up to the people serving on the Committee to decide in the time set for the reporting of the Bill exactly how much time they want to spend on it. It gives power to the usual channels, and the usual channels think that they are best at negotiating the length of that time.

The Opposition must realise that once the Government know that a Bill is to reported by a certain date, they are happy to hand over to the Opposition all the subjects of debate and whatever time scale the Opposition may wish. That gives considerable extra power to the Opposition who frequently do not realise it.

The Select Committee recommended:

"No motion to approve a report from the Business Sub-Committee should be made until . . . after the first appearance of the terms of its report . . . Such a motion would be debatable for 1½ hours".

If, after a further six sittings, the sub-committee should meet again and if it is considered that progress is still not satisfactory, exact slots or knives could then be negotiated between members of that Committee.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is the hon. Member speaking to the motion?

Sir Peter Emery: Indeed I am.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have been listening with interest and I have been tempted two or three times to intervene to suggest that the hon. Gentleman should refer directly to the guillotine motion rather than the guillotine procedure in general.

Sir Peter Emery: In order to allow many hon. Members to participate, I was trying not to refer to the fact that at every stage what I am suggesting is ruled out by the present motion. The weakness of the timetable motion needs correcting. If the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) and the Chair wish it, I shall be delighted to continue in that vein.

One of the Committee's recommendations which is not mentioned in the motion is that every part of the Bill should be adequately discussed. That must be what the House wants if legislation is to be fully considered. It is equally the case that the present system does not mean that there will be adequate discussion of all sections of a Bill. However, the recommendations of the Procedure Committee achieve that. They strengthen the timetable motion and improve it. They make it a more sensible procedure than that which exists at present.

There is a definite view to move away from the present procedure. The all-party House of Commons reform group found that 72·8 per cent. of the 323 hon. Members who replied to a questionnaire were in favour of all Bills being timetabled in advance.

Mr. Martlew: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is the hon. Gentleman speaking to the motion before the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I advise the hon. Gentleman that it has been traditional to allow reference to past and future procedures that might benefit future guillotine motions. That is what the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) is doing, and that is why I am allowing him to continue.

Sir Peter Emery: The comments of the hon. Member for Carlilse (Mr. Martlew) are a bit hot. We have heard many references from Opposition Members to outside meetings not being right and about Ministers not doing this or that outside the Chamber. However, we have heard little about the motion or about the Bill. I do not know how the hon. Member for Carlisle has the nerve to interfere in the debate in that way.

Paragraphs 67 and 69 of the Jopling Committee report make it clear that the majority of hon. Members are interested in improving the current system of timetabling Bills. The then shadow Leader of the House, the Liberal Democrat Chief Whip and the Leader of the House were unanimous in the belief that we should find a better way to carry out the procedure.

I hope that I have been allowed to show that the Opposition lose none of their power by adopting the recommendation of the Procedure Committee rather than adopting the current procedure or amending it. If it is properly used, the Procedure Committee's recommendation should allow the Opposition to call the tune in respect of what they want to debate in Committee. It will also ensure that all sections of a Bill are considered in Committee.

All that can be achieved without having to spend an exaggerated length of time in Committee as was the case before this timetable motion was tabled. No one can say that the speeches Upstairs were concise, short or to the point. We want to try to ensure that we can consider all parts of a Bill and not waste time on the early clauses. That can be achieved, and if it is achieved it will benefit the House.

5.42 pm

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): The hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) has made several interesting points, and perhaps I might refer to them later in my speech. However, I want to begin by referring to the introductory comments of the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). She rightly made the point that the Leader of the House has not made a strong case to justify the guillotine motion, particularly not at this stage in the Committee proceedings.

The Secretary of State for Education told us that the Bill is intended to last for 25 years. While I do not believe that that is likely—as the Government have in 13 years had to introduce 17 major Education Bills, it is likely that the Bill might last 10 months—if the Government are right, it is a pity that they have decided to guillotine the discussion on the Bill less than 25 weeks after the publication of the White Paper; after less than 25 working days since Second Reading; and after fewer than 25 Committee sittings.

Many Opposition Members have referred to the unseemly haste of the guillotine procedure. The unseemly haste in which the Bill was cobbled together has meant that it has many flaws. It was necessary in Committee for Opposition Members to identify the various flaws in the Bill for Conservative Members. It is sad that, in addition to Opposition Members, Conservative Members are also finding flaws in the legislation. As a result, the Minister and Conservative Members have had to table a large number of amendments.

After the guillotine motion has been passed, there will be time only to consider the Government amendments and amendments tabled by Conservative Members. As I am a new Member, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be more aware than I that "Erskine May" states in the 21st edition of "Parliamentary Practice" that guillotine motions

"are the most drastic method of curtailing debate . . . it cannot be denied that they are capable of being used in such a way as to upset the balance, generally so carefully preserved, between the claims of business and the rights of debate."

I believe that on this occasion, that balance is truly being upset.

Reference has been made to earlier guillotine motions. Many Conservative Members will be aware that the Education Reform Act 1988 was debated in Committee for 88 hours before the guillotine fell. Although that Bill was important, it had far fewer clauses than the current Bill. It had only 147 clauses, in comparison to the 255 in this Bill.

I accept what the hon. Member for Honiton said. It is not always necessary to have a guillotine motion, even on important issues. The vital Education Act 1944 has already been referred to. That legislation was debated in Committee for 60 hours and then progressed to its subsequent stages without any need for a guillotine.

The important point is that there is a huge difference between the 1944 Act and this Bill. There had been considerable and detailed consultation for a long period in the run-up to the preparation for the 1944 Act. As a result, there was great consensus on both sides of the House. The only area of major disagreement related to religious education.

There has been no extensive debate of this Bill. Many of us have often levelled that criticism at the Bill. There is definitely no consensus on both sides of the House in respect of the Bill. As a result, we are in difficulty. Quite properly, we must oppose the guillotine motion.

The hon. Member for Honiton referred to the debate in the House in the mid-1980s—long before I became a Member of this place—about guillotine and timetable motions, and the need to find a better way to address such business in the House. Speaking personally, I believe that there is great merit in the proposals in the report that was debated in 1986. In broad terms, my agreement stretches as far as major Bills which are contentious. The proposal that a timetable should be established before the Bill goes into Committee has a great deal of merit.

We must not have some of the perhaps synthetic crocodile tears about guillotine motions. After all, Governments of all persuasions have used guillotine motions. Certainly this Government, since they came to power in 1979, have introduced about 30 major Bills on which the Committee debate has been guillotined. On those occasions, it is interesting to note that the average time for debate before the guillotine was 78 hours, which is much more than the 55¼ hours of debate that we have had on this lengthy Bill. Nevertheless, I accept that in principle there can be a case for timetable motions.

However, I do not believe that this timetable motion is justified. The outrage sometimes expressed about timetable motions is justified on this occasion. I hope that I do not repeat comments by other hon. Members, but there are several reasons why we should genuinely be outraged about the motion. One is purely selfish and personal—simply that I have enjoyed the deliberations in Committee. I have certainly learnt a great deal from them. *[Laughter.]* Those hon. Members who are laughing are clearly not members of the Committee.

Who can forget the Minister's wonderful joke when he described the Bill as "a landmark cake"? Who can forget the great erudition of the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright), who has taught us so much about grammar and pronunciation? I am sure that we have all learnt a great deal.

I for one am sad that the debate will come to an end relatively rapidly. Earlier, the Under-Secretary of State for Education, whom we have already welcomed to his position, said that he was concerned about his inability to speak so fluently and so on as he might like. I assure him

[Mr. Don Foster]

that, after a few days in Committee listening to the hon. Member for Hemsworth and many other hon. Members, he will be rapidly up to speed with his Front-Bench colleagues.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): As the hon. Gentleman is referring to our good friend and entertainer, the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright), who has entertained us at great length, he will recall the occasion when the hon. Gentleman announced that he was coming to his peroration which, because he was a supporter of Demosthenes, was likely to last two hours. That is the problem that we have had in Committee: we have not had time to discuss the amendments that the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members have tabled, because many hon. Members have talked ad nauseam—with great respect to the hon. Gentleman: "nausea" was another Latin tag. *[Interruption.]* I think that Frankie Howard was a friend of the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice).

As an example, the hon. Gentleman will recall, because he was in Committee this morning, that we spent the entire sitting on one amendment to one clause, and did not even reach the end of that.

Mr. Foster: The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) will recall the intervention that he referred to in which the hon. Member for Hemsworth threatened to speak for two hours. Fortunately, that did not happen. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman is smarting because of the interventions from the hon. Member for Hemsworth. Perhaps he will recall the interesting debate that we had on the phrases which introduced clause 1(1) of the Bill. I have no doubt that he will have an opportunity to check that point in the debate.

As I have said, there are several reasons for feeling outraged about the guillotine motion. I have referred to that reason which is perhaps personal and somewhat selfish, although there are many others which are much more important. The basic reason is the issue of the importance of parliamentary scrutiny. The motion will not give us an opportunity for the proper and detailed parliamentary scrutiny which a Bill of this size and importance rightly deserves. There is no opportunity for us to scrutinise, criticise and improve the actions of the Executive—which, after all, is what the role of the legislature is meant to be. Just as the Government have made a mockery of consultation on the Bill, so they are making a mockery of the concept of parliamentary rule.

The hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) referred to the unwillingness of the Secretary of State to listen to almost anybody. It is clear that the Government have no desire to listen. They do not want to listen to parents, governors, teachers or any other educationists. Indeed, they do not want to listen to their own supporters. They seem to be totally deaf to many people who are traditional Conservative supporters. There were many references in Committee to the Conservative Education Association.

The Government also seem unwilling to listen to the views of the hon. Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton), who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Education. He is quoted as describing the Bill as

"a recipe for at best confusion and at worst chaos".

I wanted to record that phrase because of the effect that it might have on the Under-Secretary. Recently in Committee he said that, if he heard that phrase once more, he would go even more dotty than he was, so we look forward to seeing how he behaves a little later.

I am sad that, because of the speed with which the Government are rushing the Bill through, Conservative Members have not had an opportunity to listen to the views of the new Minister about the important issues in the Bill.

Reference has been made to the fact that we do not appear to have made much progress on the Bill. The hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) said that there had been slow progress. That is perfectly understandable, because the Government have placed all the important and complex issues in the early part of the Bill. I propose that we resolve the problem by changing the order in which we consider the Bill.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that one of the main reasons for slow progress—if I may refer to one of the speeches made by the hon. Member for Hemsworth—is that he managed to introduce into a debate on the 10 per cent. and 75 per cent. trigger points topics such as the history of old school boards, the ethos of schools in West Yorkshire and Severn, how he crossed swords with the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sheffield, star-gazing, "Pilgrim's Progress" and the Slough of Despond.

Mr. Foster: All those issues are vital to education. More importantly, I am amazed that the hon. Member for Norwich, North has admitted that he is attacking the integrity of the Chair. Surely, if the points were out of order, the Chairman would have so ruled, just as I am sure you would have done, Mr. Morris.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): I merely wish to make a correction. Undoubtedly, not all Conservative Members have learnt to read accurately. It was the Bishop, not the Archbishop, of Sheffield.

Mr. Foster: I am grateful for that clarification. Nevertheless, the point is important.

To pick up part of the point raised by the hon. Member for Honiton, if there had been an opportunity to plan the debate properly in the way I proposed at the beginning of the Committee's discussions, perhaps we would not have got into the state which the hon. Member for Norwich, North and other hon. Members believe we are in at present.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: Despite what the hon. Gentleman said about reorganising the order of the debate, is he aware that, along the Committee Corridor, other Bills were being discussed, some of which had no more than 15 clauses? One which had 15 clauses has just completed its Committee stage today. To reach clause 15 of a long Bill such as this is good progress. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Foster: It is clear that Conservative Members believe that the detailed consideration that has been given to the important clauses with which we have dealt merits only laughter. Opposition Members have made a serious attempt to find ways of improving a very bad Bill. That is demonstrated by the fact that we have not only debated the clauses of the Bill but tabled amendment after amendment to impove them.

The only accusation about a particular clause was in respect of clause 4. Reference was made to the fact that the

Opposition had not tabled any amendment to clause 4. That is hardly surprising when one discovers that clause 4 says:

"The Secretary of State may make grants to any funding authority of such amounts and subject to such terms and conditions as he may determine."

It would be difficult to table an amendment which was acceptable to the Committee Clerk but would not be seen as a wrecking amendment and therefore rejected. That is the only way——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Decisions on amendments rest with not the Committee Clerk but with the Chairman of the Committee.

Mr. Foster: I apologise, and I am grateful for that comment.

Mr. Patten: I hope that the hon. Gentleman has learnt his lesson.

Mr. Foster: I have learnt, and I am grateful to learn. I said that I would undoubtedly learn a great deal in Committee.

Our other problem with the timetable motion is that it does not give the Government time to get their act together. Hon. Members who are not members of the Committee will not be aware that we had the somewhat unedifying sight of Ministers competing with one another to explain different parts of the Bill and coming up with contradictory views of what was going on.

For example, we had a major debate on clause 7, about the relationship between the local education authorities and the funding authorities. Every time Ministers attempted to explain the difference we received different answers. We wanted to know whether they had a dual function, whether they would operate in parallel or whether their responsibilities would be shared. For days we waited. Finally, we received an answer. The Minister said:

"there is a shared responsibility exercised by parallel duties." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*; c. 517.]

We were told that that was the Government's definitive answer. I wonder whether it will be changed, because that definition is at odds with the definition given by the Secretary of State on Second Reading.

We have many other examples of Ministers being at odds. On Second Reading, the Secretary of State said:

"Grant-maintained schools and local education authority schools must operate on equal terms."—[*Official Report*, 9 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 651.]

In the second day of the same debate, the junior Minister said:

"There can never be a level playing field between grant-maintained schools and local education authority maintained schools".—[*Official Report*, 10 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 836.]

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I should be grateful to know whether the purpose of the hon. Gentleman's speech is to illustrate the farcical nature of the proceedings, as so well described by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery).

Mr. Foster: The point of my speech is to show that inadequate time has been given for consideration of what the Government have said is an important Bill. It is to demonstrate that the Government have not got their act together and are still making contradictory statements about elements of the Bill. Even if no one else needs additional time to get the Bill right, the Government certainly do.

I also wish to show that the Government are clearly not interested in rational debate. They are interested only in rationed debate.

Mr. Richards: The hon. Gentleman has just referred to the kernel of the debate. Several days were spent discussing what my hon. Friend the Minister said in Committee—that local education authorities and the funding agencies would work in parallel. I recall the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson), who unfortunately has now left the Chamber, spending some considerable time discussing the matter. He told us at length that he was a mathematics teacher, so he assumed, as Opposition Members do, that he must relate everything that happened in the Committee to his specialisation. He spent some time telling us how parallel lines never meet or get closer.

I put it to the hon. Gentleman that, when my hon. Friend said that the two bodies would operate in parallel, he might—no Opposition Members thought of this—have been talking about an electrical circuit. Two bulbs might be connected in parallel and burn equally brightly. Socialists seem to believe that everything must be connected in series.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is performing brilliantly, but out of order, I fear.

Mr. Foster: I am most grateful for that intervention from the hon. Gentleman. You may be interested to know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that was the longest contribution that the hon. Gentleman has made on the Bill. As a former physics teacher, I was particularly interested in his analogy. He will know that two bulbs in parallel are such that, if one is taken out, the other continues to burn. Many of us would like to take out the funding authority and leave the local education authorities.

Mr. Richards: The point that I wished to make is that socialists insist on connecting things up in series. As one adds things in series, so they get dimmer. As one adds socialists, so one gets dimmer and dimmer.

Mr. Foster: The hon. Gentleman still fails to grasp that the Government wish to add something. It is not the wish of the Opposition to add something to the system.

The interventions from the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) and others show that they are not interested in the serious debate that the Bill truly deserves. There is an urgent need for more detailed consideration than the timetable motion will allow. The Secretary of State is showing unseemly haste to get his hands on the new powers which the Bill will give him. As we all know, it confers significant additional powers on the Secretary of State.

I am well aware that the Secretary of State is a regular reader of the Catholic journal *The Tablet*. It is a pity that he has not taken notice of a letter in that journal of August this year, which says:

"The Secretary of State for Education now has powers —over the opening and closing of schools, over what should be taught within them, over the information that should be published and by whom it should be published, over how the schools should be funded, over admission policies and over specialisation (a euphemism for selection)—which are probably unprecedented in the Western world. All this is

[Mr. Foster]

proclaimed under the banner of choice. Given the distinctive role that the Church has played in the development of education in this country, Catholics should be alarmed by what is happening."

That is the nub of the matter. We should all be alarmed by the Bill and by what it contains. The Government have been in power too long they have begun to—*[Interruption.]* I am grateful for the Minister's seated intervention.

The Government have failed to remember the importance of listening to the electorate and to the views of people with knowledge of the various issues. They have not been willing to listen. I hope that we shall oppose the guillotine motion and accept the amendment tabled in the name of the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) so that we can continue the debate on a vitally important issue.

6.9 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) earlier accused me of quoting from a Conservative central office brief. I now have the information to hand. She may be pleased to know that I was referring to a letter sent to me by the home affairs section of the House of Commons Library, which reads:

"Dear Mr. Pawsey,

Guillotine

You put two questions to me on the use of the guillotine. The answers are as follows:

It is true that Michael Foot, as Leader of the House, set a record by guillotining 5 Bills in one day, 20 July 1976. They were the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Bill, the Dock Work Regulation Bill, the Health Services Bill, the Rent (Agriculture) Bill, and the Education Bill. The guillotine was applied to the report and third reading stages except in the case of the Health Services Bill where the committee stage was also guillotined after 18 sittings. The others had had, respectively, 58, 36, 12 and 35 committee sittings. All 5 Bills were subsequently guillotined for Lords amendments, again all on the same day, 8 November 1976. The decision to guillotine so many Bills in one day aroused considerable annoyance and, in particular, the groupings of the Bills into 3 rather than 5 separate motions was challenged. The Speaker, however, ruled that this was in order."

I hope that the hon. Lady will forgive me if I remind her that the brief came from the same source as hers—from the House of Commons Library.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming the information that I gave to the House. He obviously did not read his brief carefully. As I said, a Labour Government have never guillotined the Committee stage of an Education Bill.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Lady said, presumably with some form of defective second sight, that I was using a central office brief, but it came from exactly the same source as hers, from the Library.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I share the hon. Gentleman's view that central office briefs are simply not worth quoting.

Mr. Pawsey: Central office briefs are always precise, accurate and to the point, unlike those that Opposition Members receive from their sources.

If a justification for the Bill were required it could be found in the fact that, although Standing Committee E sat for about 65½ hours, we have so far only reached clause 15.

I suspect that the hon. Member for Dewsbury was in the House in 1976 when that guillotine was in motion. She is protesting about the use of a guillotine on one Bill, when five Bills were guillotined—*[Interruption.]* As I am reminded by my hon. Friends, she voted for them. The hon. Lady is not the great democrat that she pretends to be.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Pawsey: Opposition Members are queuing to intervene. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman whose name always reminds me of the Catholic church.

Mr. Greg Pope (Hyndburn): As the hon. Gentleman clearly has the information, can he inform the House how many sittings there had been on the Education Bill in 1976 when it was guillotined, so that we may compare it with the number of sittings on this Bill?

Mr. Pawsey: As it happens, I can provide the hon. Gentleman with that information. Again I am quoting from the letter to me from the House of Commons Library —in order that there be no misunderstanding about the source—which states:

"You also asked for how many hours the Education Bill of that session had been debated before it was guillotined. As mentioned above the Bill was considered at 35 standing committee sittings and according to Burton and Drewry these were 'spun out to 86 hours'".

The hon. Gentleman will recall that the Bill received two days consideration at Second Reading and that it will receive two days on Report. As far as I know, that is unprecedented. I have no knowledge of any Education Bill receiving that amount of time on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pawsey: I shall give way and then all three Opposition Front-Bench Members will have intervened in my speech, even though I have only reached the first paragraph.

Mr. Griffiths: That merely shows how controversial the speech is. First, may I point out that the Education Bill that the hon. Gentleman seeks to malign us with was only 10 clauses long, whereas this Bill has 255 clauses? He and I served on the Committee of the great Education Reform Act 1988, which had three-day Report and Third Reading stages. That is what our amendment seeks and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will support it as he did on that previous occasion.

Mr. Pawsey: That merely shows my independence of mind.

I must continue with my speech, as I know that Conservative Members want the opportunity to address the Chair on what we consider to be a genuinely important matter.

In the view of my hon. Friends, the Bill will do much to enhance the quality and standard of state education. For that reason, we want it to be enacted as soon as possible. However, our enthusiasm, our sense of urgency, is not shared by Opposition Members. We want the maximum number of the nation's children to benefit as soon as possible from the measures proposed in the Bill.

As a sign of the delaying tactics employed by Opposition Members, on 1, 3, and 8 December we devoted 17 hours and 43 minutes to the discussion of clause 7. There are 255 clauses in the Bill, and if each were debated for that length of time, the Committee would need to spend 4,157 hours and 45 minutes debating the Bill in Committee.

I am certain that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker will find that figure as incredible and as intolerable as I do. Incidentally, the figure that I quoted does not include time to debate the schedules.

Ms. Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley) *rose*——

Mr. Pawsey: If the hon. Lady will forgive me, I have given way several times and I know that many Conservative Members wish to speak.

We have been reminded that the Second Reading lasted about 11 hours and 51 minutes over two days.

I have referred to the fact that timetable motions are not new to the House. I do not believe that Conservative Members need to take any lectures from Opposition Members about guillotines, democracy, or even the scrutiny of Bills.

Some of our debates have been genuinely illuminating. For example, on 1 December we discussed the implications of the Bill for various sections of the Education Act 1944. I hope that in the timetable an opportunity will be found to re-examine those sections of the 1944 Act that gave local education authorities a senior role in the provision of education. That role will change with the growth of the grant-maintained sector, as envisaged in the Bill.

The Bill promotes grant-maintained schools and I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has come out so clearly in favour of them. He is right—such schools do much to enhance the quality and standard of state education. The Bill provides for a funding agency for grant-maintained schools and seeks to ensure that local education authorities do not stifle would-be grant-maintained schools under a mass of adverse propaganda. Conservative Members have argued for greater fairness and have long believed that some LEAs might be prejudiced against grant-maintained schools. We do not believe that the local education authority is the only vehicle able to deliver good education to the nation's children.

In Standing Committee, the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) gave the game away. He used the word "hostile" to describe the attitude of some LEAs to the idea of grant-maintained schools. It became clear in Committee that he was not alone in that view. That declared hostility is one reason why it is necessary to introduce the Bill. Where LEAs are hostile to grant-maintained schools, that hostility must be curtailed and controlled.

I found it significant that Opposition Members could boast with pride that there were some LEAs in which no grant-maintained schools had emerged. I believe that that is due not so much to the excellence of the LEAs, as to the propaganda and intimidation waged against schools considering grant-maintained status.

Mr. Enright *rose*——

Mr. Pawsey: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman, but if the hon. Member for City of Durham wants to intervene, I shall give way.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I was not going to intervene, as I hope to make a speech in the next few minutes, but I must ask the hon. Gentleman how he explains the fact that many local education authorities do not even contain a school that wants to ballot to leave the authority.

Mr. Pawsey: I can easily explain. That is because of the barrage of black propaganda that has been waged against grant-maintained schools by people such as the hon. Gentleman and his Labour party friends.

I appreciate that not all the Committee's deliberations are studied by parents or members of the public. The Committee's deliberations have been long and sometimes, dare I say it, boring. I hasten to add that only the contributions of Opposition Members were boring. However, debates on the Floor of the Chamber attract substantial public attention. One hour spent debating on the Floor of the Chamber is so often worth dozens of hours in Committee Room 10 listening to the thoughts on meditation, puppy training and the diary extracts of a head teacher. We even heard some teachers described as flibbertigibbets—not by a Conservative Member. I am glad that the example of the Education Reform Act 1988 will be followed when we discuss the Bill on Report, and that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has found time for a two-day debate on the important Bill.

On Second Reading I asked the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) whether, if the Labour party were to be returned to office—an unlikely event—grant-maintained schools would be taken back into LEA control. The hon. Gentleman said that he would respond the next day. I have read his speech—hard work it was, too—but I could not find an unambiguous statement on that important issue. Therefore, I repeat the challenge: if the Labour party were to be returned to office in some far distant future Parliament, would grant-maintained schools once more be part of LEAs?

Mr. Win Griffiths: What I said in Committee was very clear. I suggest that we look at the speech together and, if the hon. Gentleman is not satisfied, I shall later make a statement on which we can both agree.

Mr. Pawsey: As the hon. Gentleman has asked me a direct question, I can tell him that I am not satisfied with his reply. I read his speech, which did not contain an unambiguous statement on grant-maintained schools. I have given the hon. Gentleman the opportunity to answer from the Dispatch Box the question that I have once again asked him, and again he has fudged the answer——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The debate is on the timetable motion. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will relate his comments to it, but it is not immediately clear to me how he proposes to do so.

Mr. Pawsey: I think that I have made my point absolutely clear.

Conservative Members want the Bill to be enacted. There have been about 72 hours debate in Committee and on the Floor of the House, during which time we have covered only a modest number of clauses. We believe that honest discussion has become deliberate obstruction. Therefore, I support the motion and urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to do the same.

6.26 pm

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): I oppose the imposition of the guillotine on this Bill, as I believe that the Secretary of State has shown an inconsistency of purpose. He presented the White Paper and the Bill as a coping stone of 10 or so years of Conservative legislation on education—a blueprint for the 21st century. To do that and then seek to stifle debate on this important Bill reveals his inconsistency. It would surely be more consistent for him to allow debate commensurate with the importance of the matters contained in the Bill.

The only consistency that I can see relates to the practice rather than the purpose of the Secretary of State in trying to impose the guillotine after a cursory consultation process on a White Paper that was published at the end of July, modified and presented, almost as a Bill, at the end of October.

I shall confine my remarks to three important issues in the Bill that need more discussion than will be allowed if debate is stifled by the guillotine: first, clauses 169 to 179, which refer to school attendance; secondly, the inadequate treatment given to provision for special needs; thirdly, the many sections of the Bill relating to its main purpose—opting out.

Clauses 169 to 179 refer to the important issue of school attendance, but will not be given adequate debate if the Bill is guillotined. School attendance is mentioned in a key passage of the White Paper, at paragraph 1.22, which states:

"There is little point in having good, regularly inspected schools,"

first-rate teachers, a national curriculum that is well taught and assessed, if all our children do not attend school, remain there and learn throughout the school day. Last year I had the privilege of addressing the Association of Chief Educational Social Workers, so I was interested to see in the White Paper the hearty endorsement of the work of educational social workers, who share a common concern with the Secretary of State.

However, when I discussed that important subject with members of the association, I found them cautious about the new registration requirements imposed on schools. They felt that those requirements could lead to excessive use of unauthorised absence. They offered some interesting suggestions for the Secretary of State to consider genuinely to improve school attendance, instead of cooking the books to suit the league tables of school attendance. I feel saddened that an issue described in the White Paper as being so important should not be adequately discussed merely because of the guillotine.

In one of the most noted passages in the White Paper the Secretary of State suggested that parents know best the needs of their children. But clauses 169 to 179 give the lie to such a fatuous suggestion; they are all about parents who do not know what is best for their children.

As for special educational needs, I know that Ministers will boast of examples of good practice in such provision in grant-maintained schools—I have heard them do so. That does not alter the fact that the Bill provides no mechanism to protect SEN provision in schools that opt out. It is irresponsible of the Secretary of State to engineer a situation in which discussion of such an important issue cannot go on. It is bad enough under the present system of delegated budgets—local management of schools, under which funding is devolved and there is no control over schools' spending.

I shall draw my examples from provision for the hearing impaired, a handicap in which I take a close interest. For instance, a school with eight children who were hearing-impaired was given a slice of budget which the headmistress did not feel justified in spending on so few children—it came to several thousand pounds. It was intended to be used to buy eight radio hearing aids, quite expensive items. Instead, the headmistress chose to buy a perimeter fence and some benches.

Another school with a hearing-impaired unit found that the relevant teacher left and was not replaced, so parents who had placed their children in the school on the understanding that they would be provided for were no longer guaranteed that provision.

Things are even worse under the grant-maintained system, and we should of course be given time adequately to discuss them. Under the GM system, a chunk of funding earmarked for special needs by an LEA is allocated to a GM school. Hearing impairment is a low-incidence handicap which is expensive to service. Schools find it extremely difficult to pay for it, and even if they could, they would not necessarily know what resources to provide without the expertise of the LEA.

I know that the latest missive from the Secretary of State to school governors—it is undated, but I received my copy last Friday—offers an assurance that GM schools may still purchase special provision of various kinds, including provision for hearing-impaired children, from the local education authority. But how can the LEA provide that if its resource base is chipped away, opt-out by opt-out? This issue was discussed in Committee, but we have as yet received no satisfactory answers.

I have described the process of privatisation, fragmentation and diminution of service. A Conservative Member has referred to a system of provision connected in series in ever smaller fragments, becoming dimmer and more diluted as the series progresses. How, then, is parental choice to be guaranteed, especially if provision for children's special needs is so expensive? A child's statement may refer to such provision, but neither parent nor child will have any range of choice. It is irresponsible and reprehensible not to allow enough time adequately to examine matters of that sort.

My main anxiety is about the new procedures in the Bill to speed up the process of opting out and to rig the system in favour of those in a school who want to trigger an opt-out ballot. It is cavalier of the Secretary of State to rush into this before he has published evidence that GM schools deliver a higher quality of education. The evidence has not yet been forthcoming, and the case needs closer examination.

Even on the right hon. Gentleman's distorted and narrow criteria—I suppose that they equate to crooked criteria—of publishing tables of five O-level results, graded A to C by year groups, one would not be surprised to find that GM schools score higher than the 98·5 per cent. of schools which have not opted out. Twenty-five per cent. of GM schools, after all, are selective, compared with only 5 per cent. in the system generally.

A published list of 200 schools in the Merseyside and Cheshire area shows that selective schools cluster near the top of the league table. That is not surprising; those schools select their intake on the basis of pupils' likely

aptitude for the examinations to which the league tables are confined. It is not surprising, either, to find that the non-selective schools cluster near the bottom of the 200, because they do not select their intake according to these criteria.

Her Majesty's inspectorate has inspected a representative sample of GM schools, so the Secretary of State has the necessary information. Why not publish it before rushing this important legislation through the House?

My greatest anxiety is directed at what can happen if the Secretary of State rigs the opt-out process in favour of those who support opting out. I refer to recent events in my constituency and to the opt-out ballot at Thomas Becket school in Knowsley. I am pleased to say that the first two attempts to opt out of Knowsley LEA were resoundingly rebuffed: at Ruffwood school by 97 per cent. —still a record opt-out rejection—and at Prescot school —I was chairman of the board of governors for 15 years there—by 67 per cent., or more than two to one. Now it is the turn of Thomas Becket in Huyton. I am confident that the parents at that school will match the good sense shown by the parents of children at the other two.

Mr. Nigel Evans: By 1995, more than 1 million parents will have children in grant-maintained schools—*[Interruption.]*—on current trends. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that, come the next general election, he will tell those parents that their children will no longer be educated at grant-maintained schools because they will be taken over by the local education authority?

Mr. O'Hara *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not be tempted to answer that question. It has little to do with the guillotine.

Mr. O'Hara: I do not, anyway, accept the assumption that the question makes—and neither, I understand, does the Secretary of State.

What appals me, having spoken to the parents of children at Thomas Becket, is the way that the head teacher and staff at that school have drawn the children into the issue—I would not dignify the description "debate". It is hardly an overstatement to talk of indoctrination and certainly of emotional blackmail. Children have been addressed in assembly and further harassed by teachers, with tales that, unless the school opts out, specific teachers will be sacked and specific pupils will not be able to complete specific O and A-level courses. I use the word "harassed". I heard of one teacher pointing to a pupil in the corridor and saying——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That equally has nothing to do with the guillotine. The hon. Gentleman was keeping in order, but he is now drifting out of order.

Mr. O'Hara: I could give further examples, but I shall not do so, of attempts to stifle debate on an opt-out ballot by a particular school in my constituency. Likewise, the Secretary of State is trying to stifle debate on the opting-out processes in the Bill.

In my opening remarks, I referred to the indecent haste with which the Bill appeared, in stark contrast to the stature claimed for it. I allowed myself a wry smile when the Secretary of State, after a small number of weeks in purdah, emerged with his so-called blockbuster White Paper, which has become a Christmas cake of a Bill. I was reminded of the poet Horace. I am sorry that the Secretary of State is not in his place, because I would have addressed him as a scholar. I trust that my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) will listen carefully.

Boasting of one of his literary productions, Horace observed:

> "Exegi monumentum aere perennius"—

that is to say,

> "I have wrought a monument more lasting than bronze."

However, Horace also said that when one has produced something, one should put it away and suppress it for nine full years—

> "Membranis intus positis: delere licebit".

If the Secretary of State was not prepared to allow his White Paper to mature in the wood of consultation, he ought to allow the Bill to mature in the wood of full and proper debate in the House.

6.43 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Having witnessed 65 hours of self-indulgent humbug and virtual incessant verbal incontinence from Opposition Members, and having served on the Standing Committees of three major education Bills, I cannot think of a more appropriate motion than the one before the House.

The situation was exemplified by the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster)—sadly, he is not in his place—who, after 26 minutes speaking tonight, said that he was just coming to the nub of his argument. If any of our constituents saw the shenanigans involved in dealing with such an important Bill for the past two months, they would be appalled.

The Committee debated 15 clauses in 65 hours. There are another 240 to go—and the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd) said, "I think that is good progress." At that rate, we will not complete the Committee stage for another two years, and the Bill would reach the statute book some time early in the next millennium, if we were lucky.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's definition of progress. Does he measure progress as getting through the clauses or, as my right hon. and hon. Friends do, by the number of amendments that we persuade Ministers to accept?

Mr. Coombs: I measure progress by the proper and rational scrutiny of the Bill's important clauses. According to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), the Opposition, without any self-criticism but with pure cynicism, have filibustered an important educational measure. I find that quite reprehensible. The Committee took a whole morning to consider the sittings motion. Even then, the Opposition did not want to meet in the afternoons. The kind of timetable I gave would have been made twice as worse.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): Does not the hon. Gentleman recall that, in the sittings debate, Conservative Members said that they would like a flexible approach to be taken? There has been 65 hours of debate and now a guillotine is being imposed. Is that flexibility?

Mr. Coombs: I suspect that the majority of my constituents would resoundingly answer, "Yes." Three and one quarter hours were spent on clause 4 without amendment. We saw Opposition Members, obviously

[Mr. Coombs]

organised by their Whip, queuing up—in some cases, rather reluctantly—to give us the sparse edge of their views on this important measure. It has not been an exercise in discussion or democracy, but a deliberate exercise in frustration by Opposition Members.

Clem Attlee said:

"Democracy means government by discussion, but it is only effective if you can stop people talking."

Trying to get that Duracell lot to stop talking is quite something. The hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) actually accused my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of being unwilling to defend his own Bill. When my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth)—the Minister in charge of the Bill—and I held a public meeting in my constituency, we were condemned in an Opposition early-day motion for doing so—*[Interruption.]* Suddenly, we hear that the hon. Member for Wallsend did not append his signature to that particular motion. I am sure that he did not.

This is a classic example of the kind of procrastination that arises when there is no agenda or guidelines as to how discussion ought to proceed. I would not mind if it were just a question of wasting parliamentary time—albeit that parliamentary time is paid for by the taxpayer. I am concerned, however, that the longer that we debate the Bill, the less time educational institutions—whether they be grant-maintained schools or local education authorities—will have to plan for the inevitably changing relationship between schools and LEAs over the next few years.

Some dinosaur-like Opposition Members and those in district councils in particular will say, "We do not want any change in the relationship between local education authorities and schools." On 13 November—a Friday, appropriately enough—*The Times Educational Supplement* reported that the so-called intelligent vice-chairman of Birmingham's educational authority said of his planned relationship between that LEA, which is the biggest in the country, and the funding agency:

"Let the bastards sack us."

That is his idea of the kind of co-operation that is necessary to maintain proper education standards for all our children.

Fortunately, local education authorities—both Labour and Conservative—take a more constructive view. There is no doubt that many will want to amalgamate their education committees with leisure committees or child services committees—as some are already doing—recognising that the future role of local education authorities will be enabling rather than merely executive, as it has been over the past few years. The longer that the House debates in a futile way, the less we provide such bodies with a framework that allows them to plan for the future.

However, my main objection to the disgraceful way in which the Bill is being discussed—or, rather, not discussed—relates to its direct impact on some of the measures that we should take to improve education standards for children in failing schools. One of the Bill's most important aspects is the way in which it deals with education associations. Such associations will go into schools that are plainly failing; we know where many of those schools are, and we know that local education authorities are not taking enough action against them to assist their improvement and, as a result, to improve the education of children.

Whenever I discuss education matters, I remember something that I have always kept in my mind: children go that way but once. They do not have a second chance. If we get things wrong in a failing school, a child's life will be blighted. Even if there is only one class in one school whose teacher is not using maximum potential and giving a child the education that he needs, that is one class too many. The House of Commons cannot procrastinate and allow that to happen.

We have already heard of schools in the same authority, one of which is—according to one measure—far more deprived than another, but obtains significantly better results. That is because such schools have a sense of direction: teachers will have high expectations—that always comes out in HMI reports—and there will be an appropriate differentiation in the kind of education that is offered, according to the ability of individual pupils. All too often, in certain schools that are under-performing, that reveals a performance gap.

As I pointed out in Committee, Professor Nuttall, a professor of curriculum at London university, said:

"However, even when you take account of the value added, there are still . . . substantial differences between schools. We have got to close the performance gap."

One way in which to close that gap is to allow education associations to visit schools that are failing their pupils.

What is Labour's reaction to all that? Labour Members continue to make excuses and to talk about funding. They condescend to parents who have not much money, and who want their children to succeed; they do everything to protect the producer interests with which they have been identified too often in the past. Anyone who wants to see an example of that need only read an extract from a report produced by——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that that is relevant to the motion.

Mr. Coombs: I was merely seeking to point out the urgency of passing some measures in the Bill to improve children's education.

The Socialist Education Association said:

"Gramski's vision is correct—if you want the revolution to succeed you must teach the peasants to read and write".

Can hon. Members imagine any more condescending and disgraceful statement? The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), and a number of his hon. Friends, claim to be proud to be members of that association. That, I think, emphasises the Labour party's appalling attitude to consideration of the Bill, and that is why I think that we should pass the guillotine motion with alacrity.

6.54 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I believe that it was always the Government's intention to table the guillotine motion at the earliest possible moment that, by their lights, was respectable. The Committee's second sitting was kept going until midnight, and the third until 2 am. Personally, I should not mind if we kept long hours every time we met, provided that that gave us an opportunity to discuss in full all the serious issues that are highlighted in the Bill.

The so-called great Education Reform Bill 1988—I had the pleasure, if the word can be used in such a context, of sitting on the Committee with a number of Conservative Members—was debated for 88 hours before the imposition of a guillotine. Moreover, on Report and Third Reading the timetable motion allowed three days for

debate. Our amendment seeks to put the Bill on a par with the "GERBIL". We believe that, as this Bill has far more clauses and deals with many important and diverse matters in relation to schools, the Government could at the very least ameliorate the damage that is being done to its consideration by allowing a three-day debate on Report.

Some of us recall the debates in 1987 and 1988, and the forecasts that the Education Reform Bill would set a pattern for the next generation. It is salutary to reflect that, after only four years, the Government have had to bring in "son of GERBIL" to correct all the shortcomings that they now see in the original.

Some Conservative Members have made much of the time spent on the first 15 clauses of this Bill. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) pointed out —along with the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster)—the first part of the Bill lays the foundations of a completely new structure for education funding. The point between the Secretary of State and the school—which at one time was filled by the democratically elected local education authority—will pass to an unelected, undemocratic, non-accountable body appointed by the Secretary of State, which will work to rules laid down by him. We thought it only right to request a detailed scrutiny of the first 15 clauses: those relating to the Funding Agency for Schools in England and the Funding Council for Schools in Wales.

We have been labouring under a considerable difficulty, which has been identified by my hon. Friends the Members for Wallsend and for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). We have debated fundamental issues relating to funding and the exclusion of pupils from schools, without the benefit of consultation papers that the Government say they will announce shortly. We have had to discuss important matters without even knowing the Government's own thoughts. These, after all, are serious problems.

Hon. Members have referred to the length of time taken to debate amendment No. 235, which was moved by my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg). The amendment was as important as the clauses that introduce the funding agencies. My hon. Friend sought to define the way in which the funding agency would operate and what duties would be placed on schools to make reasonable provision for books and equipment and to ensure that class sizes were reasonable. Such fundamental responsibilities were worthy of a full debate.

One of the suggestions that have been bandied about is that, if we continue to consider the Bill at the present rate, it will require another 1,500 hours to complete its Committee stage. Everybody knows that that is a tendentious use of statistics, but if there had been a reasonable attempt to discuss the Bill, I am sure that we could have reached agreement on considering it at sufficient length and within a time scale that would have satisfied the Government.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that his scrutiny of the Bill so far has been unreasonable, because it sounds like it?

Mr. Griffiths: I am not saying that scrutiny of the Bill has been unreasonable. I am saying that to conclude from our scrutiny so far that the remaining clauses will be taken at the same speed is a spurious use of an argument for the sake of a motion that is unnecessary.

Mr. Clappison *rose*——

Mr. Griffiths: I shall continue, because the debate is subject to a guillotine, and I have dealt with the point accurately.

The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) referred to the considerable time that we spent on clause 7, which the Tory-controlled Association of County Councils believes raises significant constitutional implications. We took its warning seriously and considered all aspects of the clause.

Part II of the Bill will be controversial, and we should have wanted to spend time considering it. Given the conciliatory and helpful attitude of the Minister in accepting two important amendments about children with special needs, we could have reached agreement on the amendments that are necessary to improve part III.

We suggested the amalgamation of the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council in the Education Reform Bill, yet the Government insisted on establishing two separate bodies. I am sure that we could have reached agreement on that. If what the Minister told the Association of Metropolitan Authorities yesterday was representative of his approach, we could have reached agreement on reasoned amendments to that part of the Bill. Again, I am sure that we could have reached agreement on amendments to improve school attendance.

In short, there could have been a reasonable approach to the non-controversial parts of the Bill where the Minister has shown that he is willing to reach agreement, but we had no chance to reach such agreement. As a final appeal, I hope that he will accept our amendment and let us know when the exclusions consultation paper and the paper on the formula funding for GMS schools will be issued. If he does so, despite some of the acrimony in the debate, we might be able to leave the Chamber happy this evening.

7.5 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): As hon. Members well know, these occasions, which occur from time to time, are part ritual and part humbug. We have had plenty of both tonight.

Hon. Members who have sat for hours in Committee can characterise the flavour of the debate well because this has been a mirror image of what has taken place for the best part of about 60 hours upstairs. I characterise it best by quoting the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster), who took 26 minutes of our time to say, most memorably, "I quite enjoyed the proceedings of the Committee and learned a lot from it." He certain has a lot to learn, but why he should be doing it at the expense of the Committee is beyond me.

I suppose that that sums up resonably well why we find ourselves in this position. The hon. Gentleman went on to ask—helpfully, I thought—"Why do not we plan the debate properly"? Perhaps he has not noticed, but the purpose of the motion is to plan the debate properly. My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) summed it up better than I could—but that is often the case—when he said that honest discussion had become deliberate obstruction. That was the burden of my hon. Friend's comments this evening, which were expressed with understandable frustration.

I can illustrate that point, if it needs illustrating, by pointing out that 70 times the Chairman of the Committee

[Mr. Eric Forth]

has had to call Opposition Members to order for straying from the subject—for being out of order. That took place no fewer than eight times on the first sitting alone, when the Chairman had to say,

"I hope that he will relate his remarks directly to the sittings motion",

and

"Discussions about my past are not in order this morning."

That is the Chairman's past, not mine. He continued,

"This is not in order."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 17 November 1992; c. 6-9.]

I could quote in extenso, but I will not. In the eighth sitting—I pick it simply at random—on another five occasions——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I am afraid that I cannot see the hon. Gentleman's face. Will he address the Chair?

Mr. Forth: I am sorry. Moreover, I shall smile for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I speak.

The reality of the debate was mirrored in this morning's deliberations when, in Committee, as ever we are on a Tuesday, we spent nearly two and a half hours on one amendment to a clause but did not manage to dispose of it.

The importance of the Bill is agreed by all hon. Members, and at least half of its clauses are essentially re-enactments of previous statutes—a fact which we should bear well in mind. The proposed timetable motion, which I hope the House will support, allows nine more Committee days—more than we have already had—and 18 more sittings—more than we have already had—and up to 70 or more hours of debate. The proposal will allow us to ensure that all parts of the Bill are properly and adequately covered. That cannot be said of our debates up until now. We have spent more than 60 hours in Committee, covering only 14 or 15 clauses, yet the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) says, "Trust us and we shall allow proper progress to be made in future." That does not wash.

Having sat through all those hours with so little progress being made on the Bill, on what basis could we proceed? It is not good enough. Our duty is not only to the people who elected the Government, with their mandate based on the programme so clearly set out in April—and set out not only in the White Paper that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State so elegantly wrote and introduced to us in July, but in the Bill. Our duty is also to make progress on the Bill in order to provide a proper framework for the growing grant-maintained schools sector.

If Opposition Members had shown an element of desire to make progress on the Bill earlier, we should not now be in this position. But we owe the House as a whole a rate of progress on the Bill; we owe the education world progess on it, so that people can see that each clause is being properly considered. We cannot allow the sort of frustration, obfuscation and dilatory tactics employed by Opposition Members. Those tactics have slowed the Bill down so much that my right hon. Friends have had to decide that in order to protect the business of the House and the business of the Government, in order to make proper progress with the Bill, we must put this reasonable, realistic and positive timetable motion before the House. It allows more than adequate time and gives us the opportunity to sit down with the Opposition and discuss ways in which we may now proceed properly. I hope that we shall do that.

That has been done with all reasonableness—but the reasonableness has come only from the Government side of the House and of the Committee. We have allowed Opposition Members the maximum latitude, and they have failed us, they have failed the education world, and they have let everybody down, by wasting the time available and making so little progress on the Bill. We shall correct that with the timetable motion. If the House supports the motion, as I now ask it to do, we shall make proper progress on the Bill and be able to scrutinise it properly. The Bill will come out of Committee in better shape and the House will be able to proceed in proper order with its business. I ask the House to support the motion.

Question put, That the amendment be made:

The House divided: Ayes 260, Noes 290.

Division No. 102] **[7.11 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Corston, Ms Jean
Adams, Mrs Irene	Cousins, Jim
Ainger, Nick	Cox, Tom
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Cryer, Bob
Allen, Graham	Cummings, John
Alton, David	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*	Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Armstrong, Hilary	Dafis, Cynog
Ashton, Joe	Dalyell, Tam
Barnes, Harry	Darling, Alistair
Battle, John	Davidson, Ian
Bayley, Hugh	Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Beggs, Roy	Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.	Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Denham, John
Bennett, Andrew F.	Dewar, Donald
Benton, Joe	Dixon, Don
Bermingham, Gerald	Dobson, Frank
Berry, Dr. Roger	Donohoe, Brian H.
Betts, Clive	Dowd, Jim
Blair, Tony	Dunnachie, Jimmy
Blunkett, David	Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Boateng, Paul	Eagle, Ms Angela
Boyce, Jimmy	Eastham, Ken
Bradley, Keith	Enright, Derek
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Etherington, Bill
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*	Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*	Faulds, Andrew
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Burden, Richard	Fisher, Mark
Byers, Stephen	Flynn, Paul
Caborn, Richard	Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Callaghan, Jim	Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*	Foulkes, George
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Fyfe, Maria
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*	Galbraith, Sam
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Galloway, George
Canavan, Dennis	Gapes, Mike
Cann, Jamie	Garrett, John
Chisholm, Malcolm	Gerrard, Neil
Clapham, Michael	Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*	Godsiff, Roger
Clelland, David	Golding, Mrs Llin
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Gordon, Mildred
Coffey, Ann	Graham, Thomas
Cohen, Harry	Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*	Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	Grocott, Bruce
Corbett, Robin	Hain, Peter
Corbyn, Jeremy	Hall, Mike

Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy

Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

Amendment accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 298, Noes 258.

Division No. 103] **7.27 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy

Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*

Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Education Bill.

Committee

1.—(1) The Standing Committee to which the Bill has been allocated shall report the Bill to the House on or before 9th February.

(2) Proceedings at a sitting of the Standing Committee on that day may continue until Ten o'clock whether or not the House is adjourned before that time, and if the House is adjourned before those proceedings have been brought to a conclusion, the Standing Committee shall report the Bill to the House on 10th February.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on consideration shall be completed in two allotted days and shall be brought to a conclusion at Nine o'clock on the second allotted day.

(2) The proceedings on Third Reading shall be completed on the second allotted day and shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock.

(3) For the purposes of Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on consideration such part of each of those allotted days as the Resolutions of the Business Committee may determine.

(4) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolutions as to the proceedings on consideration not later than the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(5) The Resolutions in any Report made under Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (4), and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(6) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on consideration are taken.

Proceedings in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be made in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatory statement from the Member who makes, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

(3) The Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are taken in the Standing Committee.

(4) On the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill in the Standing Committee the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Order of proceedings

4. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings in the Standing Committee or on consideration of the Bill are taken, except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Dilatory Motions

5. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time

6.—(1) On the first allotted day, paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings for two hours after Ten o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to that period of two hours.

(3) If the first allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) stands over from an earlier day a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion shall be added to that period of two hours.

Private business

7. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

8.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings on the Bill which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or the Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(c) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment is moved or Motion is made by a Member of the Government; and

(d) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or the Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(a) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(b) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which under this Order are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

9.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to those proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before the time appointed for bringing proceedings to a conclusion under this Order, no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

10. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(a) prevent any proceedings to which the order applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order; or

(b) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Recommittal

11.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, recommittal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and the Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

12. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day, provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day, or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Education Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

Orders of the Day

Civil Service (Management Functions) Bill *[Lords]*

Not amended (in the Standing Committee, considered.

New Clause 2

COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR-GENERAL FOR NORTHERN IRELAND)

'Any function delegated under this Act affecting the Northern Ireland Civil Service shall be subject to an annual report made by the Comptroller and Auditor-General for Northern Ireland to the House of Commons.'.—*[Mr. Davidson.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

7.40 pm

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I am moving the new clause in order to raise matters of principle and to seek assurances from the Minister. I am moving it in this form in order to avoid duplication of the amendments that were moved in Committee.

The new clause is basically about accountability, both in principle and in process. In the Committee my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) spoke at length about the role of the Comptroller and Auditor-General. This is probably well enough known to all hon. Members, so I do not propose to cover that ground again.

However, I am particularly interested in the role of that officer and his Department in providing information for use by hon. Members in holding Departments accountable for the actions they take following the passage of this legislation and the introduction of delegation. It is important that we are enabled, as Members of Parliament, to follow through the implementation of this legislation and be provided with appropriate information, so that we can genuinely scrutinise the use that is made of these powers.

I want to press the Minister to give us assurances that he will take the next available opportunity to introduce amendments or legislation along the lines indicated by my hon. Friend the Member for Hodge Hill. I understand that he indicated at an earlier stage that he did not see the Bill as a Christmas tree to which all possible good measures could be attached. But the giving of powers at some point in the future to introduce control of the Comptroller and Auditor-General's survey would seem to be relatively easy.

In terms of the general issues with regard to Northern Ireland, given that heads of Department are not Ministers but civil servants and that there is an enhanced role for the civil service in Northern Ireland, this new clause is truly relevant.

In the discussion in Committee, grave concerns were expressed about the prospects for regional variations in pay and conditions being introduced as a result of devolutionary steps taken under this legislation. Similarly, the prospect of the impact of the legislation upon the dispersal policy of the Government was the subject of considerable discussion. I very much hope that reports that come back from the Comptroller and Auditor-General will cover both those areas.

It will be a source of considerable concern if the use of devolution becomes a mechanism by which wage rates in Northern Ireland and some other parts of the United Kingdom are brought down to a level below that prevailing in the more prosperous parts of the country. It is important to me and to many of my hon. Friends that there is some mechanism by which this issue is kept constantly under review. I can see no other mechanism by which such an overview can be achieved.

It is important that the role of the Comptroller and Auditor-General in surveying the work of the Government, by undertaking value-for-money studies, is brought into this whole area of work. I and many of my colleagues took a wider view of the impact of contracting out and market testing than did many Conservative Members. We need objective assessment of the scale of diseconomies that flow from this legislation. We need to make sure that someone—I believe that the most appropriate person is the Comptroller and Auditor-General—is continuing to survey not only the gains that are achieved by any contracting out but the diseconomies. We need to make sure that that survey is undertaken objectively.

I will give one example of a case where concern is being caused to me and my colleagues. I have with me the annual report of National Savings.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am truly sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I am afraid that he is going rather wide of new clause 2, which relates entirely to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Davidson: I understand that, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was seeking to illustrate the general principle, that the Comptroller and the Auditor-General would be used to examine certain circumstances. I was going to use the example of the Department for National Savings, but I will not use that. However, if there were such a Department in Northern Ireland with which a parallel could be drawn, and if it were found that it was undertaking a particular task at a lower cost than that in the comparable private sector organisation—had I been using National Savings, I would have compared it with building societies—then it would be very difficult to see what could be gained by contracting out some subsection of its work.

The difficulty that we experience comes back to the question of whether to take an holistic view. Many Government Departments take an holistic perspective. They have targets set for them to which they work to achieve gains in efficiency. Once one starts to split up their activies it is much easier to identify the savings that might result from the contracting out of a particular service, but that does not allow one to measure, unless one makes a specific effort to do so, the diseconomies that result. In particular, it is not possible to identify, by any method that is known so far, the diseconomies that come from a loss of flexibility, team work or morale.

It seems to me that, if we intend to go further down the road of contracting out and market testing, someone has to play that wider role to provide information to the House. That is why, in the new clause, I am proposing that, for Northern Ireland, the Comptroller and

Auditor-General should regularly produce reports on all those activities that are not contracted out, in order that we may make that assessment.

I am convinced that the Government are concentrating on that which is easily calculable at the expense of that which it is more difficult to assess, but where the costs of this policy are far greater. So, in effect, even where we are achieving some short-term, limited gains, overall the picture is a loss. I know that Conservative Members will dispute that. The problem is that at the moment we do not have the evidence to establish which of us is correct.

I therefore believe that the new clause should be supported as the only way in which that can be done.

7.45 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I welcome the fact that this new clause has been tabled, and I thank the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson) for moving it. It is particularly useful to have a clause of this nature specifically relating to Northern Ireland and imposing a duty to make reports to the House with regard to any delegations under the legislation. I hope that the hon. Member will forgive the reference to the drafting of the new clause, but I assume that it would also have to cover not just a delegation under the Bill but a delegation under any Order in Council that might be made under the existing clause 3 of the Bill, because the coverage of the new clause might not be effective without it. With permission, therefore, I will address the duty to report with regard to functions delegated under any Order in Council yet to be made or foreshadowed by clause 3.

It is particularly useful to have this obligation to account, because one of the concerns that we have had about the legislation—we went into this to some extent in Committee—is on the question of accountability. I suggested during the third sitting of the Committee that there were some special problems in accountability with regard to Northern Ireland because of the somewhat different administrative and legal structure that exists there. We made a very brief reference in Committee, where I used a form of shorthand, and it might be helpful to the House if I set out in a bit more detail what I think the situation there is and what the problems might be.

One of the problems stems from the fact that we still have in existence the legal structures for devolution. It may be paradoxical that a Government so opposed to devolution should retain in existence the legal structures for devolution, but that is the situation.

Originally, by which I mean under the Government of Ireland Act 1920, we had devolution establishing what were called "Ministries" and "Ministers". Clearly, Ministers ran Ministries. Under the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973, the term "Ministry" was transmuted into "Department" and it also created the concept of "head of Department". The Head of Department to be set up under that legislation was to take the place of a Minister. It caused a little confusion in Committee when I used the term "head of Department" as the Minister did not recognise it—it was a new term invented by a previous Conservative Government to provide a different name for a Minister. Therefore, heads of Departments are Ministers, and I use the phrase as a type of shorthand.

The point that I made in Committee was that the persons who sit on the Front Bench and who are called Ministers with regard to Northern Ireland are not Ministers for the purpose of devolution in Northern Ireland. Of course, we have the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments, the latter being run by heads of Departments. There was provision under the 1973 Act for heads of Departments under the devolutionary structures which no longer exist. The Northern Ireland Act 1974 provides that the functions of heads of Departments are now to be discharged by Departments.

I was slightly in error on that point in Committee because I referred to the function being discharged by permanent secretaries, but the legislation in fact states that the function of a head of Department is discharged by the Department, not by the Minister. The 1974 Act also provides that the Departments are to act under the direction and control of the Secretary of State but that does not refer to the Ministers. There are other Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office and they may be assigned functions by the Secretary of State but they are not heads of Department.

I felt that that could cause some difficulty with this form of legislation. In Northern Ireland we used to have a Civil Service Department. It exercised the sort of control which in Great Britain is exercised by the Treasury over the civil service. Under the Departments (Northern Ireland) Order 1982, the functions of the Civil Service Department were transferred to the Department of Finance and Personnel. Those functions being transferred by the 1982 order were the "management and control" of the civil service.

In this context, management and control must clearly relate to the type of functions to which this legislation refers. It will be interesting to know the exact form in which the Order in Council is drafted and by whom the delegation is to be made. Although the Northern Ireland Act 1974 states that the function of Departments when discharging the work of the head of Department is to be done under the "direction and control" of the Secretary of State, the term "control" must have a slightly different meaning to the term as it is used in the Departments Order with regard to the functions of the civil service and of the Department of Finance and Personnel with regard to the management and control of the civil service.

Clause 1(1) states:

"This section applies to any function delegated by Her Majesty with regard to the management of Her Majesty's Home Civil Service".

The equivalent provision when it comes in the Northern Ireland Order in Council will presumably have to refer to functions presently discharged by the Department of Finance and Personnel, and presumably provision will be made for them to be delegated to other persons in the civil service hierarchy or to heads of agencies. There may still be overall political responsibility through the Secretary of State and the provision of the 1974 order for him to exercise or to give direction and control, but in that context "control" must have a slightly different meaning from that used in the Departments Order and the functions that are to be delegated.

That raises questions about accountability. It is all very well to say that there will continue to be accountability through the Secretary of State, but the Secretary of State has a general power to give directions to the Departments and the Departments have the management functions—not the Secretary of State or the Ministers—and it will be further delegated to the heads of agencies. That means that

[Mr. David Trimble]

there are two or perhaps more steps between the political accountability through the Secretary of State to the House. That raises serious questions of accountability. I therefore welcome the new clause, because it would provide for an additional or better way to ensure accountability.

Another reason why it is desirable that this new clause be accepted and to reinforce the measure of control and accountability which the House could exercise with regard to delegation under the legislation is a special factor operating for Northern Ireland. That special factor is that the Northern Ireland Office, and the Departments which shelter under its wing, is unique among all the Departments of State of the United Kingdom in that it is the only Department for which the House has not established a Select Committee to scrutinise and monitor its functions.

That means that there is already a tremendous gap in accountability for Northern Ireland matters. Northern Ireland matters are remote not only geographically but in terms of the involvement of the House through such a Committee. The unique gap in the accountability for Northern Ireland matters means that there is a strong argument for a provision along the lines outlined in the new clause. I hasten to add that it is very much second or perhaps even third best, because any reports that are to be made to the House by the Comptroller and Auditor-General for Northern Ireland will merely give us information. The function of the Comptroller and Auditor-General is directed mainly to what could be called financial probity. It will not provide the proper scrutiny and control of policy, which is what we miss, especially because of the absence of a Select Committee. For those two reasons, it is desirable to have the new clause.

I must also refer to what could be regarded as the substance behind the new clause. At Second Reading and in Committee I expressed concern about the way in which powers to delegate functions under this legislation could be used. Despite repeated use in Committee of the phrase that salary and other matters could be set with regard to "local labour markets", the Minister did not allay my concerns about the way in which the legislation may develop.

It is not a concern which is unique to Northern Ireland. It can apply to other geographical Departments within the United Kingdom, the other Departments which the Chancellor of the Exchequer dismissively referred to in the autumn statement as "the territories", meaning Wales and Scotland. The same problems can arise there and, indeed, in other parts of England. Certainly we are delegating in what the Chancellor referred to as "the territories", so local labour markets could have a significant influence on the way in which salaries and conditions are determined in future.

The Minister sometimes felt that I was unnecessarily worried about that. I hope that he was right. I did not feel entirely reassured by what he said about the Government's policy. As hon. Members will know, throughout our debate on the Bill it has been felt—certainly by my colleagues—that the Government have a hidden agenda for the legislation, that it is not as innocent as it appears and that it may even be seen in retrospect as an important building block in a larger scheme which has yet to unfold.

That is why there are considerable reservations about the legislation, which have not been allayed by the debate so far. Our reservations lead us to believe that measures to reinforce accountability and supervision are necessary. In Committee, the Minister said that he would be prepared to make a form of annual report to the House on the operation of the legislation. Has the Minister been able to think in more detail about the form and content of that annual report? We tossed out some ideas and discussed them briefly in Committee and I look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say. Perhaps he can spell out the details of that annual report, because it is important that the House receives information about its operation.

If new clause 2 were incorporated in the Bill, that information would be provided. It is for that reason and for the other reasons that I have mentioned that I support the new clause. I have referred to the absence of the Select Committee and to the slightly different legal and constitutional structure in Northern Ireland. Those matters should be addressed, and I do not apologise for referring to them once more.

Because of the way in which the Bill is drafted, after tonight the legislation, so far as it affects Northern Ireland, cannot be discussed. We have not yet had the substantive Northern Ireland measure. That will come in the Order in Council provided in clause 3. We do not know the precise form that that order will take. As I said earlier, there may be slight differences between the Order in Council and the Bill, but we will be denied a debate on the Northern Ireland measure because of clause 3.

That is why I hope that the Minister will now be able to address the different constitutional and legal structures in Northern Ireland to which I referred in Committee. I must add that I have received a letter today from the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office. Now that I think about it, I have covered all the points in the letter. There is no need for me to read the letter into the record.

I hope that the Minister is now apprised of the slightly different structures in Northern Ireland because of what was said in Committee and presumably because he has taken further advice on the matter. I hope that he will understand my concern. The functions of management and control of the civil service in Northern Ireland rest not with the Secretary of State or with Ministers, but with the Departments even though they are subject to direction from the Secretary of State. The Bill will delegate from the Departments down to other persons. That raises issues which the new clause seeks to address and that is why I support it.

8 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): We had a useful discussion in Committee on a similar amendment related to the position of the Comptroller and Auditor General for Great Britain. New clause 2 relates to the Comptroller and Auditor-General for Northern Ireland. I will talk principally about him, as I do not wish to be ruled out of order.

Just as we argued in Committee that it was necessary to add to the Bill in this way, so I will argue now that it is not necessary to add to the Bill the proposed role for the CAG for Northern Ireland. As I pointed out in Committee, the Bill has no effect on the existing powers of the CAG for

Northern Ireland or for Great Britain, on the powers of the Comptroller and Auditor General in general or on the Public Accounts Committee.

The CAG for Northern Ireland has powers under the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act 1921—I give the precise reference for the benefit of the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble)—to audit the accounts of Northern Ireland Departments. I do not believe that that position has been changed by the examples in the hon. Gentleman's graphic and interesting comments.

Under the Audit (Northern Ireland) Order 1987, the CAG for Northern Ireland can conduct studies in economies, efficiency and effectiveness with which Northern Ireland Departments have used resources in discharging their functions. He can also report to Parliament. As I will argue in relation to the comments of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson) the CAG for Northern Ireland already has powers to deal with the considerations that he raised.

The Bill will not affect those powers of the CAG for Northern Ireland. The hon. Member for Upper Bann made some interesting points about accountability and the exercise of that accountability in relation to the House. We will have an opportunity to discuss the annual report on a later amendment. I reaffirm that accountability through the Comptroller and Auditor General route is not affected by the Bill. Delegation under the Bill will be within Northern Ireland civil service structures, whether to Departments or to agencies. The Comptroller and Auditor-General in Northern Ireland will therefore be able in future, as he is now, to report the results of any examinations of delegated functions to Parliament.

I accept what the hon. Member for Upper Bann said about the different terminology, but senior staff, whether we are talking about accounting officers or agency accounting officers, may appear before the PAC to give evidence in future as now.

Let me reaffirm that the Government consider strong independent audit essential to ensuring the public accountability of the Northern Ireland civil service. If the diseconomies that the hon. Member for Govan fears arise, they will be picked up, as they would be now, by the Comptroller and Auditor General and brought before us.

The hon. Member for Govan asked for an assurance about the powers of the Comptroller and Auditor General. I reaffirm what I said in Committee. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has given a commitment that he will take a suitable legislative opportunity when it arises and that that matter will be dealt with then.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I did not mean to interrupt the flow of the Minister's eloquent speech, but he referred to the PAC and the Comptroller and Auditor General. I am sure that our colleagues from Northern Ireland would be fascinated by the situation in the PAC yesterday.

The Welsh Development Agency came before the Committee at the behest of the Comptroller and Auditor General, but a key witness in allegations against the management of the WDA had already been nobbled by the officials against whom he was making the allegations, as he was tied down with a £250,000 redundancy package, including a secrecy clause which precluded him from talking about his work at the WDA. When the staff of the Comptroller and Auditor General went to see him, he pointed out that he stood to lose £64,000 of his money if he were to tell them what he really would have liked to tell them.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman seems to be making a speech and not an intervention.

Mr. Alan Williams: All I can say——

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think that we have had enough from the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jackson: I have read the press accounts and I was disturbed by them. However, I do not believe that the problem arises in relation to the clause about Northern Ireland. The right hon. Gentleman seems to be saying that there may be difficulties under the present arrangements for the Comptroller and Auditor General, but the Bill makes no difference to the position of the Comptroller and Auditor General, whether in the United Kingdom as a whole, in Great Britain or in Northern Ireland.

We believe that there should be a strong independent audit. The Comptroller and Auditor-General has an important role, which is not affected by the Bill. The supporters of the new clause must show why the powers of the Comptroller and Auditor-General, which I have said he already has, are insufficient. They have not tried to explain why the Comptroller and Auditor-General in Northern Ireland—and not in Great Britain—should be compelled and obliged by statute to report on all delegations made under the Bill.

That is highly unrealistic, particularly when we consider the nature and nitty-gritty of many of the delegations which we discussed in Committee. Some of the delegations may have little or no public expenditure implications. Is the Comptroller and Auditor-General in Northern Ireland to waste his time reporting on them?

The sensible approach must be to continue investigations under the existing powers. Insisting on investigations for each delegation could lead to a great waste of National Audit Office resources, weaken the power to investigate where there is real cause for concern, and therefore weaken the accountability that we all agree is important.

Mr. Davidson: Given the Minister's assurance that the Chancellor will table amendments in due course, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 3

Annual Report

'An annual report of the delegation of functions under this Act shall be made to Parliament by the Minister responsible for the Office of Public Service and Science.'.—*[Ms. Mowlam.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member's name is not on the list of those who signed the new clause, so it will need to be moved formally by an hon. Member on the list.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the new clause be read a Second time.—*[Ms. Mowlam.]*

Mr. Morgan: I should explain why a member of the Labour Welsh Front Bench rather than a member of the

[Mr. Morgan]

Labour citizens charter Front Bench has opened the debate on a new clause on the need for an annual report by the Minister for the civil service, public service and science. It is fairly easy to explain the matter to anyone who has, like me, been a civil servant—and subsequently a Member for a Welsh constituency—for more years than I care to remember.

If a unit within the civil service was relatively self-contained, it means that it was relatively easy to disperse to areas such as Scotland and Wales—sometimes referred to by the Chancellor of the Exchequer as the territories. If those units were relatively easy to disperse because they were self-contained, it was relatively easy to delegate their functions. Therefore, in the eye of the storm, to a degree that might not have occurred to those Conservative Members who represent more the "have" rather than the "have not" areas—although I can see some exceptions on the Government Back Benches. *[Interruption.]* I was about to concede the point; I had not spotted the hon. Member for Lanbaurgh (Mr. Bates). I concede that there are areas in the north-east of England which are in the same "have not" category.

As far back as the 1960s, it was common for Governments, especially Labour Governments, to disperse the relatively self-contained, operational management aspects of the civil service to such areas. I recall the initiative taken by Lady Castle when she was the Secretary of State for Transport—if that was the title at that time —to set up, in the early days of mass computerisation when the Government tended to take those initiatives in advance of the private sector, the driver and vehicle licensing centre in Llangyfelach just outside Swansea. I was about to say that, if the Minister could pronounce Llangyfelach, I would advise the Labour party not to vote against the Third Reading of the Bill, but I know that that would be too easy a win for the Labour party.

Some of us have a particularly soft spot for Llangyfelach, partly because we have family connections in the area and partly because of the famous story told by Max Boyce about a Welsh rugby fan talking to an American fan who was standing next to him at a rugby match. The American fan asked the Welsh fan where he came from, and he said Llangyfelach. When the American turned away, the Welsh fan's friend said that he should have explained a bit more about it, because the American was probably from California. The Welsh fan then turned to the American fan and said, "I am sorry, I did not explain to you. I am from Llangyfelach, which is two miles from Morriston." For some of us, "two miles from Morriston" is all the explanation that we need.

In the 1960s and 1970s, as a result of the initiatives taken by both Labour and Conservative Governments under the Fleming plan and the Hardman initiatives, many of the easily delegated and dispersed self-contained aspects of the civil service were dispersed. In south Wales one thinks of the Business Statistics Office, the Export Credit Guarantees Department insurance services department in Newport, Group Two and Companies House in Cardiff. Those are the classic areas of the civil service that we are talking about as the most subject and prone to delegation under the powers sought in the Bill. That is why the people in the outer areas of great Britain, the territories, including the north-east of England, although the Chancellor would not call that area a territory, want additional protection built in to ensure that the Government are clear in their own minds about delegation before we can possibly concede the powers to them.

Additional protection is needed, or the jobs in the relatively self-contained operational management aspects of the civil service will be put at risk and the Government will act on ideology: "Get rid of them. Delegate them. Put them into agencies. Disperse the management functions. Take away the parliamentary accountability." Obviously, the Government have pursued the strategy of politicising the upper levels of the civil service and removing parliamentary accountability from the lower and middle levels.

8.15 pm

Those of us who represent constituents in which large numbers of people work in specific units in the civil service, in the eye of the storm in the row about what the Government have in mind in the delegation of functions, put the matter high on our agenda. That is why we have tabled new clause 3. It is a simple but important two-line clause to ensure some protection for our constituents and the customers of the service.

We are not against flexibility in the line between direct parliamentary accountability and the delegation to the lowest level possible of as much management freedom in the civil service to take initiatives that result in a better service, lower costs and a better job. We want to give civil service management the powers and incentive to do the job better. We are not happy with the Kafkaesque, hall of mirrors, fairyland world of pseudo-privatisation into which the Government want us to plunge without any of the necessary parliamentary protection, which we obviously cannot afford to see happen.

In 1988 the Government set up next steps agencies. Some of them will be turned into trading funds, as happened in 1991 with Companies House, which is next door to my constituency. The trading fund is then led to a further strategy and ownership review, which is being undertaken at present. Once again, that will destabilise Companies House, which will possibly have three changes of management structure in three years. That is why we want additional protection provided in the Bill.

We have seen the introduction of contractorisation. Naval dockyards and atomic weapons establishments—there is one next door to my constituency—have been affected by contractorisation. The training and enterprise councils carry out some of those functions. Where is the operational responsibility for the functions carried out by the TECs? Are the TECs quangos? They are not listed as quangos.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that training and enterprise councils, especially the one in Teesside, do an excellent job in promoting business and developing opportunities for young people in some of the less prosperous areas of the country? Those training and enterprise councils are directly accountable to the Secretary of State for Employment and the Minister of State, Department of Employment.

Mr. Morgan: I thank the hon. Member for Langbaurgh for raising that matter. He has made precisely the same point as I did. I am not commenting on the merits or demerits of individual TECs or the TEC system as a whole.

I am saying that the Government have not yet defined a TEC. Is a TEC a quango? I do not know whether the hon. Member thinks that he knows the answer. Normally, the definition of a quango is whatever the Secretary of State in the Department says is a quango. The other definition is that quangos should appear in "Public Bodies". Normally, the new addition of "Public Bodies" is published about now.

I had hoped that we would have the benefit of a copy of "Public Bodies 1992" before this debate started to see whether some of the mess in the Government's mind about the form of some of the halfway houses between delegated functions in the civil service, quangos, and trading fund bodies. If "Public Bodies 1992" had come out, TECs might be in there. I can tell the Minister that, although the TECs were set up in 1990, they are not listed in "Public Bodies 1991". I shall look with great interest to see whether Companies House is in "Public Bodies 1992", because it was set up on a trading fund basis in 1991 and is audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General as if it were a quango. However, I understand that it is not defined as such.

All that produces uncertainty and instability. The Labour party is against that uncertainty and instability, but favours flexibility. Flexibility gives people high morale in the civil service and gives them an incentive to offer suggestions on how their jobs can be done better, at lower costs or by providing a wider or better service.

That is the spirit that the citizens charter is supposed to embody. However, I am afraid that the Government want to destabilise the civil service simply because anything that is given the label of private sector is seen as good—straight out of "Animal Farm"—and anything that is in the public service is seen as bad: "If it moves, privatise it." If it does not move, kick it until it moves. We believe that that is unhealthy. That is why we want the additional protection built in of a requirement that there must be an annual report.

We are dealing with muddy waters. We are dealing with five or six aspects half way between privatisation and public service. We do not believe that that is fair to the hundreds of thousands of people who work in the civil service, particularly where there is high unemployment. Such people cannot walk out of jobs if their civil service job is privatised or their Department is converted into an agency or trading fund. If they lose their job, they cannot walk into another job.

The civil service is an extremely important employer in Wales. That is why we do not believe that the muddy waters created by the Government have yet been sufficiently clarified for us to say to the Government, "Fine, you know what you are doing. Go ahead. You do not need to report back to Parliament every year." It is essential that the Government should be able to demonstrate to Parliament every year that they have clarified in their own mind which bodies should be next steps agencies, which should be trading funds and why, and which should be like the TECs—delegated companies limited by guarantee but not allowed to make a profit. They should clarify which bodies should be ready for privatisation while the Government have a majority committed to that course of action, and why.

The Government must explain to Parliament every year why they have chosen a certain slot from all the halfway houses. I give an example from close to my constituency of where the Government have not clarified in their own mind just how much financial and managerial autonomy they wish to give to a body. I shall omit references to the DVLC at Swansea because I see two Swansea Members in the Chamber who might try to catch your eye later, Madam Deputy Speaker.

In 1988 Companies House became a next steps agency and in 1991 it became a trading fund. It now has a dummy board of directors, as if it were a private company, called a steering board. What is a steering board? Has the Minister for the civil service ever explained to this House or the other place what it is and what it is supposed to do? I do not believe that he has.

A steering board can bring in people from the private sector. The senior directors of Companies House can take directorships in other companies, so they can say that they are almost in the private sector. But Parliament was never told that. If there were a requirement to make an annual report, the Government would have to say what they were doing with Companies House and why.

Problems can arise. For the first time ever, the directors of public sector bodies with statutory responsibilities—which can give criminal records to directors who are late in filing their accounts—can sit on the boards of private companies. How are those private companies regulated? The directors of Companies House could give a criminal record to directors of a company when they too sit on the board of that company.

You might think that I am giving a fictitious example, Madam Deputy Speaker. Let me read out a letter from the companies registrar dated 12 June 1992 to the legal department of Bovis Homes Ltd. The letter refers to some six companies including Chiswick Green Management Ltd. and Devonhurst Management (Offices) Ltd., which are subsidiaries of Bovis Homes. Bovis Homes is a large company which is a subsidiary of P and O.

The letter says:

"Thank you for your letter of 10 June about the problems you are facing in filing accounts for the above companies. As the accounts for these companies are already overdue, there is no provision for an extension of time to be granted. However, if I can have your assurance that the outstanding accounts will be delivered no later than 14 August 1992, I am prepared to delay prosecution action against individual directors for this period.

You should, however, be aware that each set of accounts delivered late after 1 July will be subject to a late filing penalty which is mandatory and payable on demand."

That implies that a criminal record could be given to the legal directors and other directors of Bovis Homes.

The letter from David Durham, the registrar of companies, to M. J. Platt of the legal department of Bovis Homes is interesting. The number two in charge at Companies House has also been a director of Bovis Homes since last year. That is a classic conflict of interest problem which should be reported to Parliament every year. The Government should say, "These are the difficulties that we have had in attempting to make Companies House act in a more businesslike way. It sounds fine in theory, but occasionally there are problems in practice." Conflict of interest problems will arise in practice.

One might almost have expected a postscript to Mr. Durham's letter saying, "My number two will see you at the board meeting and I hope that he will not see you somewhere else as a guest of Her Majesty after that." Such problems should be reported to Parliament every year. The Minister would do so if he took his job seriously and acted

[Mr. Morgan]

not out of ideology but in an attempt to solve the practical problems of giving incentives to the civil service to make itself more efficient every year.

Instead, the Minister merely utters guttural grunts that everything that has the word "private" attached to it is good and everything that has "public" attached to it is fuddy-duddy, old-fashioned and no use to anyone. That is why we are in favour of a flexible line between public sector, normal civil service management and the new forms of management, provided that they are explained to Parliament every year and we receive a report on the practical problems that arise. On behalf of the taxpayer we could then certify that the civil service did its job properly, with all its statutory duties and powers to give people criminal records or impose fines on them. Parliament gives such bodies those powers.

It is not just about business. An annual report would preserve the morale of civil servants so that they felt part of a team and were not destabilised by the Government's ideological commitment to privatisation.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I am delighted to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). I congratulate him on his ability to catch things that fall from lorries. I thought that we were pretty good at that in Swansea, because we received the memorandum from the chief executive, but my hon. Friend scores the best total for things falling into his hands.

I take issue with my hon. Friend on only a few points. First, he said that the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency was in Llangyfelach. It is not. It is in Clase, within the boundaries of the city of Swansea. I think that the reason why he said that it was in Llangyfelach was that he had a good joke about it. Secondly, he had great faith that the annual report which we hope will be published will reveal all that he wants it to reveal. He did not give credit to the Government or the civil service for the possibility of obfuscation.

The civil service and the Government could well produce a report which gave bare details but not the detailed information that my hon. Friend seeks, which could open the way to genuine probing by Parliament. Having said that, I agree that the new clause is important. In the light of what the Minister said in Committee, I believe that my hon. Friend is probably pushing at an open door. The new clause strikes at the heart of the question whether the new bodies can be made accountable to Parliament and the public.

Worrying things are happening in the civil service, partly, alas, because of the one-party rule that has prevailed in the past decade or so. Civil servants realise that the pathway to promotion means dancing to the tune of a Government who have been increasingly ideological, in the Orwellian sense which my hon. Friend described. Civil servants have been increasingly politicised during that time. The more powers are delegated by the Government, the less they are within the searchlight of Parliament.

If there is a report, Parliament should be able to keep some sort of check on what is being done. No one is saying that there should not be as much efficiency as possible in the civil service or that people's comfort should be disturbed regularly by a comparison with outside sectors. We are concerned that the Government have a hidden agenda—they think that private is good and public is bad—and they will push the civil service along that continuum.

8.30 pm

Discrete areas, such as the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency at Swansea, are not at the core of the Department of Transport. Therefore, the Department has no loyalty to them. We fear that, when a highly ideological Government with a politicised civil service says—perhaps in rhetoric at a party conference—that we must privatise X number of jobs in the civil service, it is obvious that jobs that do not form part of the core will be thrown overboard because senior members of the service have no loyalty to them. Such areas have already been the objects of dispersal policy.

By seeking to fatten various parts of the civil service for market as part of their privatisation policy, the Government are undermining the regional policy that various Governments have pursued with some success. We have some good examples in Swansea: hence the presence of my right hon. Friends the Members for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) and for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). We have benefited from the positive aspects of dispersal policy.

The vehicle inspectorate in Swansea is in danger of losing jobs as a result of Government policy to go ahead with privatisation. As a result of the decision to privatise by January 1994, there is a danger that jobs will also be lost at the Driver, Vehicles and Operators Information Technology Directorate, in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West, and it may be sold to a foreign buyer. There is certainly a danger that it will be moved from the Swansea area, which has high unemployment. The jewel in the crown is the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, which is at Clase and not at Llangyfelach.

Civil servants are wary of public scrutiny, want to go ahead on their own with a complacent Government and want to present other regional Ministers with fait accompli at the end of their deliberations. I invite the Minister to read and re-read the document by the chief executive at the DVLA, which so happily fell off the back of a lorry. Had it not done so, and had it not fallen into the hands of civil servants, it would have continued on its course within the Department of Transport and would have been presented as a fait accompli to the Secretary of State for Wales in February or March.

The issue affects job prospects in an area of high unemployment. Can the Minister deny that, in the normal course of events, had the document not been made public by a civil servant, the regional Minister would have been brought in after decisions had already been taken? Happily, the Secretary of State for Wales is aware of the danger, thanks to a public-spirited civil servant. He knows how vital the DVLA is, as it underpins the economy of Swansea and the sub-region. He can make representations to the Government. Had that not been the case, there would not have been any serious discussion of the matter.

The danger is that civil servants consider such issues on tramlines. The Government ask them to find ways to economise. They know that the pathway to promotion is by feeding the Government what they want in terms of privatisation, so they consider ways to privatise and will seek to ignore public opinion.

I shall quote to the Minister the words of Mr. Curtis, the chief executive at Swansea, who said at the end of his consultation document:

"given the close links between unions at DVLC and local MPs, it would be likely to lead to Parliamentary Questions and requests to meet Ministers."

That might disturb our quiet life or stand in the way of the juggernaut of privatisation, which would lead to the loss of jobs in Swansea and would leave a white elephant there in the form of a large building. I think that my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West has costed that and perhaps he will give us the figures.

To return to the problem of narrow accountancy, civil servants consider how an issue will affect their department or a sector within it. It may make sense——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman continues, he seems fairly wide of new clause 3. Could he focus his argument on the new clause?

Mr. Anderson: I am seeking to give a significant local example of what might be avoided if the searchlight of knowledge comes to the House as a result of the annual report. I shall continue with my example and then conclude.

I hope that the Minister will agree that essentially the Government must consider wider issues, which include job prospects. At DVLA, job prospects would have been totally ignored had the matter followed the course that the chief executive wanted. I and my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West might be accused, like Cato, of travelling around the streets mentioning DVLA again and again and perhaps of sickening Ministers, but we shall continue to do so because we want them to know that the matter is vitally significant to jobs in our constituency and in the sub-region. We fear that they would have ignored that fact. We want the wider employment implications to be considered fully. We know that they would not have been considered and we appeal to the Minister to ensure that that happens.

Parliamentarians will only be able to do their job, Madam Deputy Speaker, by opening such developments to public scrutiny and by giving as much notice as possible about the nature of delegations and the conditions under which they are given in an annual report. Essentially, we are meant to represent our constituents and to give Ministers some idea of where the shoe pinches and of the local effects of decisions taken at a high level, which affect people's lives.

Mr. Alan Williams: I apologise for the length of my earlier intervention and I add only that if you thought that was a speech, Madam Deputy Speaker, you should hear me when I make a speech. However, I do not intend to prevail on your good will, because I value it too highly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) raised a serious issue, which is at the heart of the relationship between the Executive, the Government, and Parliament. It is the essence of the concept of accountability. It is inevitable that the further down the line responsibility is passed—however sensible and logical that may be in administrative terms—the further the Minister, and thus the House of Commons, move from accountability.

Earlier, the Minister said that he saw the Public Accounts Committee as playing a key role in maintaining accountability. I want to try to show the clash between what the Minister claims the Bill will sustain—accountability to Parliament—and the reality of administrative devolution, which will not only take decisions away, but convolute the lines of communication.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) spoke of the DVLA. The Minister will know from debates in Committee that the DVLA is close to the heart of hon. Members from my district. We were alarmed at the civil service internal document that stated that the information should be kept from Ministers because they might use their rights to call on Ministers to be accountable. The civil servants say that they do not want us to be able to ask Ministers about their decisions and recommendations, as that could be inconvenient. It is difficult to reconcile that with what the Minister has been trying to tell us about sustaining accountability.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East also made a valid point about costing. However, the more one delegates and fragments, the more difficult it is to achieve direct financial accountability. If the decision to get rid of 3,000 jobs at the DVLA in Swansea is acted on, the DVLA would be able to say that its costs had been reduced by £40 million a year as it was no longer employing those people. Its representatives can pat themselves on the back and say that it was a good decision. They do not have to explain to anyone that the cost of those 3,000 people being out of work would, according to the latest Department of Employment figures, be about £27 million a year. The £27 million does not fall within their remit, and they are not accountable to their Ministers for it. The Treasury, the Department of Employment and the Department of Social Security—through lost national insurance contributions —will bear the cost.

One problem of the new clause is that it does not go wide enough. It refers to "the Minister responsible". In the case of DVLA, which Minister is accountable? Is it the one whose Department suffers the loss of national insurance income? Is it the one whose Department loses income tax? Is it the one whose Department pays unemployment benefit? The one Minister that it is not is the Minister to whom the DVLA is accountable, and who is accountable to the House. Therefore, costs are created and jobs lost, but the Minister responsible for those consequences is not accountable.

In the confidential document, the head of the DVLA said that the building would become a white elephant. The building cost more than £60 million when it was new and, according to a letter sent to me by the Minister for Public Transport, its depreciated value is now about £35 million. However, there is no accounting for white elephants. That sounds flippant, but it is true. Nobody has to account for the loss of the capital value of those premises.

Even the Minister accountable for the DVLA could come to the House and say that his Department had saved £40 million on labour costs, while ignoring the unemployment costs, for which someone else had responsibility. However, nobody has to come here to explain how £35 million worth of assets have been completely written off. Where is the accountability in that? How does the Minister explain that in terms of bringing delegated authority closer to the House? Virtually the only sector for which there would be some accountability would be the £76 million of redundancy payments that would have to be made to those declared unemployed.

6.45 pm

The process of fragmentation and delegation inevitably makes it more difficult to monitor the position. Even Ministers find it more difficult to do so. We accept that Ministers are meant to come to the House wearing the metaphorical sackcloth, and say, "The deed was done by John Evans in the sub-office in Llanelli, but I stand here at the Box and accept full responsibility for it." We know that the Minister involved does not bear full responsibility. Very often, he or she does not even recognise responsibility for it.

The Minister referred to the Public Accounts Committee. Recently, the Comptroller and Auditor-General identified errors in the accounts of the Development Board for Rural Wales, and qualified those accounts. The Minister—and certainly his permanent secretary as the accounting officer—will understand how serious it is for accounts to be qualified.

The Public Accounts Committee had an acrimonious meeting with the accounting officers for both the Welsh Office and the Development Board for Rural Wales. However, within a couple of weeks of that acrimonious exchange over the shortcomings of the chairman who was responsible for the package that led to the irregularity, the Secretary of State for Wales did the very opposite of apologising to the House. The Secretary of State should have apologised, said that the incident should never have happened and that, even though it happened to someone delegated to act in his name, he accepted responsibility.

Instead, the Secretary of State said that he did not care what the Public Accounts Committee said or whether there was a motion on the Order Paper asking for the chairman to be sacked. The Secretary of State promptly reappointed the chairman for three years. Where is the accountability there? Where is Parliament's power? It is bad enough if the organisations to which the power is delegated try to conceal information, but it is worse if they are doing so with the compliance and apparent endorsement of Ministers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Morgan) mentioned another example of how information is concealed from Ministers as well as Parliament. The matter was raised only yesterday in the Public Accounts Committee in relation to another organisation. The Minister for Public Transport is aware of yesterday's hearing in relation to the Welsh Development Agency. One of his colleagues, who has been on the Public Accounts Committee for many more years than me, said that the WDA report was the worst that he had come across in 20 years in the House. However, nothing will happen to the people responsible.

When the permanent secretary to the Welsh Office was asked who would discipline those people, he said that it would not be him or the Secretary of State. He was asked who would exert discipline within the WDA. Obviously, it would not be the members of the board, as they had all been in on the spoils. They had all been enjoying private mileage in cars paid for by the taxpayer. They were all in the affair together. Where is the accountability there?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Where is the relationship with the new clause that we are supposed to be debating? Will the right hon. Gentleman focus his argument on it?

Mr. Williams: I thought that I was doing precisely that, but I apologise for my lack of clarity. I was criticising the new clause, which lays down that the Minister responsible should produce an annual report. My point was that in this case the Minister responsible, the Secretary of State for Wales, far from bringing the matter to the attention of the House of Commons, condoned it and kicked the House in the teeth by saying that he would reappoint for another three years the people who had committed the misdemeanour.

I do not want to try your patience too far, Madam Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Morgan: Christmas spirit.

Mr. Williams: Indeed. Many good things go with Christmas.

Yesterday we learned that officials had mounted an operation named, appropriately enough for this season, Operation Wizard. As far as we can gather, the WDA had employed consultants at huge fees which were then concealed in the accounts. The operation has never been publicly declared. Allegedly, it involved enabling the agency to develop a management buy-out of part of its operations. That is known as taking delegation to its extreme. It is not the Minister who is opening this back door; it is the people with the delegated power who are trying to open it with a jemmy and take public assets out through it.

They planned to use public funds to carry out consultancy work on the feasibility of the project and set themselves up with a nice little number to take over some of the profitable operations, to run them as a privatised concern—all things which the Minister has said could never happen. The process runs as follows: delegation, subordination to a quango, then the step out the back door into a private entity with no accountability.

I am grateful to the Minister for having listened to my remarks, as he did in Committee, and to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for your good will.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): As my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) has said, we feel that we are pushing at an open door in this matter, because in Committee the Minister gave a commitment to make an annual report to Parliament on the delegations that had been made. We are interested not just in the list of such delegations but in the parameters and conditions attached to them. We are interested in scrutiny and in ethical values, and as my hon. Friends have repeatedly said, we are interested in accountability.

When asked these questions in Committee, the Minister said:

"the hon. Member is asking fair questions that I have not considered at this stage."

We do hope that he has considered them by now, and that he has some answers.

The Minister also said:

"I see no objection to the idea that the report to Parliament should specify the person to whom delegations are made." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 24 November 1992; c. 56-57.]

We should like these two points clarified, if possible.

As the Government move towards a greater public/private mix in the civil service—a Treasury Minister has said that that is the ultimate aim—so the distinctions between the two sectors become blurred. Although both are working to serve the consumer, the lines of

accountability and the ethos of the civil service can get muddied in this process. It would be useful if the Minister could give us some information tonight about a matter affecting his Department.

It would be useful to know, for instance, whether Sir Peter Levene's appointment was a public one. I presume that he was appointed by Francis Maude, and he now works directly to the Secretary of State and is responsible for the efficiency unit and for purchasing. If his was a public appointment, what is his salary? That information should be in the public domain. Is it calculated on a pro-rata basis along the lines of the salary of a permanent secretary? The case of Sir Peter exhibits the sort of difficulties about the culture and ethos of the civil service that concern us. He has, after all, a direct line to the Secretary of State and to the Prime Minister.

We should also like to ask some questions about Sir Peter's powers. He is chairman of the docklands light railway. One would not want to make the connection, but in his role in the civil service efficiency unit, he suggested that civil servants should move to Canary wharf. Similarly, he is a vice-chairman and managing director of a merchant bank, Wasserstein Perella, but one would not want to connect his responsibilities at the bank—for mergers, acquisitions, advisory services, restructuring, re-capitalisation, takeovers and leveraged buy-outs—with his role in the efficiency unit and in the future of the civil service. It is this sort of grey area that we find confusing.

Mr. Robert Jackson: I do not want to enter a competition to determine the location of the DVLA as between Clase and Llangefelach—*[Interruption.]* I have made a reasonable approximation of that pronunciation, but we shall have to listen to the tapes. The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) seemed to be a little hazy about his geography. I noticed that he was rebuked by the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), so he had better not interrupt from a sedentary position to correct my pronunciation—he had better find out where the place is first.

We have had a rerun of the debate in Committee about the Government's commitment to dispersal policies and their compatibility with delegation. I repeat now what I said in Committee: the Government remain committed to dispersal policy. It is one of a number of general central policies of Government which will continue irrespective of delegations under the Bill.

The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) asked about Sir Peter Levene. I shall have to write to her about the details, but I understand that he was appointed by the Prime Minister. There is a danger in the way that the hon. Lady and other Opposition Members speak; they give the impression that they do not believe that the experience of people from the private sector can be of use in the public sector. That is a great mistake. We in the public sector can learn a great deal from the experience of people from the private sector. Quite often, the people concerned voluntarily give of their time, sometimes at a low rate of remuneration, and there is an element of public service in that which should be acknowledged by all sides of the House.

I am a little surprised at the debate. I know that it is the custom to stray wide, but we shall have an opportunity to return to many points on Third Reading. Not one of the instances mentioned by Opposition Members related to management functions covered by the Bill. By definition, the annual report will contain nothing relevant to the points that were made.

I take this opportunity to say a few words about leaking and falling off the back of a lorry. The hon. Member for Swansea, East spoke as though it were a matter of credit for somebody to acquire property that had fallen off the back of a lorry. Governments of both parties have for many years accepted that civil servants have a duty to serve the Government of the day. If government is to be conducted properly, it is important, in the interests of everybody, that the Government can have confidence in their ability to consider proposals and to make them public only when it is appropriate.

It is not a question of undue secrecy. It is just important that all the options, including radical options, should be available to be considered. Many proposals are dropped as a result of consideration within Government. Opposition Members spoke about the effect on staff. I would simply say that a document was leaked, and that had an effect on the staff—and that is not a happy situation.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Clearly we could debate what is in the public interest. In my judgment, there is a strong argument for saying that when, in such a case, a document is produced by a civil servant that is of a highly political nature and which rules out all options save one—and that option would involve the destruction of 3,000 jobs in an area of high unemployment—there is a public interest in that issue being debated openly and fairly, rather than being presented to the regional Minister at the end of the day. The normal presumption against the leaking of such a document could be overriden when such considerations apply.

9 pm

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman is fair-minded and honourable, and I can see that he feels a bit defensive. It is right that he should feel defensive. If such a proposal were made, of course there should be an active debate. There would certainly be an active debate when right hon. and hon. Members of the calibre of those who represent the two Swansea constituencies are involved.

The fact remains that no such proposal was made. It was simply raised for discussion within Government. I do not want to trespass on your patience and tolerance, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Alan Williams: I am instinctively with the Minister in his remarks, in that I do not favour the leaking of documents. Like the Minister, my colleagues and I have experience within Departments, and clearly certain rules must be observed. We do not want to disregard them.

However, sometimes a different argument can be made than that put by my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). Sometimes, a situation arises involving an individual known today as a whistleblower. We had that only yesterday. The person blowing the whistle was doing so against the individual to whom he had to report if he had a complaint. What should the individual do in that situation? It is not a question of someone wilfully wanting to leak a confidential document or anything of that nature. In the case to which I refer, the individual wanted to make a complaint against the activities of senior management—but the line of complaint

[Mr. Alan Williams]

was to the very senior management that was the subject of the individual's complaint. He had no other route to follow.

Mr. Jackson: The right hon. Gentleman has extensive experience of Government; leaking was a problem when he was a member of a Government, and it remains a problem today. I emphasise that it tends to prejudice the ability of Government to give reasonable consideration to all the options if leaking occurs.

The Opposition are seeking, through new clause 3, to formalise the promise of an annual report that I made on behalf of the Government in Committee. The Government's view, as I explained in Committee, is that promoting that promise to the face of the Bill is neither necessary nor desirable. I could say also that the amendment is inappropriately drafted, because it refers specifically to

"the Office of Public Service and Science."

It would cause considerable problems if that were on the face of the Bill and at some stage in the future, peradventure, that office were, as a result of changes in Government machinery, replaced by some other body. that is a good example of the inflexibility that arises from such an attempt to dot every "i" and cross every "t".

Hon. Members are of course right to make great play of the importance of keeping the House informed of civil service management matters—although I am not sure that the House is always terribly interested. Perhaps the attendance tonight and at previous debates for which the Government have found time illustrates that: In principle, however, it is a fair point that we should keep the House informed—hence the promise that I made of a report on delegations by written answer.

In fact, that would give the House more information about the management of the civil service than it has had before. According to the scenario constructed by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), delegation inevitably leads to the extension of the accountability chain, so that there is less and less accountability. I do not agree: I think that this occasion for delegation has led to the creation of an entirely new opportunity.

All the next steps agencies operate within written and published frameworks of objectives and performance obligations. As the right hon. Gentleman made a point about chief executives, let me add that those frameworks include a clear statement of a chief executive's accountability to the Minister concerned. All that is spelt out much more clearly than the provisions normally found in civil service business units outside the agency framework. In short, accountability to Parliament, and the provision of information about the management of the civil service, have been extended.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West made a fair point when he identified the problem of being kept up to date with all the changes in the organisation of the civil service and public-service bodies, which are already happening and may increase in the future. I certainly undertake to examine the publication that the hon. Gentleman quoted —"Public Bodies"—and see whether it can be improved and extended to provide more information about the range of different bodies.

I recognise that, as the process of public service reform goes ahead, certain issues arise: following changes in the status of bodies, for instance, legal relationships require clarification. I shall examine that point for the hon. Gentleman, but I do not believe that the report that the Opposition demand in new clause 3 would give him what he seeks. He cited the status of training and education councils, for instance; the legal position and accountability of TECs would have to be dealt with in a different way.

The hon. Member for Redcar asked what we would put in the report. We would publish an annual list of delegations in the form of a written response to a parliamentary question. The list would specify the nature of delegations, and—the hon. Lady stressed this point particularly—the office of the recipients of delegations. It would include a summary of the main conditions where conditions were applicable.

Obviously, hon. Members would have an opportunity to pursue matters in further detail. Where appropriate, they could pursue with the original recipient of a delegation, whether he was a Minister or an official—or with the central Department, which might be the Treasury or the Office of Public Service and Science—the granting of delegations and commissions. That would considerably extend the present availability of information, and I think that it would be very helpful.

I do not think it necessary to apply such provisions to something that is on a statutory basis on the face of the Bill, referring to a specific Department whose status and name may change. After the initial rush of delegations, the torrent is likely to dry up—if there is a torrent—and many of the delegations that follow will be minor and specific.

It will always be open to hon. Members to table parliamentary questions asking for information at shorter intervals than the annual process that I have described, or, indeed, to pursue matters of detail arising from the original answers. Those interested will have access to information when it is required, and when it will be useful to them and to the House.

Ms. Mowlam: I welcome that answer. If the Government agreed to a freedom of information Bill, the problem of leaking and of where documents arrive would no longer be a problem. Let me put it on record that I wish to cause no offence to Sir Peter Levine—who, when I was on the Public Accounts Committee, was one of the most competent people who came before us in comparison to many of the other civil servants who were present. My point is very different: it relates to the mix of public, private and ethical accountability, which I think the Government are avoiding.

In view of the specific points that the Minister has listed, I do not think that we shall secure the further accountability and ethical scrutiny that we want. In view of that, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1

DELEGATION OF FUNCTIONS

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I beg to move movement No. 5, in page 1, line 10, leave out 'as he thinks fit' and insert

'as specified in Schedule consultation to this Act,'.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With this, it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 13, a new schedule—*Consultation*—

1. Delegations made under this Act will give departments or agencies any powers to change the terms and conditions of civil servants without conforming to the normal processes of consultation with recognised trade unions and staff.

2. The Act does not alter current arrangements for consultation or negotiation with the national unions specified in the national pay agreements with individual unions or in any other nationally agreed documents.

3. Arrangements set out in this Schedule shall apply in other areas, ie where terms and conditions of service are not the subject of formal written national agreements, and where it has in the past been the practice to consult, including over the granting of discretions. In these areas, the recognised trade unions and, as appropriate, the staff affected by the proposed change will be:

(a) informed of, and given the opportunity to comment on, proposals to delegate powers to departments and agencies (paras 4-5 below); and

(b) consulted on proposals by the holders of delegated powers to introduce any changes to the terms and conditions of their staff (paras 6-7 below).

4. The unions at national level will be informed of proposals to make delegations to departments and agencies and given the opportunity to comment both on the principles of the delegation itself and on the conditions that may be attached to it. The relevant union(s) will be informed of the functions to be delegated; the recipient(s) of the delegation; when the delegation will take place; the nature of any conditions that the central department concerned propose to attach to the delegation; and, in broad terms, the purpose of the delegation. A reasonable timescale will be given for comment.

5. Where a function is sub-delegated within a department or agency (ie. where, consistent with the terms of a delegation, responsibility for the function is delegated by the original recipient to another Crown servant not specifically designated in the original delegation from the central departments) the department or agency concerned will consult the recognised trade unions and, as appropriate, the staff themselves about the granting of the sub-delegation.

Ms. Hoey: On Second Reading, my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) referred to the Bill, in his own inimitable way, as a "vague" Bill. In Committee, the Minister put a little flesh on the bones. The purpose of the amendment is to breathe some life into the corpse by filling in the missing gaps and giving it what is missing—a heart.

We dwelt at length in Committee and on Second Reading on the formalisation of the process of consultation on proposed delegations. There has been much unanimity between the Government and Opposition Members about the positive value to an organisation of a proper consultation process. We have heard how management is strengthened when considering structural change by drawing on the valuable experience of the work force.

The value of the contribution of the civil service unions is not, and has not been in the past, limited to helping the interests of their members. Their contribution to the effective running and development of our world-leading civil service has been considerable, as I hope the Minister will agree. On Second Reading and in Committee, the Minister graciously apologised for the appalling lack of consultation with civil service unions before the introduction of the Bill. That was, indeed, a very unfortunate oversight.

In Committee, the Minister struggled to respond constructively to the concerns that we expressed, but to some extent he succeeded. He produced a note prepared by the management side in the civil service on consultation with the civil service unions. He said:

"The note that I refer to makes it clear that recognised unions will be consulted before delegations are made and the departmental and agency trade unions will be consulted about proposals to change terms and conditions."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 24 November 1992; c. 63.]

On Second Reading, the Minister repeatedly called the Bill a "poor little Bill". Perhaps, therefore, I can call this a harmless wee amendment, which seeks to enshrine the terms of the note in schedule 1 and the Minister's subsequent assurances in statute. If it is good enough to be put into practice and quoted in defence of the Government's position, why is not it good enough to include in the Bill?

I could readily understand the Government's opposition to an amendment guaranteeing rights to trade unions if we were seeking to define those rights, but all we are seeking to do is hold the Government to the assurance that they freely volunteered. I hope that the Minister and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—I am not sure where he is, but he is not here—will feel able at this late stage to accept that the intention of the amendment is to put their words in their proper context and into practice.

The value of this move would be considerable, and would represent a vote of confidence in the staff of the civil service. The Bill has attracted cross-party consensus on the potential benefits of delegated and decentralised management. I hope that the Government will feel able to extend this spirit of consensus and the spirit of Christmas—in which many hon. Members are indulging at the moment, which is why they are not here—by accepting the amendment to implement their plans.

In Committee, the Minister said that he had

"no problem in subscribing to the general arguments for consultation . . . put forward".

The only argument that he used to counter the idea was that it was

"without precedent . . . nor have civil service unions ever had such a role."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 24 November 1992; c. 65.]

Is that really the best argument that the Minister can find? Surely it is a little weak to recognise the validity of our argument about the need for consultation, to suggest his own plans for dealing with the matter, and then not to agree to stand by that plan in law, although we welcome it, just because it has not been done before.

9.15 pm

We are satisfied with the text of the Minister's proposal on consultation, and we invite him to commit those very words to history by incorporating them into the Bill and accepting the amendments, and hence new schedule 1. It may break new ground for the Minister to make such a move, but if he accepts our argument, as he seems to, I hope that he will have the courage of his convictions and do so.

If those welcome assurances are not put on a statutory footing, confidence will inevitably be undermined. Such an omission would raise questions about the Government's commitment to the concept of proper consultation—and Opposition Members may feel unable to take the Government's other commitments on the Bill at face value.

When the Minister was pressed in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson) on what the hon. Gentleman himself described

as a characteristically serious point, he conceded that it was not Government policy to provoke or secure derecognition. If the Government are not prepared to back up their proffered commitment on consultation, are we also to assume that they will happily go back on their statement on derecognition?

The Government have a choice between confirming and reinforcing the answers that they gave to the real worries raised, undermining their stated assurances and laying bare a hidden agenda.

Mr. Robert Jackson: I congratulate the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) on what I believe is her first appearance at the Dispatch Box, although she has of course spoken in her official capacity in Committee. I congratulate her, too, on her eloquent figure of speech about putting a heart into our Bill. If I may say so, the hon. Lady could put a heart into even the most lifeless of corpses.

I welcome what the hon. Lady said about the importance of the potential consensus on decentralisation in the public service. That is an important phrase, on which I hope we will be able to build. However, we shall not be able to accept the amendment. As the hon. Lady has explained, it refers to a schedule which consists of a copy of a note sent by management to the unions setting out the consultation arrangements when delegations are made. I agree that that is a splendid document. How could I do otherwise, as it came from us—but I cannot accept it as a schedule to the Bill.

In the first place, amendments Nos. 5 and 13, taken together, would be defective. If they were accepted the only condition that central Departments would be able to place on delegation would relate to consultation with the unions. That is far too narrow. There are many potential conditions that we may wish to impose on delegations—conditions on value for money and the limits of delegations, and perhaps even conditions involving subjects raised in the House and in Committee, such as dispersal policy and equal opportunities policy. It would be appropriate to impose such conditions under which power should be exercised, yet they would be precluded by the amendments.

I repeat what I said in Committee—that the Government accept that the unions and staff need to know with whom they are dealing on matters relating to the terms and conditions of the staff represented. The Bill does not detract from any legal rights of staff to be consulted on changes in terms and conditions. I repeat that the present arrangements for consulting the unions before discretions are given to Departments and agencies will also extend to delegations.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall fairly asks why, if the Government intend to take such action anyway, they should not simply put it into the Bill. We do not believe that it would be right to make such proposals part of a statute. Although the hon. Lady was inclined to dismiss it, I repeat the important point that the amendment would give the civil service unions a totally new and unprecedented statutory right to play a part in determining the level at which staff-management decisions are made. That would be wholly unwarranted. We do not think that there is any case for giving civil servants statutory protection unlike that applying to any other employees, when they are already adequately protected as regards consultation by the general law of the land.

I remind the House that the amendment is defective for the reasons that I have explained. It would prevent the Government from imposing other essential conditions—for example, to protect expenditure controls—and it might constrain the freedom of recipients of delegations in a variety of ways. I urge the House to reject this unnecessary and inappropriate amendment.

Mr. Davidson: I will speak briefly on the need for discussion and debate with staff, and on the issues of consultation and explanation. There is a grave danger that the staff will not be taken along with the thrust of the new moves. There is a real fear among many staff that there is a hidden agenda which is designed to privatise the civil service, and to erode wages and conditions. They believe that the measure is not designed to liberate staff.

I give the example of the National Savings bank. The director of the bank has produced a report in which he says of the staff:

"They have few equals in dedication and enthusiasm".

He also said:

"I pay particular tribute to the dedication National Savings staff have to customer service and the continuous improvement of that service."

There are many other similar quotes too numerous to mention. The annual report shows that the National Savings bank is meeting the targets set for it. Indeed, it is doing better than comparable financial organisations in the private sector, yet it is being broken up in a way that it believes is likely to worsen its ability to undertake the tasks that it has been asked to undertake by the Government.

In such circumstances, the staff are entitled to believe that there is a hidden agenda. They want the service that they provide to the public to improve, and they see that there are two ways in which to move forward. The first takes the holistic perspective. It looks at the department as a unity and seeks to identify ways in which to increase the output of the service with less input. It seeks co-operation, and it seeks ways in which to build team work and in which to maintain the admirable record of flexibility from staff. That is one route.

The other route is simply to see the service fractionalised, with each individual department focused only on itself, with no regard to the functions of the organisation as a whole and with each part having its own targets and objectives. The staff believe that that is the framework into which market testing and contracting out will force them. In the circumstances, it is essential that we undertake processes of consultation which not only explain Government policy but seek to amend and justify it in the context in which staff operate.

If we wish to have efficiency and improvement in organisations such as the National Savings bank, we must work with the staff or against them. I am sure that the Minister agrees that it is far more likely that we shall achieve improvements in the service to the public if we work with the staff rather than against them. I hope that the Minister and the Government will give the strongest possible assurances that dogma will not have a role in the implementation of efficiency targets. I hope that the Government will have an open mind about the way in which such objectives are to be achieved and that they will not force through policies involving, for example, contracting out and market testing when such policies are not appropriate.

Mr. Robert Jackson: It might be convenient if I reply now to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson). The phrase "hidden agenda" has been used on several occasions during the debate. The Government's agenda on this issue is not hidden. It has been spelled out in speeches and written about extensively in the press. Everybody knows what our agenda is, and there was some discussion of it in Committee upstairs.

We ask of any function within government whether the state needs to be providing it—whether it should be retained or abolished. If we accept that a function should be performed, we ask whether the state needs to perform it: whether it needs to be done by public officials or whether it can be done in the private sector—in other words, whether it can be privatised. If it emerges that it cannot be privatised, we examine whether it can be put on to an agency basis—becoming an arm's-length contract with Government and remaining within Government as a next steps agency.

We ask of all functions within Government, whether they are carried out by agencies or directly by Government, whether they can be subjected to market testing to establish a competitive basis for seeing that value for money is obtained for the services that are being provided and to enable funds to be recycled back into the provision of services, if efficiency gains can be made. That is a clear and transparent agenda. It has been publicly announced and extensively debated over the years, including in the period before the last election.

The hon. Member for Govan should accept that the Labour party will have to consider the fundamental presumption behind the Government's policy that the public services exist for the benefit of the public. If there is an obstacle to the potential consensus to which the hon. Member for Vauxhall referred, it could be that Opposition Members are inclined to give too much weight to the question of those who provide public services as opposed to those who benefit from them.

In a recent debate, I characterised the difference that perhaps exists between the parties. I hope that it will narrow. I said that the difference between the Government and the Opposition was that the Government believed in public service while the Opposition believed in public provision. That is not a satisfactory position for the Opposition to take. But the Government's agenda is clear, it is not in any way hidden and it is clearly apparent.

Mr. Davidson: I appreciate the point that the Minister makes about the concept of hierarchy. We are not entitled to believe that dogma is driving the policy of the Government when they have decided that a function such as national savings shall remain linked to the public sector, although on an agency basis, and it seems reasonable for the Government to want to establish clear targets for an organisation such as that.

But we are entitled to believe that dogma is driving Government policy when they not only set the organisation output targets and efficiency objectives but then say how its functions shall be carried out by insisting that sub-activities within the overall output of the organisation shall be achieved in a particular way. Nobody in the private sector has to operate in this way.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member is making an intervention, it is too long.

Mr. Jackson: As we said in Committee, we subject all delegations to certain central policies of Government. The hon. Gentleman has been arguing for certain such policies to remain with Government, for example, on dispersal. Alongside central policy on dispersal, it is a central policy of Government that there should be market testing. That is the explanation of what he sees as a paradox.

Ms. Hoey: I regret that the Minister has not responded to our arguments, but has more or less repeated what was said in Committee. He has not come up with anything new. The message that he is sending civil servants will ensure that there is a reduction in morale, for it is clear that he does not want fully to consult and involve the civil service unions. However, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

9.30 pm

Ms Mowlam: I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 1, line 11, at end insert

'subject to the operations of the delegation of that function being carried out in accordance with Government policy on equality of opportunities'.

In this amendment, we are seeking clarification from the Minister on the impact of the Bill on equality and the whole question of sex discrimination. The note on terms and conditions in the civil service released by the Cabinet Office clearly stated that the Bill would not of itself change anyone's terms and conditions of service; nor would it affect the rights of civil servants in respect of protection of their terms and conditions.

We believe that that will not be the case. There is really a threat that the Bill, if passed, will have a serious impact on equal opportunities in the civil service. The Bill would enable the delegation of functions to both heads of Departments and agencies, one of these functions being the delegation of equal opportunities. This, we believe, could have serious consequences for women employees.

We are also concerned about monitoring. Delegation, we believe, poses a threat to equal opportunities monitoring. Performance pay for women is monitored, but we are concerned that, after the Bill is passed, the delegated powers will mean that individual Departments will set up their own pay machines, some of which may not use pay scales and incremental progression. It will then be difficult to monitor awards or performance-related pay across a whole range of pay systems and to produce meaningful statistics. We also believe that the OPSS will be unable to monitor complaints on discrimination and harassment, presumably because of the difficulties of monitoring.

It is these questions that concern us particularly. What worries us is that the Government will use this Bill to delegate powers and that different Departments and agencies will then opt for what are seen to be flexible working patterns. If we take standby appointments, these will not be responding to equal opportunities, such as flexible hours and job sharing, and there will be no monitoring of sexual harassment, recruitment, child care, disciplinary action taken in relation to harassment and discrimination, career breaks, training and development.

We are seeking from the Minister with this amendment some guarantee of those equal opportunities post-delegation.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The Government entirely agree with the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) about the importance of equal opportunities in employment. It is a matter of record that Government and the public service have a very good record as equal opportunities employers; and we are committed to maintaining it. For example, there are our programmes of action on women and race and our code of practice on disability, which have been published, the annual progress reports, and the Prime Minister's recent initiative on appointments of women and ethnic minorities to public bodies. We have a very strong commitment, and we support the spirit of the hon. Lady's concern.

Nevertheless, we cannot accept the amendment. We have had some discussion in this debate—and it was a theme which ran through our discussions in Committee—of the importance of what we have now come to call, having developed a jargon, central policies, which will run across and alongside, transcending, overriding and driving through, the whole range of policies which will be delegated under this Bill.

There is nothing in this Bill which interferes with the power of Government to enforce such central policies—relating, for example, to equality of opportunity or, indeed, to any other matter. If the delegation of a particular function raises particular equality issues, this Bill, now that the previous amendment has been withdrawn, allows suitable conditions to be attached.

The hon. Member for Redcar mentioned monitoring. It will be perfectly possible for monitoring of questions of sexual harassment and pay arrangements to continue, as appropriate, under the new arrangements; it will become easier—not be made possible, because it is simply a matter of facilitation—under the operation of this Bill.

I can give the hon. Lady the assurance, if that is what she is seeking, that these delegations do not in any way undermine our central policies. To take something dear to the heart of the Government, there is nothing on the face of the Bill about value for money, but the Government will continue to use that as a criterion, alongside other central policies, for example on equal opportunities, when we are considering delegation or the exercise of delegated powers.

The amendment is unnecessary, but it has provided a welcome opportunity for us to place on record our continuing commitment to equality of opportunity. On that basis, I hope that the hon. Lady will withdraw it.

Ms Mowlam: We were very keen for some terms and conditions to be included in the Bill. I do not want to sound jaundiced, but one always lives in fear that the Government might forget that they promised certain terms and conditions, especially those on sexual equality, when the delegations take place. However, in view of the Minister's assurances, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Robert Jackson.]*

9.35 pm

Ms Mowlam: We have had the pleasure of the Minister's company throughout the Committee stage but, sadly, that of the Secretary of State only for part of Second Reading and not tonight. Although it is a party night and I know that many people are preparing for Christmas, it is sad that the Secretary of State could not be here for any part of the debate in view of its seriousness.

I shall be succinct. I want to put on record the importance of our vote against the Bill. As we have seen in the Chamber tonight and in Committee, there is common ground between the Opposition and the Government. There are certain advantages to be obtained from decentralisation and delegation. We may or may not agree on the detail of the delegation, the specifics of pay or certain terms and conditions but it is impossible to know whether we agree—the scope of the Bill permits broad delegation but, in Committee and this evening, the Minister has emphasised that he was talking only of examples, not of specific plans.

It is important to note that the Transfer of Functions Orders covered by the Bill include pay and conditions in addition to the organisation and conduct of the civil service. In other words, the Bill encompasses all the management functions relevant to the home civil service.

Our main objection to the Bill is the part that it plays in the Government's overall strategy of contracting out and privatisation. The Minister said that we kept referring to a hidden agenda but we did so only because the Government have assured us throughout the debate that this is merely a technical, small Bill of minor importance. However, his responses this evening have shown clearly that the Bill is part of a jigsaw and part of the Government's overall stategy for privatisation and contracting out. We disagree with that final goal.

The Bill will drive down wages and conditions for members of the civil service. Departments or parts of Departments faced with market testing are already cutting their major expense which is, of course, salaries, in order to compete with external bids.

The experience of market testing and contracting out among local authorities is that competition from the private sector is often solely on the grounds of undercutting wages. Civil servants say that when part of their Department is put up for market testing, members of the work force offer to cut holidays, pensions and sick pay in the hope of preserving an in-house bid and of saving their jobs.

That puts paid to the Minister's argument that the proposed changes are about quality, service and choice. The Government's prime consideration is cost cutting, which is achieved by contracting out and privatisation. It is clear that privatisation is the centre of the Government's policy. On Second Reading and in Committee, the Minister and the Secretary of State have tried to skirt the issue by saying that they will choose the public or the private route, whichever is the most viable.

However, in a speech to the Centre for Policy Studies on 23 November, their colleague the Chief Secretary to the Treasury stated the Conservative party's position more starkly. He said:

"In every Department of State we are no longer simply looking for obvious candidates for privatisation. The conventional question was 'what can we sell.' The question must now be turned on its head to 'what must we keep?'"

The Government are doing all that they can to make parts of the civil service attractive to the private sector. It is clear from the internal papers issued by the Treasury that the way in which departmental managers are required to assess the relative value of in-house bids and tenders from outside the civil service will not guarantee a level playing

field. The Minister has repeatedly said that there will be a level playing field between in-house and outside bids. However, when we consider the terms and conditions, that will not be the case.

The civil service bid is required to assess all in-house costs including accommodation and what are called hidden overheads. Bids from outside the civil service are made on a cash basis. Thus it is possible for an in-house bid that is lower in cash terms to lose out to a bid from the private sector even though it may cost the public service more, simply because the private sector did not have to take into account equipment and accommodation costs or a variety of other issues.

There are already clear examples of how bias has been given to private sector bids. In respect of the Ministry of Defence, we need only consider Tarmac's bid for the Property Services Agency. Once the bid was made, Tarmac was allowed to come back with additional funds for possible redundancies. It was then given a guarantee of £11 million in future contracts, £8 million of which was from the MOD.

There is a similar case of unfair bidding between in-house and external bids in respect of the Central Office of Information. Williams Lea was allowed to make a second bid to include redundancy payments and no one else was allowed to participate in the second round of bids. Those are two serious examples where in-house bids have not enjoyed a level playing field.

The Government could have simply continued to rely on the pressures of market testing to drive down wages. However, they ran into an obstacle in Europe in the form of a directive in 1981 which gave employment protection to workers when they were transferred from one commercial undertaking to another.

Until recently, it was unclear whether the directive applied to non-commercial undertakings such as local authorities or the civil service. A recent European Court of Justice ruling states that it does. That directive on the protection of workers' rights extends through local authorities and the civil service with the workers when they are privatised.

That has caused confusion in the Government's market testing programme. John Hall, who chairs the Confederation of British Industry's competing for quality group and who is also secretary of the Cleaning Support Services Association, has said of the workers' rights that are to be protected:

"This will make tendering totally unattractive. It is staggering news. It is probably the most serious challenge ever to our industry and we will fight it tooth and nail . . . If the clause"

on the protection of workers' rights

"goes on the statute book then there will be little point in our members getting involved in public sector tendering."

Similarly, a spokesman for Onyx UK, another important contractor for local authority services, stated on Radio 4's "Face the Facts":

"If private sector employers become liable to take on not just council services but the workers' original terms and conditions as well, it would change the face of compulsory competitive tendering and though there would be nothing to stop the private sector remaining involved, much of the rationale behind the process would have been lost.

I think it would slightly emasculate what the Government's intention was behind the compulsory competitive tendering regulations which is to reduce the costs to local authorities by opening it up to private sector tendering which would mean that if the private sector win, the employees would effectively be employed on normal private sector conditions. Therefore, if the regulations are changed and we would be obliged to take over the ex-council employees on the existing conditions, this of course would mean that our price would be higher and the price of all our competitors would be higher."

So the protection undertakings for workers will be transferred to the employment legislation. As a result of that, and the difficulties which it has caused, a number of Departments have halted their market-testing programmes until further clarification is given. The Foreign Office has halted such programmes. The Welsh Office has told its health authorities to cease contracting out while it seeks legal advice, and the Health and Safety Executive has put its programme on hold because it initially received contradictory legal advice.

With the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, the Government have been forced to accept that market testing will lower pay and conditions in the civil service, and the Bill will allow them to do that. We are opposed to the Bill because of a combination of the transfer of undertakings and the possibility that it will lower terms and conditions and facilitate market testing and contracting out.

The Labour party has a different view of the civil service. Our view is a renewal of the public service tradition to make it more responsive to users, to decentralise it and, above all, to make it accountable. We think that the civil service should remain under a single employer which has public money—taxpayers' money—and which is accountable directly to Parliament or through Ministers. It is clear that that does not happen at present.

Privatisation and contracting out have altered that view of the civil service. All we have to do is to examine the monopolies of gas, water and electricity which provide no additional choice, regardless of the Government's rhetoric to consumers, and are deeply inadequate in their regulation and accountability to Parliament.

We must examine examples of the sort that the Minister gave this evening. If the Minister thinks that social security would function better in the private sector, and if he puts it out to competitive tender, what will happen to Mrs. Smith from Bootle who already has a severe difficulty with accountability and being able to complain about her disability living allowance? If social security is put out to contract and goes to a building society or NatWest, will people such as Mrs. Smith have a genuine system of complaint? Such a system would be lost under the Government's proposals.

The civil service is already demoralised by the Damocles sword of privatisation hanging over its head. We believe that there are ethical values and a culture in the public service which have a sense of equity between individuals and offer a product, whether it is running a prison or our passport agencies. That is not to say that value for money is not important. It is more a question of emphasis.

The Labour party believes that ethical interests, public scrutiny and accountability are crucial to the future of our civil service. As many of my hon. Friends have said, we value our civil service. We accept that there is a need for change, equity of provision, constant review and testing services, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson) said, by way of performance indicators or quality management. However, we want a civil service which will be run by people who are

[Ms Mowlam]

accountable rather than business people who are accountable only to themselves. We want a civil service of that sort when we enter the next century.

9.48 pm

Mr. Trimble: I wish to explain briefly why my colleagues and I will oppose the Third Reading of the Bill. During earlier debates, I said that we were worried that the Bill contained a hidden agenda. In the words of the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam), the Bill will deteriorate the conditions of service and depress salary levels of civil servants who are in agencies which are about to be hived off, or in other parts of the civil service. That is a wholly undesirable way in which to proceed.

That is not to say that there cannot be some advantage and flexibility and a devolution and delegation of responsibility, and so on. However, we fear that behind the legislation lies an agenda which is not in the interests of the public service. There should still be a concept of public service.

I make no apology for referring once again to the parochial aspects which concern me, especially those relating to procedures. As I said, clause 3 authorises the making of an Order in Council by negative resolution. That means that the equivalent provision for Northern Ireland will not be debated in the House.

The Minister said earlier that the Bill was a technical measure. He said that it had not raised a tremendous amount of interest in the House and called attention to the limited attendance in today's debate and earlier proceedings. However, the technical nature of the Bill is not a reason for saying that it should not receive detailed scrutiny. Indeed, it is an argument for even closer scrutiny. It is the function of the House closely to examine measures.

Clause 3 authorises the making of an Order in Council for purposes corresponding to those of the Bill. But "corresponding" does not mean exactly the same. For the reasons that I gave earlier, the Northern Ireland Order in Council could not be drafted with exactly the same terminology as the Bill. It will contain differences. Those differences will not be debated because of clause 3. If clause 3 did not exist, we would have an unamendable Order in Council. But the normal procedure for Orders in Council—publishing a proposal on which there is a consultation—would allow a limited opportunity for people to make representations and have a chance of influencing the nature of the measure.

If the Bill is passed, there will be no opportunity for any scrutiny of the Northern Ireland measure or any opportunity to amend it. That is simply not good enough for a detailed, technical and complex matter. For that reason, as well as the general issue on which I touched, we find the measure unacceptable and we shall oppose it.

9.51 pm

Mr. Davidson: There is a consensus in favour of delegation and better management of public services, but anxiety is often expressed by Opposition Members about the hidden agenda behind the Bill. As the debate has gone on, the agenda has become far less hidden. I find myself in the almost paradoxical position that I must vote against the Government's proposals because they do not go far enough. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] I know. It causes me some difficulty, I must confess.

I am in favour of delegation to management within the civil service, but the Bill does not go far enough, because it does not allow managers freedom to manage without the fetters of Government policy on a series of matters on which we believe that these policies are driven by dogma.

The public services should operate to agreed agendas, free from dogma. I recognise that we need consensually driven policies for the civil service. For example, I wish to see the flexibility of public service constrained by agreed policies on issues such as dispersal. But I am opposed to constraints such as the thrust to regionalisation of pay, which is designed to drive down pay levels, and contracting out.

Are we serious about injecting private sector methods into the public sector? Let us take the example of the National Savings bank in Glasgow. I ask the Minister to give me an example of a private sector organisation which is obliged to contract out its typing services, messenger services, reprographic services, agency accounting, internal audit and training. The private sector does not operate in that way. If we want a decent public sector, it should not be fettered by dogma-driven policies. That is why I oppose the Government's proposals.

9.53 pm

Ms Hoey: I regret the need to oppose the Bill. Although it was initially heralded as a poor, misunderstood little Bill, the detailed debate on Second Reading and the examination in Committee, as well as the scrutiny in the House of Lords, have highlighted the importance of the measures proposed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) reiterated the central and overwhelming area of agreement between the Opposition and the Government, but we are not able to offer support for the Bill because of what it lacks. It lacks a conscience. It lacks safeguards to prevent the abuses and errors that may be side effects of the measures that it contains. It lacks a commitment to consulting the unions, even though the Minister has conceded the importance of such procedures. What is more, we shall be left to rely on the Minister's discretion over consultation, when the Bill was sprung on the staff of the civil service without a day's notice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) has been terrier-like in his pursuit of the Government for a commitment to proper consultation. The failure of his efforts is testimony to Government intransigence.

My hon. Friend the Member for Redcar has pressed the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to put the Government's commitment to maintaining and developing equality of opportunity in the Bill, by allowing modest amendments to safeguard the civil service's co-ordinated practices. Our civil service has an excellent reputation in that field, and the Government's reluctance to amend slightly the Bill bodes ill for Government policies, including Opportunity 2000.

The hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord), in an earlier discussion, hit a raw nerve on the Conservative Front Bench when he pleaded in the recent debate on public services for a period of reflection so that we could

look first at ways of making our civil service more efficient in its present form before we reach too readily for the privatisation lever.

The Bill does nothing to allay our fears that the Government's hidden agenda is the privatisation of the civil service regardless, on the dogmatic grounds that the private sector necessarily does things better than the public.

Opposition Members have reached out to the Minister with olive branch amendments to cover our concerns, and they have spurned them. My hon. Friends have coaxed and cajoled the Government in search of guarantees to cover the famous impartiality, objectivity and discretion of the civil service. The Minister has turned a stony—*[Interruption.]* Madam Speaker, do we have to try to speak when people are gabbling over there beyond the Bar?

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, but I thought that the hon. Lady was capable of making herself heard.

Ms. Hoey: I am, but I wish that hon. Members who come in for the last two minutes of the debate might sit wherever they have been a little longer and not come in until the Division is called.

The Minister has turned a stony face on those pleas. Sadly, his commitment and motivation must be questioned, and we shall therefore oppose the Bill.

9.57 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson: The House has had an unparalleled opportunity to discuss the civil service in the past few weeks—an opportunity which we have not perhaps had before. There was a statement on the citizens charter White Paper, a debate on the public service, and the Second Reading, Committee and Report stages of the Bill. It has been an interesting experience, which has shown that there is a good deal of common ground between both sides of the House, which is welcome.

In particular, it is clear that the Government and the Opposition share a view of the importance of ensuring that the civil service can give best effect to valued commitment to serving citizens. It is easy for us to take our British system for granted. Apolitical, impartial incorruptible civil services are not altogether common throughout the world, and we are lucky to have what we have here. It is also common ground that it is equally important that the civil service should change and evolve to meet new challenges; otherwise, there will be stagnation and decline, and that is the threat that faces all large organisations.

I am sorry to hear that the Opposition intend to vote against the Bill. No doubt it is their duty to oppose, but it seems unfortunate that they are thereby forced to oppose better management in the civil service.

Let us remind the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) of her words in Committee:

> "We have no difficulty with decentralisation; we have no difficulty with management decisions being taken close to the place where the work force are".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 26 November 1992; c. 75.]

It sounds to me as though the hon. Lady is happy to favour delegation, provided that all managers take the same decision. It is exactly the same as her attitude to market testing—she is in favour, provided that the private sector is not allowed to compete. The fact is that the hon. Lady is willing to wound but afraid to strike.

I pay tribute to the valiant support for the Bill given by Earl Howe in the House of Lords, and to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who said that the sole aim of the Bill was to remove a legal technicality in order to help the civil service to organise itself in the best way to deliver services to the citizen in an effective and efficient manner. There is no hidden agenda behind the Bill: it is simply an attempt to remove a technical impediment to delegation and decentralisation, where there is common ground between us. The Bill will bring positive benefits, and I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 297, Noes 234.

Division No. 104] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John

Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Robert Hughes.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie

McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—
Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment—*[Mr. Robin Squire.]*

10.14 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I was not present on Friday when the Bill was debated, but I have read the report of the debate, and I entirely support the principle of the Bill. During the debate, the Minister made two points about expenditure. First, he said:

"the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has agreed that all significant direct costs incurred by local authorities in carrying out a project under the technical links scheme will be met from the know-how funds."

I take it that that will be covered by the money resolution, which is required, as a matter of formality, for private Members' Bills.

"Secondly,"

the Minister said,

"we have made it known that the Secretary of State is prepared to sanction under section 19 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 local authority expenditure under the technical links scheme."—[*Official Report*, 11 December 1992; Vol. 215, c. 1155.]

Does that mean that the Secretary of State would sanction local authority borrowing, or does it mean that the technical links scheme will be covered entirely by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office under the resolution, and that only local authority expenditure in this country relating to the technical links scheme will be covered by that second point?

I think that the Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill is well intentioned. I believe that many local authorities are keen to establish links with countries that need technical assistance and expertise. However, many local authority residents take the view that the priorities of such technical links should be financed by central Government: local authorities are very short of money, and many people take exception to what they see as lavish trips abroad at a time when, for example, schools are crumbling and roads need repairing. I feel that the emphasis on central Government expenditure is right.

The Bill provides for consent by the Secretary of State to the provision of advice and assistance by local authorities. That invokes the de minimis rule, which governs the level of expenditure below which such consent will not be required. In Friday's debate, the Minister said that an announcement would be made. In the context of this motion, can he tell us what the limit will be?

I know that it is the habit of the House not to question expenditure, but I do not happen to agree with that habit. It would be helpful if the Minister could tell us what gross sums are involved in annual expenditure. As he will appreciate, a number of local authorities providing technical advice and assistance could become involved in considerable expenditure under the two provisions that he mentioned on Friday. It would be interesting to have some idea of the scale of the Government's proposed expenditure.

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

It would also be useful to know how central Government will supervise expenditure. It is possible, for example, that three or four local authorities, or more, would concentrate their advice and assistance, perhaps through a technical links scheme, on a single area in a single country, because such links had been established by chance. When provision is thin on the ground, will the Government make any provision subject to the availability of financial assistance in the way that I have described? That is one of the useful things that central Government can do.

10.19 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire): The prime reason for the money resolution is that the Local Government Bill will involve the Department of the Environment, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office in new expenditure in, for example, processing the occasional application for consent. That is the central reason for the resolution. I echo and endorse the view expressed by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), as he will know from reading the report of last Friday's debate, when we went into some detail, that the Bill has widespread support and that it is expected that money will not fall on council tax payers to any significant extent.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South mentioned the sanction under section 19 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982. The purpose of that provision is essentially to ensure that, in advance of the legislation receiving Royal Assent, there is no question of a district auditor being able to take action against a local authority which is offering technical assistance to other countries. It is a rarely used provision, but it exists to ensure that, when a measure such as the Bill has overwhelming support in the House, no action is taken against a specific authority. That would be unreasonable.

The hon. Member asked about consents. I do not have the figures beside me now, although I had them for Friday's debate. We are going out to consultation to local authorities on this and on a number of aspects of the Bill. From memory, we are basing the figure on population. With a population of under 50,000, there will be a limit of £20,000, rising to a consent of no more than £60,000 for authorities with a population of more than 250,000. If I may, I will write to the hon. Gentleman on the matter, because I am relying on memory at the moment, and if I have the figures wrong, he will be the first to point that out.

10.21 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): We are not practising for the Maastricht debate when we come back in January. I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) might have been when he kicked off the debate, but we realise that there is a time limit on money resolution debates.

The Bill received its Second Reading on Friday, and it had all-party support. A few days later, a money resolution is provided by the Government. About a fortnight ago, we had a long series of points of order on Maastricht. One of the main points in the first run at Maastricht was the fact that we were arguing for a referendum. The Government said that there was no provision for a money resolution. We wanted to argue that occasionally the Government provide a money resolution when it suited their purpose. They do so, as I pointed out then, for private Members' Bills.

This Bill is a first-class example. Within the space of a few days, the Government have provided the necessary money resolution for a Bill which has all-party support. I hope that the Minister will ensure that his colleagues understand that, when we come back to Maastricht after the recess, the Government will have to provide a money resolution for the referendum, so that people outside this place can have a vote on Maastricht. Let us have no more funny business; let the Government not say that they are not capable of providing a money resolution, because that is what they have done tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment.

TRANSPORT

Ordered,

That Mr. Jack Aspinwall be discharged from the Transport Committee and Mr. Nigel Evans be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

PETITION

Emergency Telephone Service

10.23 pm

Ms Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I have great pleasure in presenting tonight a petition with 250,000 signatures which was organised by the Union of Communication Workers. It was signed by people all over the country, both members of the public and workers in the emergency services. Most importantly, it was also signed by people who use the 999 service, the service that saves lives. I am pleased that I did not have to carry the petition, because it filled six boxes; I am grateful to the attendants who have brought them here tonight.

The petition says:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House decide to maintain the current 999 emergency telephone service provided by B.T. and reject the proposal to transfer this service to a call handling agency.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

To lie upon the Table.

Pit Closures

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

10.24 pm

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): I am delighted to have the opportunity to raise on the Floor of the House the question of the 10 collieries remaining on the Government hit list for closure. It is psychologically important that the issue be ventilated in the House, because the knowledge that it is before the House now, and will be continually before us when we return from the Christmas recess, gives heart to the coal miners affected.

As you are aware, Madam Speaker, I sought an Adjournment debate because of the unsatisfactory answers given by the Minister for Energy to Trade and Industry questions a couple of weeks ago. However, the real background to the debate is the announcement made by the President of the Board of Trade on 19 October to the effect that he proposed to agree with the Coal Board and close 31 collieries, putting more than 30,000 miners out of work and more than 60,000 related workers out of a job as a direct result of the closure programme.

That programme was the most savage rationalisation that a Government have ever attempted to inflict on any industry or sector of industry in this country in such a short time. It was immediately greeted with massive outrage by the British public. There was a mixture of motives behind that outrage, but it is fair to say that most people regarded the closure programme as one of the worst cases of industrial vandalism that they had ever witnessed. There was also great anger that the Tory Government sought to take vindictive revenge on the miners. The public were also aware of the massive waste of coal reserves, which do not belong to the Government, or to one generation, but to the people. Millions of tonnes of those precious reserves were to be left in the ground.

There is no doubt that the uproar generated shook the Government to their foundations—so much so that when a debate was to take place on a Labour motion 48 hours later, on 21 October, the Government caved in before the debate started. To our astonishment the President of the Board of Trade, who on Monday had not mentioned the word "review", announced a review of 21 of the 31 pits originally scheduled for closure. The right hon. Gentleman said that 10 pits would remain on the closure list, but, according to him, and according to the Secretary of State for Wales, who wound up the debate on that fateful night, even those 10 would be subject to a full review and genuine consultations.

The Secretary of State for Wales spelled the pledge out categorically, saying:

"Let me make matters absolutely clear about the 10 pits. British Coal is under a statutory duty to consult on those closures . . .It must be a genuine consultation. British Coal has given the criteria to show that those pits are currently loss making and have no prospect of viability in the foreseeable future. If there is any serious doubt about whether those criteria apply, British Coal will have to demonstrate that the doubt is removed and that the criteria have been met, because, under the legislation, it not only has to give reasons for closure, but it must prove that the consultation is a genuine one. That is absolutely clear."—*[Official Report,* 21 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 526.]

The Secretary of State for Wales used the words:

"loss making and have no prospect of viability".

I shall concentrate on those words, and relate them to Parkside colliery, at Newton-le-Willows, in my constituency, because it provides a good example of the impact on the other nine collieries.

The President of the Board of Trade made a statement on 19 October. In reply to my question about Parkside colliery, he said:

"The figures that British Coal has shown me for that particular colliery indicate that it is not able to make a profit even in today's circumstances. That is the real world that I have to confront."*[Official Report,* 19 October 1992; Vol. 212, c.224-25.]

I subsequently obtained British Coal's profit and loss statement for Parkside colliery, which I quoted in the debate on 21 October. I quote it again. In 1987-88, Parkside made a profit of £5,093,000. In 1988-89 it made a profit of £3,258,000. In 1989-90, it made a profit of £1,729,000. In 1990-91, it made a profit of £5,074,000. In 1991-92, after a difficult first six months when it lost money, it recovered so well in the second half of the year that the profit for the year was £2,874,000.

Those figures show any reasonable person that Parkside is a profitable colliery. The chairman of British Coal, at a meeting that I and eight or nine colleagues had with him and his senior officers at Hobart house on Wednesday 18 October, admitted that Parkside was profitable. At Trade and Industry questions on 2 December, I asked the Minister for Energy to publish the report by J. T. Boyd, which has lain on his desk since October 1991. I understand that the report maintains that five of the 10 pits on the closure hit list were profitable and that they should remain as part of a viable British Coal mining industry. The Minister ignored the question and the report remains unpublished. I challenge him to publish the Boyd report, which he has had for 14 months, so that we can see what Boyd said about the pits.

Miners at Parkside colliery have been treated quite disgracefully. Following the statement of the President of the Board of Trade on 19 October, and notwithstanding everything that was said in the debate on Wednesday 21 October, on Friday 23 October NUM officials at Parkside colliery were brusquely told that coal production would end that day. Consultation on the viability of the mine, the likelihood of its being saved and its future have been non-existent.

In the statutory 90-day consultation period, which is required only to discuss redundancy, British Coal is insisting that every miner must report to work every day on his shift time, even though everyone knows that they will all be sent home. Some of those men must travel 30 to 35 miles to get to the colliery, and to bring men in at 5 am or 6 am is quite disgraceful. It is all part of British Coal's policy of putting psychological pressure on the men to accept redundancy payments.

What will happen to miners when the 90-day consultation period runs out? I hope that the Minister will answer that question, because miners certainly want to know. A brand new face at Parkside, which had cost £6 million to install, was ready to go into full production. Miners inform me that that face was the finest that they had ever had and, to quote their words, "they would have been printing money by Christmas" with that face.

Today, one face at Parkside is threatened with extinction. Despite British Coal's High Court pledge to protect the fabric of pits, the face known as W31 at Parkside is suffering serious divergence and the miners

[Mr. John Evans]

there told me today that, unless that face is worked quickly, within a few days, it will soon become unpassable, and that would mean the end of that face. Every request that the miners and the union have made to cut coal on that face has been rejected by the management of the colliery.

The basic facts about Parkside are clear. Its performance in the last five years has been excellent. The pit had a difficult summer, largely because of unexpected geological problems with the installation of the new face, but by September those problems were widely viewed as having been solved. The new face offered every prospect of clawing back earlier losses. That assessment was made by the NUM's mining engineer, who emphasised that the availability of good, high-quality reserves did not appear to be in dispute. There are 40 million tonnes of coal reserves at Parkside colliery.

British Coal's claim that Parkside has no future is not based on a judgment of the pit's efficiency but on the market crisis facing British Coal. Coal reserves are to be abandoned, valuable machinery left underground and the skilled work force told that their right to work no longer has any value.

The Government talk much about the cost of keeping pits open. That is not the point. The real issue is the cost of closing them. The principal cost is that of a sizeable and, in all probability, long-lasting increase in unemployment, which is already unacceptably high. For example, at Parkside colliery there are 724 employees classified as miners. Each is entitled to a payment under the scheme of an average of £24,000. For every 100 miners made redundant by British Coal, the corporation also sheds 33 other employees, which means that British Coal will shed a further 239 jobs. Each of those will be entitled to a redundancy payment at least as good as that offered to the miners.

The end of mining at Parkside would mean significant job losses in firms that supply services direct to the colliery, including private contractors, suppliers of equipment and railway and road haulage workers who remove coal from the site. The effect on the economy of the north-west would be utterly destructive. There are no new jobs waiting to be taken by those made redundant. The adult unemployment rate in the St. Helens travel-to-work area is over 14 per cent. So added to the cost of the redundancy scheme are the costs of the dole. The annual cost of an unemployed worker is estimated to be £7,900 in terms of unemployment benefit and lost taxes.

Therefore, it is now possible to measure the cost of Parkside's closure. The average redundancy payments to 724 Parkside miners and 239 other British Coal employees would be about £23 million. The cost of 963 newly unemployed people, at £7,900 each, would be another £7·5 million, making a total in excess of £30 million. That is not counting the cost incurred by all the other workers in associated industries who would also be made redundant, the cost of which would, I suspect, add another £10 million to £15 million to the cost of closing Parkside.

The Government must put in place an energy policy that utilises the nation's coal reserves in an efficient and environmentally friendly manner. They must ensure a level playing field for British Coal to supply competitively priced coal in bulk volume to the generating companies. The Government must restrict the dash for expensive gas and safeguard existing cheaper, coal-fired power stations. We must also press the European Community for a total ban on dumped coal within our borders. We must seek the support of the European Community to export British coal into the Community.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I am very pleased that my hon. Friend is making this very powerful case in respect of a pit that is one of the newest in Britain. It was developed only a few years ago in pit terms. I think that my hon. Friend will agree that, with 20 million tons of coal coming into Britain at this time, that represents nearly £1 billion loss on the balance of payments. We can ill afford that when we are about £12 billion in debt.

Is it not crazy to be sacking those miners at Parkside in my hon. Friend's constituency and miners in other constituencies, costing all that money with the dole, when German coal at £110 a ton is coming from the Common Market into Britain and we cannot sell what is the cheapest deep-mined coal in Europe?

Mr. Evans: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comment. He has saved me the necessity of suggesting that one of the other things that the Government could do is to give the same sort of support to our coal industry as the Germans have to theirs.

If such things are done in the review which the Government are carrying out, I submit that Parkside and most of the other pits will survive and have a prosperous future. Eighty per cent. of Parkside's coal goes just 12 miles by an environmentally friendly merry-go-round train to be burnt at Fiddler's Ferry power station. That power station, I understand, is now looking round for alternative supplies of coal, because obviously it is not getting Parkside coal, and it is increasingly concerned about the quality and the problems associated with imported coal being brought through the port of Bootle.

Parkside is a profitable pit. There is a market for its coal and it has an efficient work force. Perhaps the Minister will now explain why Parkside, with the record that it has, is doomed to closure if the Government's plans are carried out.

10.41 pm

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): I congratulate the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) on securing this debate and on arranging it for a reasonable time of the night.

The hon. Gentleman referred to a number of points, such as imports, the possibility of exporting to the rest of the European Community and the point raised by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) about subsidies. Incidentally, I am sure it was a slip of the tongue, but of course there is no German steam coal for generation purposes imported into the United Kingdom; there is, however, some small amount of anthracite and coking coal imported and, as the hon. Gentleman knows, those imports displace other imports of anthracite and coking coal rather than United Kingdom coal. As he also knows, I am sure, the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) has very firm views on the future of the anthracite mines in his constituency.

I have listened very carefully to the points made by the hon. Member for St. Helens, North with regard to matters that are the subject of the review. I am sure that he will not

be surprised to hear me say that it would not be right for me tonight to pre-empt the results of the review. We hope to publish it in White Paper form early in the new year and, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government are committed to a debate on the Floor of the House about that.

Furthermore, the hon. Gentleman will know that the Trade and Industry Select Committee is completing its investigations into this matter and my right hon. Friend and I were giving evidence to that Committee this afternoon.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Is the Minister aware that the miners in the 10 pits have absolutely no confidence in this review because they feel that the fabric of the mines has been left in such a state that they cannot be resuscitated even if it comes to the stage when the Minister or the President of the Board of Trade, or even, God help us, the chairman of British Coal, decides that it shall so be?

Mr. Eggar: As the hon. Gentleman knows, there is a difference between the review to which I was referring—which covers the 21 pits—and the statutory consultation period, which covers the 10 pits which are, strictly speaking, the subject of the debate. Parkside is one of the 10 for which the procedure will be the statutory consultation period. I shall take a little time to explain the background to that because some questions are often asked about the 10 pits; a number of those questions were raised by the hon. Member for St. Helens, North.

It is fair to say that there has been some speculation about the basis on which the 10 pits were chosen. The answer to how and why they were chosen is straightforward and has already been explained to the House. They are the 10 pits which British Coal informed the Government were currently making losses and had no prospect of viability in the foreseeable future.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Eggar: I shall, of course, give way to my hon. Friend, but, as I was saying, those were the criteria on which the Government took the decision that the 10 pits should go to statutory consultation.

Mrs. Peacock: I am listening carefully to what my hon. Friend says. We continue to hear British Coal's view that the 10 pits were uneconomic. I understand that the Minister and the President of the Board of Trade say that they must accept British Coal's figures, but can the Minister tell me, the House and anyone else who is listening how we can get correct figures for those mines? We have been told that British Coal's official figures are not correct, that all those mines are not loss-making and do not have the bleak future that British Coal predicts.

Mr. Eggar: I shall deal with exactly that point later.

We are also asked why the 10 pits were not included in the moratorium and in the coal review. Again, the answer is straightforward—it relates to the economics of the pits, as we have been informed of them by British Coal.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Eggar: No, I am sorry. I have already given way. It is not fair to the hon. Member for St. Helens, North, whose debate this is——

Mr. Hoyle *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The Minister appears not to be giving way.

Mr. Hoyle: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I hope that it is a point of order, not a point of frustration.

Mr. Hoyle: I do not wish to be critical, but I have as many constituents working at Parkside, as has my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans), who spoke so strongly about it and I want to make a point to the Minister who has given way twice.

Mr. Eggar *rose*——

Mr. Hoyle: I have not quite finished.

Madam Speaker: Order. The Minister is not giving way. If he is not giving way, there is nothing that the Chair can do.

Mr. Eggar: I am grateful, Madam Speaker. I shall try to make progress and if the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) later still feels that I have not answered his questions and if time permits, I shall willingly give way.

The reason the pits are the subject of statutory consultation is that British Coal told us that the pits are currently loss-making and have no prospect of viability in the foreseeable future. Let me explain why. British Coal expects coal prices to its main customers—the generators—to decline significantly from next April. If the 10 pits are loss making at current prices, their position will clearly worsen at lower prices.

I stress that it is British Coal which is undertaking the current statutory consultation process, not the Government. It follows that representations—for example, where this or that pit is profitable or loss-making—must be best pursued in the context of those statutory consultations.

Mr. John Evans: Is the Minister aware that the miners and the National Union of Mineworkers constantly raise that point in the alleged or supposed consultations, but British Coal will not refer to the points to which the Minister has just referred?

Mr. Eggar: I will try to make rapid progress and then reach the points that have been raised.

It might help if I take this opportunity to spell out the nature of the statutory consultation process. The process is taking place under section 188 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 which was previously section 99 of the Employment Protection Act 1975. The participants are British Coal and the relevant mining trade unions. The process began at the end of October and the consultation period must be not less than 90 days. That is relevant to the point raised earlier about the 91st day.

Section 188 of the 1992 Act requires British Coal to provide the unions with specified information; to consider any representations made by the unions and to reply to the representations. That is clearly laid down in section 188.

British Coal informs us that it has sent the relevant trade unions an information package on each colliery. According to British Coal, the package includes the pit's performance, its financial results and other associated key data. The unions—if not Opposition Members—will have

[Mr. Eggar]

that financial package. I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) is aware of that.

British Coal has said that the consultation will relate to all aspects of the proposed redundancies at the 10 pits, including the reasons for the decision for them to close; the numbers of men involved; the extent to which transfers may be possible; and the terms of redundancies and assistance available. I am told that British Coal has held statutory consultation meetings on each pit at group and colliery levels. Whether there are further meetings depends on the wishes of the trade unions.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Minister now please address the powerful case made by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North about Parkside? The Minister has generalised about all the pits. My hon. Friend said that Parkside has always been profitable. A new face has just been opened and that would make it even more profitable. Will the Minister address the problems of that pit?

Mr. Eggar: The position for Parkside, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware, is that because it is involved in the statutory consultation process, that process takes place between the trade unions and British Coal. The correct procedure is for discussions to take place between British Coal and the relevant trade unions. The Government are not party to that statutory consultation process under section 188 of the 1992 Act.

I have been informed by British Coal that it has made a package of information available to the unions. If the unions want further meetings—in addition to those that have already taken place—on the future of the pits, I am informed that British Coal will agree to those meetings. Under the provisions, the discussions must take place between——

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Eggar: I will give way, but I have only a few minutes left.

Mr. McCartney: Like my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), I have constituents who work at Parkside. It is a last refuge as all the collieries in my constituency have closed since 1987. The Minister is not addressing the issue that British Coal gave a guarantee to the High Court to protect the fabric of the colliery. The President of the Board of Trade and the Secretary of State for Wales gave commitments in the House that they would ensure that that commitment would be upheld. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North is saying that that commitment is wilfully not being upheld and Parkside's face is collapsing. What is the Minister going to do about that? What steps is he going to take to ensure that in the next seven days that face is cut to protect the colliery? That is the real issue tonight. All the rest is a load of guff.

Mr. Eggar: British Coal has given us quite clear assurances about the way in which it will seek to preserve the fabric of the colliery. I remind the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) that, after the Scargill strike of 1984, there was widespread concern that collieries would not be able to open and start producing coal. In fact, after a long period when there was no mining when there was nothing like the degree of care and maintenance that is being carried out at Parkside——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at six minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 16 December 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

RIVER HUMBER (UPPER BURCOM COOLING WORKS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 14 January 1993.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Rail Services (Edinburgh and the Borders)

1. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail about the future of rail services from Edinburgh and the borders to London and the continent.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): My right hon. Friend and I meet senior management of British Rail from time to time. Such contacts cover a wide range of topics relating to rail services in Scotland.

Mr. Beith: If Mr. Richard Branson—or anyone else—is allowed to take over the east coast main line service, what guarantee is there that passengers from the borders will continue to have frequent train services from Berwick and other intermediate stations? With or without Richard Branson, when will there be through services to France, through the channel tunnel, from Edinburgh and the borders?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The answer is 1995. I understand that British Rail intends to operate a day-time service from Edinburgh down the east coast main line and a night-time service from Glasgow down the west coast main line to Paris and Brussels. Day-time and night-time through services are expected to start in 1995, but, for people intending to use the route earlier, there will, of course, be an option of transferring quickly in London to another route. Freight services will be in use as soon as the channel tunnel opens. The reason for the delay to 1995 is that many complex issues need to be resolved.

Mr. Foulkes: Has the Minister read the remarks of Lords Whitelaw and Ridley in the other place arguing strongly against any privatisation of British Rail? As one of them is one of the greatest advocates of privatisation, will the Government take account of those remarks? Train services in the borders, in Ayrshire and in other rural areas are bound to suffer if privatisation goes ahead. Clearly, private operators will be after only the lucrative routes, and rural areas, as usual, will be the ones to suffer. Will the Government think again on the issue?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government have given a clear commitment to preserving the current national network and continuing to provide subsidy, when it is needed, for loss-making services that are socially necessary. On the privatisation of international routes, the Government's view is that international services will benefit from private sector expertise, and specific options for transferring international services to the private sector are under discussion within British Rail and the Government. I cannot yet say when we shall be in a position to publish specific proposals.

Independence

2. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received for Scottish independence.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): Since the general election I have received 22 representations in favour of independence for Scotland. I have received hundreds in support of the maintenance of the Union.

Mr. Amess: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Scottish people live in Basildon? They are proud to be Scottish and pleased to live in Basildon. Is my right hon. Friend further aware that the overwhelming majority of them are totally opposed to the break-up of the United Kingdom, and does he agree with them?

Mr. Lang: I am glad to be able to reassure my hon. Friend that the overwhelming majority of the people of Scotland are also resistant to the break-up of the United Kingdom. The only political party offering the break-up of the United Kingdom saw its representation in the House reduced by 40 per cent. at the general election, when I was delighted to see my hon. Friend re-elected as the Member for Basildon.

Mr. McAllion: Is the Secretary of State aware that although the democratic opposition to Tory Government in Scotland may be divided on the issue of indpendence, it is absolutely united behind the principle that Scotland should decide for itself what its views on independence are? Who does the Secretary of State think is more representative of Scottish opinion—the 25,000 Scots from every part of the country who gathered in Edinburgh last Saturday to demand a multi-option referendum, or the ragbag of no-hopers on the Conservative Back Benches?

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Gentleman wants to see a ragbag, he should look at the range of organisations with different opinions that marched in the demonstration on Saturday. They could not even reach the end of the march without disagreeing and falling out among themselves.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Does my right hon. Friend appreciate that Scotland's greatest benefit is that it is the only country on earth which does not have the misfortune to have a Government? However, Scotland has the good fortune to have control over its affairs and its heritage—for which my right hon. Friend is so appreciated. Will he ensure that when the English work out whether they can buy tea or shortbread on Sundays, under their stupid Shops Act 1950, section 4 of the 1950 Act is never applied to Scotland and that our law remains as free as it is?

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend is right to draw attention to the distinctive features of legislation affecting Scotland, which are safeguarded by arrangements in this Parliament. Not for the first time, Scotland is giving examples from which England can benefit.

Mr. Wallace: Does the Secretary of State accept that while 78 per cent. of the Scottish people rejected independence on 9 April, 75 per cent. were not satisfied with the status quo and wanted a Scottish Parliament? Given that the Secretary of State, in his speech to the Monday club at the Conservative party conference, accepted the nationhood of Scotland, how does he envisage Scotland being able to implement the democratic wish of the Scottish people if he and his colleagues in Government refuse to accept that wish?

Mr. Lang: The vast majority of people voting in the last general election supported parties which are nominally committed to the maintenance of the Union of the United Kingdom. Within that United Kingdom and its Parliament, it is possible to cater for the distinctive needs of the different parts of the Union. That is what already happens in Parliament, and that is what we are considering to find out whether further changes can be made to improve arrangements for Scottish business at Westminster.

Mr. Ian Bruce: What representations has my right hon. Friend received from the dockyard workers at Rosyth about an independent Scotland? If that were to come about, what effect do they think that it would have on their jobs?

Mr. Lang: I have had no such representations, but, in that matter as in so many others, Scotland's benefits derive to a large extent from our membership of this United Kingdom.

Mr. Salmond: The Secretary of State must be aware, even if Basildon man is not, that the latest signs are that independence is the leading option and that it is twice as popular as his option—the status quo. In the light of Saturday's march and rally, does the Secretary of State still believe what he has told us for the past six months—that no one is interested in the Scottish question? On Saturday, 25,000 people demonstrated for freedom and democracy in the streets of our capital city. When will he take stock of that? If the governor-general were to announce a rally in March in favour of the discredited Union, would any Scot bother to turn up—or would he have to bus them in from Basildon?

Mr. Lang: I have already pointed out that the march last Saturday contained elements that conflict directly with each other in their views of the future of Scotland. The hon. Gentleman asks who is interested in the Scottish question. I am interested in it. That is why I and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister are taking stock. That is why we are considering proposals to change the arrangements whereby Scottish business is handled and to find other ways in which Scottish interests can be better represented within this Westminster Parliament.

Mr. Canavan: When did the Scottish Tory party manage to get 25,000 Scots marching for anything? The Secretary of State is trying to derive some comfort from the fact that there are honest differences of opinion among the people of Scotland on the exact powers that a Scottish Parliament should have. Why is he so afraid to hold a referendum and let the people decide? Is it because he knows that the overwhelming majority would reject the status quo?

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Conservative party is pursuing its objectives through democratic and parliamentary means, and it was the only party in Scotland to increase both its vote and its share of the seats at the last general election.

Local Government

3. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the conduct of local government in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The conduct of local authority business in Scotland and the rest of Great Britain was comprehensively examined by the Widdecombe committee, and the Government made a number of changes in the law in the light of its report. I believe that Scottish authorities generally observe high standards in the conduct of their business, but there are lapses from time to time.

Mr. Shaw: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Scottish people in my constituency have been shocked to learn that 22 relatives of Labour councillors are employed by Monklands district council? *[Interruption.]* Is my right hon. Friend further aware that, of those 22 relatives, three are employed in the housing department, the wife of the director of housing is employed in the leisure centre—*[Interruption.]* and the view of the tenants and people of Coatbridge and Airdrie—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must not shout down other hon. Members. We have freedom of speech here. There will be opportunities for rebuttal. Will the hon. Gentleman move rapidly to his question?

Mr. Shaw: My question relates to the fact that of 22 wives, sons and daughters of Labour councillors employed by Monklands district council, three are employed in the housing department, the wife of the director of housing is employed in the leisure centre—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I am now directing the hon. Gentleman to come to his question. I want a question now.

Mr. Shaw: I hoped that my right hon. Friend would have the opportunity to follow the whole question. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the people of Airdrie and Coatbridge believe that they can obtain houses, council

house transfers and repairs only if they have the approval of the ruling Labour families on the council? What does my right hon. Friend intend to do about that?

Mr. Ernie Ross: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that I cannot take points of order at this stage. *[Interruption.]* Order. Hon. Members are responsible for the comments that they make in the House and there are opportunities for rebuttal. I shall come to that as soon as the Secretary of State has had an opportunity to respond.

Mr. Lang: I am aware of those allegations and I share my hon. Friend's concern. My powers to intervene in such matters are limited by statute law. Section 211 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 gives me discretionary power to order a local inquiry if I consider that a local authority has failed to carry out a statutory duty or if I am of the opinion that an investigation should be made to determine whether it has so failed. I am currently considering whether any of the allegations made may amount to a breach of the council's statutory duties.

Mr. Maxton: Is it not time that the Secretary of State took the opportunity to dissociate himself publicly in the House from the irresponsible and unscrupulous campaign being run by the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) and advised the hon. Gentleman that he has much better things to do with his time? Will he also ask the hon. Member to repeat his allegations outside the House where he is not covered by parliamentary privilege?

Mr. Lang: I have explained my position with regard to the statutory duties of the local authority and my own statutory powers. Others who have complaints in relation to these matters have the option of pursuing them in other ways—through the courts, the local government ombudsman, or the Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland.

Mr. Bill Walker: My right hon. Friend will be aware that I have tabled a question and received what I judge to be an unsatisfactory answer about the activities of Councillor Brooks, the leader of Monklands district council. My question concerns the amount of public money which has gone into a company that has gone into liquidation and anther company that is still trading. It is only right that the House should be made aware of the public money that has been used and the debt that is outstanding on pay-as-you-earn after four years in relation to the company that has gone into liquidation. Those are matters of genuine interest to the House regardless of the political colour of the individuals concerned.

Mr. Lang: If the Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland concludes that the council has illegally authorised expenditure, it can submit a special report to me with any recommendations that it may have. That may include the surcharging of those responsible; I am empowered to do that, but I have no evidence that it would be appropriate.

Mr. Galloway: Is the Secretary of State unaware how repugnant it will seem to people at home watching our proceedings that question 2 at Scottish Question Time should be from the buffoon of Basildon about Scottish independence? Question 3, which the Secretary of State is now answering, impugns the integrity of people who are not here to answer for themselves and was asked by a man——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): Black shirt.

Mr. Galloway: Never mind my black shirt. Question 3 was asked by a man who brought a prostitute into this building and caused her to have a parliamentary pass. That he should be the man casting aspersions on the characters of other people, and that the Secretary of State should associate himself with that, is a revolting spectacle.

Mr. Lang: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has asked a question for me to answer.

Mr. Kynoch: Has my right hon. Friend had any approach from the Leader of the Opposition or the shadow spokesman for Scotland about carrying out an inquiry into these dreadful affairs?

Mr. Lang: No, I have not had an approach from either the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) or from the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

Scottish Homes Budget

4. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the proportion of Scottish Homes budget will be spent in Edinburgh and the Lothians in 1992-93.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes is likely to spend 12 per cent. of its programme in Edinburgh and the Lothians in 1992-93. This will be about £44 million and compares with £36 million in 1991-92.

Mr. Darling: While I welcome the fact that Scottish Homes has reluctantly increased the amount that it is spending on the east coast of Scotland, is the Minister aware that this Christmas people will be sleeping rough in the doorways and cemeteries of Scotland's capital, that 8,000 people are on Edinburgh housing association waiting lists and that others fear that in 1993 they will lose their homes as a result of increasing rents and mortgages? Will he stop Scottish Homes siphoning off public funds to help private developers and ensure that more money is put into the housing association budget to build desperately needed homes in Edinburgh and throughout Scotland, and, above all, at affordable rents?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I confirm to the hon. Gentleman that early next week we shall make a statement on the additional £7·5 million for the homelessness competition. Proposals have been received from more than 40 local authorities and are currently being assessed. The hon. Gentleman spoke about mortgage repossessions. Only 4 per cent. of the applications for homelessness relate to that cause. I make it clear to the hon. Gentleman that Scottish Homes will certainly take into account not only the needs of Edinburgh and the Lothians but those of the whole of Scotland. Scottish Homes has been making substantial progress in giving funds to housing associations to alleviate homelessness.

A considerable amount of activity is taking place in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. Provision for the elderly is being made by Fountainbridge housing association, and Canmore housing association is providing for special

needs at Morrison street. Fountainbridge housing association is making provision at Gilmour place for a homeless group. There is a further project at Lauriston place by Lister co-operative for those in priority need, and the Old Town housing association is providing for general needs at Guthrie street. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman's representations will be borne in mind when further allocations are made by Scottish Homes and the provisional allocations are made shortly before Christmas.

Mr. Gallie: Is my hon. Friend aware that the number of houses below tolerable standard in Scotland fell yet again in the past year, this time by about 4 per cent? As it is Conservative policy to improve and not to demolish, is not that good value for public expenditure? Is he further aware that the remaining below tolerable standard houses are on the private ownership side of the housing market? Will he take account of that when allocating public funds for next year's expenditure?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall most certainly do that. About £2 million was made available for Edinburgh in a supplementary allocation for the pre-1984 backlog of repairs; that will be borne in mind before we make provisional allocations. I also confirm that Edinburgh and the Lothians received an additional £4·1 million from Scottish Homes in respect of a recent supplementary allocation. Those matters have been carefully borne in mind.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that neither Scottish Homes nor Scottish local authorities can solve the homeless problem? Have not 35,000 people registered as homeless in 1992? including 11,500 families? Is he aware that that means 84 children a day becoming homeless in 1992? Is it not clear that the Government do not care about the homeless? If they did, they would not have spent £16 million on a European summit.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The funding for the European summit was money well spent.

Scottish Homes has provided more than 1,200 housing association units during the past three years, specifically to cater for the homeless. In addition, one third of local authority nominations for Scottish Homes stock have been targeted for homeless applicants.

In the coming year, more than £1 billion will be spent on housing by Scottish Homes, local authorities and new towns. A substantial proportion of that should be used to combat homelessness as and where necessary. The statutory responsibility lies with local authorities to decide what allocation to make within their mainstream allocations.

Mrs. Fyfe: Does the Minister know that in West Lothian the number of homeless families and single people applying for housing rose by 65 per cent. this year? Does he know that this Christmas more than 2,500 children will spend the day in local authority temporary accommodation? Does he realise that 120,000 children will spend Christmas in damp and dangerous housing? At 38,000 households, the Government have beaten their previous record for homelessness in Scotland. Do they actually understand the misery for which they are responsible?

Can the Minister explain the competition to which he referred briefly a moment ago? Are the homeless now to compete with one another to get a decent, dry home?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Lady should be aware that last month we requested proposals for a share of the additional £7·5 million made available for homelessness projects in 1992-93. We have received proposals from more than 40 local authorities, which we are currently assessing. I had hoped to make an announcement today, but I cannot. I shall do so as soon as possible. The proposals need to be properly assessed. Of course, the most pressing priorities will be chosen.

I must make the point that 60 to 70 per cent. of homeless applicants result from family disputes. Neither local authorities nor the Government are responsible for that. However, it is right that local authorities should have the statutory responsibility. Of course, being homeless is quite different from being roofless. No one in Scotland should be roofless. Local authorities should give top priority to ensuring that any such people are looked after properly.

Maternity Services

5. **Ms. Rachel Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards provision of full maternity services.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): The Government's policy towards the provision of full maternity services is to enable women to have a choice of how and where they give birth, provided that this can be done safely and cost effectively. The guiding principle is the safety of the mother and child. The way in which that policy is operated is being reviewed in the light of the report by the Health Select Committee on maternity services in England and Wales.

Ms. Squire: Is the Minister aware that the choice of the vast majority of the people of Dunfermline and West Fife is that there should be full maternity services in Dunfermline? Is he further aware that the most recent survey of the wishes of local people, carried out by the local newspaper the *Dunfermline Press and West Fife Advertiser*, found that almost 1,000 people—the vast majority—were in favour of that provision? Will the Minister therefore express his support for a full maternity service in Dunfermline? Will he instruct Fife health board to meet the needs and the wishes of the people of Dunfermline and West Fife and to continue to provide a full maternity service in Dunfermline?

Mr. Stewart: I am aware of the hon. Lady's close interest in and concern about the matter on behalf of her constituents. I shall give her the up-to-date position as I understand it. The Fife health board decided on 15 December to withdraw consultant maternity services from Dunfermline, and instead to introduce a midwife-led service. My right hon. Friend awaits a formal proposal from the board, which will include the results of the public consultation to which the hon. Lady referred. I assure the hon. Lady that my right hon. Friend has made it clear that he will not agree to the establishment of more midwife-led units until the pilot scheme in Aberdeen has been evaluated.

Alcohol Abuse

6. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the Scottish Council on Alcohol to discuss funding for centres dealing with alcohol abuse.

Mr. Stewart: Scottish Office officials regularly meet representatives of the Scottish Council on Alcohol. The last meeting took place on 5 November. The funding of alcohol misuse services was not raised.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Is my hon. Friend aware that people in alcohol abuse centres are worried that the money allocated to them is going on the community care budget? They feel that that money should be ring-fenced and used specifically for alcohol abuse. Does he agree that the chance of people suffering from alcohol abuse because of drinking too much Scotch whisky is slim, because it is cheaper to buy a bottle of Scotch whisky on the continent than in the United Kingdom due to the terrifying amount of duty charged?

Mr. Stewart: On my hon. Friend's first question, I can reassure him that we are continuing to provide substantial support for the work of the Scottish Council on Alcohol and that the two designated places in Scotland continue to receive substantial direct assistance. The care in the community budget is generally ring-fenced, but aggregate external finance in Scotland is not ring-fenced specifically, as it is in England. However, my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State has made clear the substantial extra resources that are being allocated to local authorities for the transfer to care in the community.

My hon. Friend's second question falls within the remit of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Treasury. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor will no doubt have noted the roar of cross-party approval that greeted my hon. Friend's remarks.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: One of the things that could help reduce alcohol abuse is a reduction in long-term unemployment. In my community, many highly skilled men and women who have been out of work for years are in deep depression, which can sometimes lead to alcohol abuse. Surely it would be better if the Government took steps to give them back their pride and dignity, and got them back to work.

Mr. Stewart: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there are many reasons for trying to get unemployment down, not just the factors to which he referred. Moreover, a range of measures can be and are being taken to deal with the problems of alcohol abuse. For example, I had a useful meeting recently with the chief medical officer and employers' representatives in Scotland. Further positive moves will be taken to see how we can inculcate a responsible attitude to deal with alcohol misuse in the workplace.

Local Government

7. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the organisations and individuals who lobbied him in support for a reorganisation of Scottish local government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The responses to the Government's first consultation paper on the reform of local government, published last February, were made available for public inspection. The Government published a summary of responses to that paper in February of this year and this is available in the Library.

Mr. Hood: The Secretary of State knows that his proposals are anti-democratic and a further attack on local democracy in Scotland. If he denies that, will he assure the House and Scotland that, post reform, the number of councillors in district councils will not be cut? Will he further assure the House that the joint boards that he envisages in his consultation paper will be manned not by quango Tories appointed by himself, but only by elected councillors?

Mr. Lang: The proposals in the consultation paper are not undemocratic. The purpose of reform to a single-tier structure is to create stronger, more coherent local authorities. The other points raised by the hon. Gentleman will be considered in the consultation process. However, it is worth mentioning that his district council, Clydesdale, while expressing views on a number of other aspects, said:

"The council would offer no objections to a single tier system of local government."

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: When my right hon. Friend eventually brings his proposals on the future of local government to the House, will he consider allowing the people of our four great Scottish cities directly to elect their Lords Provost and to end the practice of the ruling political group choosing the first citizen?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend makes an interesting suggestion. It is one which can be considered in the consultation process, along with all the other suggestions that we shall no doubt be receiving.

Mr. Ingram: Is the Secretary of State aware that the people of the East Kilbride part of Busby have voted to stay with Labour-controlled East Kilbride rather than to transfer to Tory-controlled Eastwood? Why, then, has he overridden the views of the people? Is this a foretaste of what will come with local government reform, with the wishes of the people being ignored by the Government?

Mr. Lang: We have overruled no views. We have put out a consultation paper in which we have listed four illustrative options, but have made it clear that other options can be considered. We shall not approach the decisions that have to be made on a party political basis. I find it depressing that the hon. Gentleman can see the matter only as one of advantage or disadvantage to the Labour party.

Sir Anthony Durant: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that the discussion that is taking place about Monklands is serious? He will be aware that I have taken an active interest in local government—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I have insisted that other hon. Members do not use a long preamble, but put questions directly. I must apply that rule to the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Anthony Durant: Will my right hon. Friend go ahead with the inquiry and not wait?

Mr. Lang: I am in a position to set up an inquiry only where I am satisfied that there has been a statutory breach

of local government obligations, and I am not satisfied that that is the case with regard to Monklands district council.

Mr. McLeish: Is not the reform of local government simply a paving measure for the privatisation of Scotland's water and sewerage services? Will the Secretary of State explain why his Ministers squandered £50,000 worth of taxpayers' money in payments to Quayle Monro Ltd essentially to obtain private advice for the Conservative party? When will he publish the report from Quayle Monro? What does he have to hide?

Mr. Lang: The findings of the Quayle Monro report are reflected in the consultation paper on the future structure of the water and sewerage industries of Scotland, in which we have laid out a range of eight options and on which we welcome views. The hon. Gentleman spoke of costs. I was interested to see in *The Scotsman* yesterday that Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte has carried out a report on behalf of Lothian region that bears out the findings of the Touche Ross report that the reform of local government to a single-tier structure will result in substantial savings.

Mr. Gale: In the light of his earlier answers, does not my right hon. Friend find it surprising that he has not received representations from the Leader of the Opposition concerning the reorganisation of local government in his constituency of Monklands, East?

Mr. Lang: I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition, and all Labour Members of Parliament, will, in due course, address the issue of the reform of local government. I hope that their contributions to the future structure of local government in Scotland will be more constructive and forward looking than their contributions this afternoon.

Offensive Weapons

8. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report,* column *530,* what consultations he proposes to make on legislative proposals relating to the carrying and possession of knives and similar offensive weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend will consult publicly in the new year on proposals to change the law in relation to the carrying and possession of knives. In light of the consultations, we shall introduce measures for consideration by the House at the first available opportunity.

Mr. Marshall: We have heard all this before, time after time. Are not murders at record levels in Scotland this year? Is it not the case that violent criminals are being let out of prison for Christmas, on condition that they do not take drink or drugs? Have not the Tory Government simply gone soft on law and order? For some years, some of us have been trying to get the Government to take action against violence on our streets. How many more people have to be mugged, maimed, slashed, stabbed or murdered before the Government will do something about this ever-growing menace to society?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Why is it that Strathclyde police are 181 officers under strength? It is because Strathclyde regional council has not employed its full complement. The hon. Gentleman should be making strong representations about that. I know that Strathclyde has increased the number of its police officers, but it is still 181 under strength.

As for the crime clear-up rate, in 1988 it was 160,000 and in 1991 it was 184,000—a considerable police achievement. Of course I am concerned about the rising crime rate—it has been rising for the past 30 years—but police operations, such as Operation Dove in Paisley, have been extremely successful in helping to produce an overall reduction in crime. I strongly recommend similar schemes to police officers in other areas.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: May I remind my hon. Friend that the draconian sentences passed on the razor slashers in Glasgow—the razors in question were not lethal weapons—caused the new fancy for the knife, which is lethal? So we must be cautious on this matter. As one who carries a gun himself, even though it is rather small, I know that there are worse things in the criminal law than simple assault—for instance, fraud perpetrated at public expense in Monklands. If that is not investigated by the Lord Advocate, it should be——

Madam Speaker: Order. That is wholly irrelevant to the question, as the hon. and learned Gentleman knows.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I recall my hon. and learned Friend's gun, because he once let it off in the High Court, causing a considerable disturbance, and it was with great relief that it was discovered to have been only my hon. and learned Friend letting off a very small cap gun.

The maximum penalty for carrying an offensive weapon is two years in prison, but for the use of such weapons the penalty can be an unlimited fine or life imprisonment. Both the Lord Justice-General and the Lord Justice-Clerk have made it extremely clear that such offences will be regarded as very serious and will be severely dealt with.

Mr. McFall: What a pathetic response from the party which is supposed to be the custodian of law and order! Does not the Minister realise that there was a staggering increase of 40 per cent. in crimes involving offensive weapons in Scotland last year? Is it not amazing that in Scotland, unlike England and Wales, it is not an offence to carry an offensive weapon? The ready availability of these weapons causes immense concern. I illustrate that point by referring the Minister to the *Sunday Times* of 22 November in which an advertisement for a mail order magazine featured such murderous weapons as the Bowie knife—a 7 in stainless steel blad with a serrated edge. Does not that show that this activity can be described as trading in death? The police and public to whom I speak ask whether the Government have given up on crime, and if they have not, when they will start doing something about it.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I remind the hon. Gentleman that when we first brought in police powers of search the Labour party voted against them in the House. If a police officer has reasonable grounds for suspecting that a person is carrying an offensive weapon he may search that person without a warrant under section 4 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980. We have said that we will take forward consultations speedily and legislate at the first available opportunity. Our commitment to law and order remains stronger than ever.

Whisky Distillers

9. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many whisky distillers are currently in operation in Scotland now and 10 years ago.

Mr. Stewart: There are currently some 25 whisky distillers operating in Scotland. In 1982, there were 32 quoted companies engaged in Scotch whisky distilling.

Mr. Shersby: Is my hon. Friend aware that distilleries are at the heart of rural communities in Scotland and that any further closures will be quite devastating to the people of those communities? Is he also aware that sales of whisky in the United Kingdom have dropped by 1 million bottles while sales abroad, where it is taxed less and costs less, have held up? Will my hon. Friend consult the Chancellor of the Exchequer and ask him, at the very least, to peg whisky duty so it can compete on level terms with imported wines?

Mr. Stewart: The reduction in the number of distillers in the past 10 years is mainly attributable to mergers and acquisitions within the Scotch whisky industry rather than to companies going out of business or ceasing to run their distilleries. My hon. Friend is right to point to the importance of distilleries, particularly to rural areas and to the success of the industry in the export market. I had the great pleasure to attend a Queen's award for export ceremony at Burn Stewart distillers in Barrhead in my constituency.

I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will consider my hon. Friend's views about duty on whisky, as well as the views of others, including the well-presented research by the Scotch Whisky Association, which was recently sent to the Treasury.

Mr. McKelvey: Nevertheless, I hope that the Secretary of State for Scotland had the opportunity to peruse the Pieda report, which stated clearly the importance of the Scotch whisky industry to the Scottish economy—it is responsible for 15,000 direct jobs and 56,000 indirect ones. Those jobs will be threatened if the Chancellor does not show some partiality between the tax on wine and that on whisky—in whisky's favour. At the moment the tax on whisky is twice as much as that on wine and such an imbalance must be redressed.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman's record as a strong defender of the interests of Scotch whisky is well appreciated throughout the House. He is, after all, chairman of the all-party Scotch whisky industry group. He has made an immense contribution to the debates about the industry. I repeat that I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will have noted what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that the distilleries and the whisky industry are Scotland's premier exporting industry, and that it will continue for ever if it is looked after properly? Would he and his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have words with the Chancellor and draw his attention to the fact that if whisky and other spirits were subject to the same tax as that on wine there would be a substantial reduction in income to the Treasury, but that if the tax on wine were brought up to the level of that on whisky there would be a substantial inflow of funds to the Treasury? We have never understood why the Treasury has not seen that option as an opportunity to get more money.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is known for his own Bill that benefited the industry. He is absolutely right; no one can dispute the key importance of the Scotch whisky industry in relation to the Scottish economy and exports, the value of which in 1991 was more than £1,800 million.

I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Treasury will have noted the specific points that my hon. Friend has raised. I can reassure him that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is in close consultation with the Chancellor on all matters relating to Scottish industry which affect the Treasury.

Rural Mains Extension

10. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many additional households have been connected to *(a)* water and *(b)* mains drainage in Grampian region under the rural mains extension scheme over the last six years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): More than 1,500 houses in rural areas have been connected to the public water supply system in Grampian region since 1 April 1986. No similar figures are available for connections to mains drainage, as the rural sewerage grant scheme ended in that year.

Mr. Bruce: I am sure that the Minister will recognise the importance of the programme of extending rural mains and mains drainage in areas such as Grampian, which accounts for about a third of all the households in Scotland that still have private water supplies. Is he aware that, since 1975, 700 km has been laid at a cost of £12 million? Can he assure the House that—whatever reorganisation of water is introduced—the rural mains grant will continue, and the 50 schemes that are still outstanding in Grampian will be not only completed but, if possible, accelerated?

Sir Hector Monro: It is certainly important to continue the schemes in Grampian. This year's capital allocation of £25 million is 35 per cent. higher than that for 1991-92, which shows that we appreciate the importance of the schemes. I shall consider whether to write to the hon. Gentleman about the exact details of the schemes in the future, but I think that he should feel fairly confident that, whichever of our eight options is chosen, rural water supplies will be given high priority.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that privatisation is the best recipe for those who are concerned about the level of investment in the water industry? Has not the industry in England increased its investment by 50 per cent. since its privatisation?

Sir Hector Monro: I note what my hon. Friend has said. As I have already made clear, I do not intend to make any pronouncement on the matter before the end of the consultation period. We have presented eight options, and I hope that all hon. Members will make constructive suggestions to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about them. We shall reach a decision early in the spring.

Mr. McAllion: Is the Minister aware that in Grampian region, as elsewhere in Scotland, it is illegal to disconnect

the water and mains drainage supplies of domestic consumers? Can he assure the House that, if it is decided to privatise the water industry, the law in Scotland will not be changed to allow disconnections in the future?

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman is rushing ahead. As I have just explained, we are a long way from introducing legislation. When the Bill is presented to the House, hon. Members will have ample opportunities to go through it line by line and decide—in the light of which option is chosen, and in the light of how it is introduced to the unitary system of local government—what disconnection procedures there should be, if such procedures are considered necessary. As the hon. Gentleman has pointed out, it is not now possible to disconnect domestic supplies, and that will be taken very much into account.

Local Enterprise Companies

11. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of Scottish Enterprise to discuss the business plans of local enterprise companies.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I meet Scottish Enterprise regularly to discuss a wide range of issues, including the activities and achievements of the local enterprise companies. However, consideration of the business plans of local enterprise companies is a matter between Scottish Enterprise and the individual companies concerned.

Mr. Ross: Apparently, the Government do not intend to listen to Sir Brian Wolfson, the man selected by the Tory Cabinet to establish the training and enterprise councils and the local enterprise companies. Sir Brian has criticised the attitude of voluntarism being taken to both TECs and LECs, and also the failure to establish a training levy of companies. But will the Minister at least listen to Scottish Enterprise Tayside? That body told me last month that it was experiencing increasing tension in its efforts to provide high-quality training for a special needs group, and that, if its budget were cut, it might reluctantly have to sacrifice both quality and quantity.

Mr. Stewart: This year, Scottish Enterprise Tayside received a budget of £23 million. Its budget increased by 5 per cent.—a larger increase than was received by any other LEC except one. As the hon. Gentleman will know, Scottish Enterprise's planned budget for next year is £9 million up on this year's plans, and an additional £20 million is expected from the European regional development fund. There will be no reduction in the overall resources available to the Scottish Enterprise network.

Mr. Kynoch: Does my hon. Friend agree that the 11 per cent. increase for enterprise and environmental expenditure by Scottish Enterprise and the LECs that was announced last week by our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will enable those bodies to continue, at local level and with local expertise, the good work that they have carried out since their very recent inception less than two years ago?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The substantial increase in resources for the environmental and enterprise budgets has been warmly welcomed by the local enterprise network because it offers it flexibility between its different budget heads. I have no doubt that the excellent work that the local enterprise companies have done in the past two years will continue, and that, as they gain experience, they will be able to lever in increasing resources from the private sector.

Dr. Godman: The Minister spoke of the achievements of local enterprise companies, but Renfrewshire Enterprise has achieved nothing on the lower Clyde. Many people are deeply concerned about the decision of Auld's the Bakers to move to Inchinnan. Did it receive no help from Renfrewshire Enterprise officials to locate within the Inverclyde enterprise zone? How valuable is the enterprise zone when a local company is forced to move a few miles away? Will he investigate this and other cases that reveal the pathetic performance of officials of Renfrewshire Enterprise on the lower Clyde?

Mr. Stewart: I do not understand that question because Inchinnan is in Renfrewshire; the company is moving within the territory covered by Renfrewshire Enterprise. That does not seem to be a matter of great criticism of Renfrewshire Enterprise. *[Interruption.]* I wish that the hon. Member would allow me to answer the question. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and I have had a number of meetings about the Inverclyde enterprise zone. We are aware that there have been some difficulties, but I assure him that Scottish Enterprise and Renfrewshire Enterprise are doing all that they can to ensure that the zone is a success.

Mr. McLeish: When will this humbug and hypocrisy end? Why is £20 million being cut from Scottish Enterprise's training budget this year, including a 13 per cent. cut in youth training and a 7 per cent. cut in adult training? Does the Minister accept that, with high unemployment, deepening recession and the guarantee for young people not being met, we should be spending more on training rather than less? When will the Government put the real needs of Scotland first instead of Ministers being content to hang on to the coat tails of English employment Ministers?

Mr. Stewart: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State yesterday morning, he would know perfectly well that Scotland's share of Britain's unemployment has fallen. The implication of the hon. Gentleman's statement is that he would have preferred it to rise. When shall we see an end to the humbug and hypocrisy of Labour Members about training, because the Government have increased real resources for training two and a half times in real terms compared with the Labour Government, yet every training initiative that the Government have taken has been opposed by Opposition Members?

Fisheries Conservation

12. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the fishing industry in Scotland to discuss conservation policy; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Let us get back to quieter waters.

My right hon. Friend and I are available to meet industry representatives whenever it is appropriate. I last met representatives of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation on 23 November.

Mrs. Ewing: The Minister may seek quieter waters for questions, but is he aware of the great depth of anger in fishing communities that neither he nor any Conservative Member of Parliament for Scotland was prepared to march with the 4,000 fisherfolk who came to Edinburgh from the length and breadth of Scotland last week? The only support that we received from the Scottish Office was from civil servants who waved and cheered as we walked past. Given the deep anger in those communities, will he assure us that when he next discusses fisheries at the Council of Ministers he will guarantee that there will be no consecutive tie-up and that any tie-up will be flexible, will enable boats to be taken out of harbours for repairs and will take account of bad weather conditions, which often enforced a tie-up? Without that, there is no way in which he will make his policy work.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Lady attended the recent fishing debates and she knows that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I take the fishing problem extremely seriously, which is why we are so frequently in touch with the fishermen's interests. We shall go to Brussels this Friday, Saturday and Sunday, determined to achieve the best possible result for the United Kingdom's fishermen and I shall, of course, be looking after the interests of the Scottish fishermen in particular. They will and can look forward to a much better quota of haddock, in which I think that they are especially interested, and to other improvements. I gave the hon. Lady a clear understanding that we are wholly opposed to the 10-day tie-up, which we shall oppose in Europe this weekend.

Mr. Galloway: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I shall hear points of order after business questions.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Will the Leader of the House tell us the forthcoming business?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for the first week after the Christmas Adjournment will be as follows:

MONDAY 11 JANUARY—Remaining stages of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill.

TUESDAY 12 JANUARY—Opposition day (8th allotted day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion, subject to be announced.

Motion on the Insurance Companies (Amendment No. 2) Regulations.

WEDNESDAY 13 JANUARY—European Communities (Amendment) Bill. Progress in Committee—third day.

THURSDAY 14 JANUARY—European Communities (Amendment) Bill. Progress in Committee—fourth day.

FRIDAY 15 JANUARY—Private Members' Bills.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet on Wednesday 13 January at 10.30 am to consider European Community Document No. 9752/91 relating to investment and management of pension funds.

[Wednesday 13 January:
European Standing Committee B
Relevant European Community Document
9752/91 Freedom of Management and Investment of Pension Funds.
Relevant Reports of the European Legislation Committee HC 24-viii (1991-92) HC 24-xv (1991-92) HC 79-i (1992-93).]

Mr. Brown: In the light of recent events in Bosnia, will the Leader of the House give us an assurance that, if there are any new developments in the immediate future, the Government will make a statement tomorrow morning? In any event, will he assure us that the House will be informed at the earliest possible opportunity whether there is any change in Britain's present commitment?

Will the Leader of the House assure us that there will be an early debate on the investigation into the pit closure programme? As he will be aware, substantial concern has been expressed that one pit face in Nottingham has already closed, and there is some doubt as to whether there will be a complete and fairly judged review.

Will the Leader of the House invite the Secretary of State for Health to make a statement on the workings of the internal market, especially in the context of the Tomlinson report? We understand that certain matters were deleted from the report at her insistence and we should like to question her about that.

Will the Leader of the House give us an assurance that the crimes committed in the Maxwell pension fund affair could not possibly recur, at least during the Christmas recess? What assurance can he give us about that?

Mr. Newton: I shall take the hon. Gentleman's questions in order.

It is always my wish, and, I know, that of my right hon. Friends, to inform the House in an appropriate way at the earliest opportunity of significant changes, should there be any, on a matter as important as Bosnia. However, there is no basis for suggesting that that might lead to a statement tomorrow, which I think is what the hon. Gentleman meant.

I can do no more than note the hon. Gentleman's request for an early debate on pit closures. If he has in mind the period after Christmas, I point out that there is an opportunity available to the Opposition, should they wish to take it, in the business that I have just announced.

The hon. Gentleman referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. I understand that the Tomlinson report reflects the inquiry's terms of reference. It was not doctored at any stage and contains the views that Sir Bernard wished to express. Almost every statement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health makes relates to the internal market of the NHS and reflects its success in increasing the amount of treatment provided.

Again, I note the hon. Gentleman's ingenious question about the Maxwell pension fund. I recognise the welcome given by the Select Committee on Social Security to the inquiry into the matter that the Government have set up with a view to ensuring that difficulties are prevented in future.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): If, during the Christmas recess, there should be a further commitment of British armed forces into what was Yugoslavia, will my right hon. Friend give an undertaking that that decision would be the subject not merely of a statement but of a debate in the House during the first week back, even if that meant rearranging business?

Mr. Newton: I very much take on board my right hon. Friend's suggestion. He will understand—this echoes what I said to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown)—that I do not wish to add to the words that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister uttered on the subject generally in the House yesterday afternoon.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Leader of the House recognise that there is concern among hon. Members of all parties that we should be informed of the latest moves on the enforcement of the no-fly zone? The Prime Minister referred yesterday to the conference today in Geneva and to the conference on security and co-operation in Europe which meets today in Stockholm. In the circumstances, it would be appropriate to have a report tomorrow on the matter before the House rises.

Will the right hon. Gentleman ask whether the Lord Chancellor will make a statement on the contraction of eligibility for legal aid in the light of the announcement today that representatives of the Bar Council, of the Law Society and of many other lawyers' organisations are willing to enter meaningful discussions about reducing the cost of legal aid, including the possibility of a pay freeze?

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's observation on the earlier matter. He will, of course, reflect on the fact that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister also referred to discussions at the North Atlantic Council on Thursday in addition to the two gatherings to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

I shall ensure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary

Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department are made aware of the hon. Gentleman's request on the question of legal aid and reports in today's papers.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that some of us have parliamentary duties away from this place at, for example, the Western European Union and the Council of Europe? In view of the fact that the European Communities (Amendment) Bill may go on for the rest of our parliamentary lives, does my right hon. Friend think that it would be helpful for those of us who have other official commitments to have the same two days every week delineated by my right hon. Friend so that we know where we are and can make our plans?

Mr. Newton: Without wishing to seem to endorse what I would term my hon. Friend's overweening pessimism, I note his request, which has come from one or two other quarters of the House on earlier occasions. I recognise the need to take account as far as we can of things that are occurring elsewhere when it is proper to do so, and I note the latter part of his request. I cannot give my hon. Friend an absolute promise at present, but I shall consider whether there are ways in which I could be helpful to the House, which I will describe at some later stage.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): The Leader of the House will be aware of the importance of the award of the nuclear refit contract to either Devonport Management Ltd. in Devonport, in my constituency, or to Babcock Thorn in Rosyth. There is clear and growing evidence that there has been a leak of vital commercial information from the DML bid to Babcock Thorn. The award of the contract involves the jobs and futures of more than 40,000 workers in both England and Scotland.

In the light of the change in stance on the matter by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement since he answered a debate in the House on 25 November this year, and as the Secretary of State for Defence has not yet found time to answer my letter to him of 7 December, will the Leader of the House allow time immediately after the recess for the Secretary of State for Defence to make a statement or to answer a debate on this matter of great national importance?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman made a number of points and I certainly shall not attempt to answer all of them off the cuff, but I shall bring them to the attention of my right hon. Friend. As for the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's comments, he should note that questions to the Ministry of Defence are at the top of the list for the Tuesday of the week that we return after Christmas.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): My right hon. Friend will be aware that there is continuing disappointment in the House that he has failed to give his considered view on the recommendations made in the report of the Committee chaired by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling). When does he expect to make a statement to the House on the future of the proposals?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give my hon. Friend a definite date, but my contacts through the usual channels are continuing, and I hope to come forward with my views without too much further delay. As on previous occasions, may I say that a number of important aspects of the Jopling report have clearly been reflected in practice in the way that we have managed to operate the business of the House in recent weeks.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): In view of the appalling impression given to people outside by the televising of debates in the House, and in view of the fact that the succubi in the Press Gallery are the only ones who benefit financially and professionally from televising the proceedings of the House, would it not be advisable to have a debate on the matter so that the House may decide once and for all to remove that technical incunabula from the place?

Mr. Newton: I am aware from experience that one always disagrees with the hon. Gentleman at one's peril, but personally I do not share his view about the overall impression of the place created by television, which I believe has done a great deal to enhance public interest in Parliament and politics.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an early debate—preferably over two days—on the consultation paper on the future of the BBC? I have received a lot of correspondence about it, and I am sure that many right hon. and hon. Members would want to participate in such a debate.

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly bear in mind my hon. Friend's request; but I do not want to encourage any hopes of a two-day debate.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Home Secretary to come to the House tomorrow before we rise for the recess to give clear guidance to people throughout the country in the light of the European Court's judgment that it is time that the laws of the land on Sunday trading should be observed?

Mr. Newton: I should perhaps mention, as there will be widespread interest in the matter, that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will be answering a question this afternoon about the legal consequences of the judgment of the European Court of Justice. The hon. Gentleman will also be aware that, on 26 November at the Dispatch Box, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary described the way that the Government wanted to progress in relation to the legislation once they had the European Court judgment.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate in the new year to remind Members of Parliament that what they say and publish must be accurate and based on fact? The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw)—we are all delighted that he is no longer getting stoned in India—recently published a statement to say that there were now fewer teachers in employment when, in fact, more teachers are in employment than ever before. Such disgraceful behaviour by the Opposition has simply got to stop.

Mr. Newton: While I have not seen the paper to which my hon. Friend refers, I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Blackburn will carefully study what he said and will wish to correct any errors that he has put about. Manifestly, all of us would agree that we have a duty to ensure that what we say is straightforward and accurate.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): I wish to thank the Leader of the House because, as a result of my request to

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him about miners' payments before Christmas, I received a prompt reply from the Minister concerned the next day, saying that the bonus would be paid as usual. That was subsequently repudiated by British Coal, and this morning that repudiation was confirmed by the President of the Board of Trade. Will the Leader of the House therefore ask the Prime Minister to come to the House to debate early-day motion 1085, standing in my name?

[That this House recalls and approves the statement of the President of the Board of Trade that miners in pits under review would not lose benefits at the most advantageous rate; notes the confirmation by British Coal that they would withhold the vast majority of these payments despite a statement from the Minister of Energy to the contrary; and calls upon the President of the Board of Trade to intervene urgently, ensuring that payments are made before Christmas.]

Will the Leader of the House ask the Prime Minister to persuade British Coal to behave like Scrooge after rather than before his conversion?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman asked whether I would bring the Prime Minister to the House to debate his early-day motion. I fear that, as he may have foreseen, I do not expect to be in a position to do that. In view of the hon. Gentleman's kind remarks at the beginning of his question, I shall again make inquiries, once business questions are over.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for time to be given for an early debate on Britain's contribution to the European Community to give us the opportunity not only to congratulate the Prime Minister on the outcome of the Edinburgh summit but, particularly, to expose the hypocrisy of Opposition Members who appear intent on pouring British taxpayers' money——

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that "hypocrite" and "hypocrisy" are not words that we tend to bandy across the Chamber.

Mr. Thomason: In that case, Madam Speaker, may I withdraw and use instead the word "inconsistency"?

Madam Speaker: That is perfectly acceptable.

Mr. Newton: Clearly, the spirit of Chirstmas is now suffusing the House. I warmly endorse my hon. Friend's remarks about the success of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at Edinburgh, both on that matter and on a number of others. As I said in my statement, I shall be providing the House with two full days' worth of opportunities to make a wide variety of comments about Europe.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that people will be extremely disappointed that the House will be breaking up for Christmas without any statement being made on the latest developments in British policy towards Bosnia? Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that those of us who have been reluctant in recent months to condone military action remain of that view but nevertheless believe that the crimes and atrocities that are being committed by the Serbians in their so-called ethnic cleansing programme are totally unacceptable in today's world and cry out for United Nations action?

A statement should be made before the Christmas break so that the people of Britain may know to what extent we should commit ourselves. I am not suggesting that we should commit ourselves all the way by any means, but we need some action so that the criminals who now control Belgrade realise that the international community cannot stay silent or indifferent to what is happening.

Mr. Newton: The whole House will agree with the hon. Gentleman's condemnation of what is going on in the areas to which he referred. I touched on the question of a statement and debate in a number of earlier answers and I have nothing to add. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree, however, that the Prime Minister spoke in firm terms yesterday and referred—as I did during the Christmas Adjournment motion debate on Monday—to the vigorous language of the Edinburgh Council conclusions.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): May we have an opportunity to debate early-day motions 991, 992 and 1040?

[That this House is concerned that for the last 10 years Councillor J. Brooks has been Labour Leader of Monklands District Council, where with the help of the local Labour Party he has achieved a position of near absolute power which has resulted in (1) a £1 million land deal for a company owned by Councillor Brooks and his brother, whereby the company acquired council land for £50,000 and forced through planning permission to make the land worth more than £1 million, the payment of generous fees to Councillor Brooks and his brother and other expenses followed by the company being placed in liquidation with unpaid bills to third party creditors of over £200,000, (2) the employment by the Council of Councillor Brooks' son in Direct Works, another son in the Planning Department and a daughter in a temporary post, (3) the sacking from council employment of Labour Party member Tom McFarlane at 51 years of age, believed to be the only Monklands District Council worker ever made redundant without being offered alternative employment, because he and his wife had dared to question the internal procedures of the local Labour Party and its corrupt rule of the Council and (4) the attempt by Councillor Brooks to cover up the mafia-like behaviour of himself and other Labour councillors by seeking to obtain council funding for legal fees for a private libel action against the local newspaper and by starting a council-owned free newspaper; believes that other allegations about relationships between the expenditure of council money and benefits to Councillor Brooks and his family need to be independently investigated; and is further concerned that the manner in which the Labour Party is governing local councils in Scotland is against the public interest and requires to be independently investigated.]

My right hon. Friend will be aware that, at Scottish questions, the conduct of Monklands district council was raised on a number of occasions. As there is an Opposition day on the Tuesday after we return, will my right hon. Friend persuade the Leader of the Opposition, who happens to have Monklands district in his constituency, that that is an opportunity to have the matter properly aired and all the charges properly examined so that the situation can be resolved?

Mr. Newton: I am happy to say that that is a question for the Opposition rather than for me. I understand that there were some somewhat heated exchanges on the matter earlier, and I regard it as my role now to try to reduce the temperature.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): The Leader of the House has just been asked a question on the ruling by the European Court on Sunday trading, and he referred to a reply given by the Home Secretary on 26 November which, in essence, was that he would put the Sunday trading laws in abeyance until such time as the court had ruled. The ruling was announced this morning. Surely the Home Secretary or the Attorney-General should be here to make a statement before we go into recess, and before all the large stores are allowed to trade illegally on the Sunday before Christmas. Also, one of them should be here to explain in detail the Government's interpretation of whether the Shops Act 1950 should apply or whether they will leave the law in abeyance despite the ruling of the European Court.

I want a clear decision this afternoon from the Government, through the Leader of the House, which will give guidance to all our people about whether Sunday trading is legal in the run-up to Christmas and before 22 January, when the House will accept my Bill.

Mr. Newton: It is important that I make it clear that I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's interpretation of the statement—it was not an answer to a question—by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary on 26 November. On the latter part of his question, I already made it clear in my reply to another hon. Gentleman that the Attorney-General is answering a question this afternoon setting out his view of the position.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): In view of the fact that my right hon. Friend has not been able to announce a debate on foreign affairs before the end of the year, and as he could devote only 10 minutes to the subject in his speech in the debate on Monday because of his generosity to others, will he arrange for a debate on foreign affairs and especially on the situation in Bosnia? Hon. Members on both sides of the House, of all shades of opinion, want a debate, so could we please discuss the matter in the week that we come back and change the business accordingly?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's request, but he would not expect me to go further in view of the fact that I have just announced the business. As I said at the time, he made an impressive speech in the debate on the Christmas Adjournment motion. The principal reason that I was unable to devote much time to replying to him was that I made a short speech—as did the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown)—to allow Back Benchers to have as much of the debate as possible. I devoted virtually all my speech to answering my hon. Friend and neglected other hon. Members.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Leader of the House contact the Home Secretary to arrange for an urgent statement to be made to the House on the removal of Lorrain Osman from this country to Hong Kong last night? He has been held in remand in British prisons for seven years, mostly in maximum security. His family saw him at 7.30 pm yesterday, in the company of his solicitor, Mr. Kingston, and they were not told anything. Two hours later, he was bundled on a plane to Hong Kong, where he arrived earlier today, despite the fact that an appeal to the House of Lords was pending against the decision of the Home Secretary grant an extradition order for him.

I and many people outside the House believe that the case needs to be brought out into the open. Undoubtedly, Mr. Osman has a great deal of information about the goings-on in Hong Kong and Malaysia, which also needs to be brought out into the open. There is deep anger about the way in which Mr. Osman has been treated, the length of time that he has spent in prison, and the information needs to come out now, in public.

Mr. Newton: The facts, as I understand them, are that Mr. Osman has been resisting extradition since he was committed into custody to await surrender in June 1987. The Home Secretary signed a warrant for his surrender in June this year. Mr. Osman and those representing him have been made well aware that he would be surrendered to the Hong Kong authorities as soon as outstanding legal proceedings had been completed. Following the refusal of his petition for leave to appeal to the House of Lords last night, which was immediately notified to Mr. Osman's legal representatives, steps were taken to remove him to Hong Kong.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that we are approaching a period of great danger in the Balkans and that our indignation and anger over what is going on in Sarajevo could lead to a chain of events that could, unhappily, go out of control? Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to remind the House of the strong links between Serbia and its fellow Slavs in Russia, which is led by a Government who are looking increasingly beleaguered and nationalist? For those reasons, would it not be wise to involve the Russian Government closely in any initiative in the Balkans and for us not to use NATO as a vehicle for seeking a solution——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is putting political issues to the Leader of the House. We are dealing with the business of the House in the week after the recess. Many hon. Members have a question to ask. I am trying my best to accommodate all of them, but I shall not be able to do so if hon. Members make long statements and in consequence long replies are given. Questions and answers should be brief so that I can call all hon. Members.

Mr. Butcher: Will the Leader of the House make time for a debate in the House before the recess, because it would be a tragedy if we were to sleepwalk into an international crisis before we had a proper discussion?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful for the measured way in which my hon. Friend spoke. He will understand that I have already touched on the matter several times, but I shall ensure that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is aware of what he has said.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): In view of Birmingham city council's announcement today that all job vacancies are to be frozen, that new spending commitments are to be halted and that there are to be 3,000 redundancies in the next financial year as a result of the Government's revenue support grant settlement, and the likelihood of similar announcements from other councils as their treasurers get to grips with the figures, will

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the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on the Government's local government policy and its impact on services and jobs, and hence on the wider economy?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady will be aware that the local government settlement involved a substantial increase. I note her request for a debate.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): In view of the presentation today of the National Lottery Etc. Bill, tomorrow's announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage, the great deal of good that that Bill will do for the arts, sport, charities and our heritage, and its widespread support in the House and the country, how soon can we expect a Second Reading debate?

Mr. Newton: Not in the first week after the recess.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): The Leader of the House will be aware that the Government have published two policy papers in relation to Scotland, one dealing with local government and the other with the future of the water supply industry. As water privatisation was not mentioned in the Scottish Conservative and Unionist party's manifesto, on which it fought and lost the election in Scotland, may we have an early debate on the Floor of the House on those major policy matters?

Mr. Newton: To give a direct answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I am aware of the publication of those documents. The widespread consultation will be completed at the end of January, and I would not want to promise a debate within that time scale.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): My right hon. Friend may recall my invitation to him to join me in a walk over London's bridges. In the light of a written answer that I have received which shows that just about every bridge from Hampton Court to the sea will be closed or partly closed to traffic in the next six months, will my right hon. Friend arrange for a statement to be made either tomorrow or early in January? If not, all he can do is make a Christmas present to each of my constituents of a course on walking on water, as that will be the only way that they will be able to get here.

Mr. Newton: That is an ingenious question, but I shall still not take up my hon. Friend's offer to join him on a walk over Christmas. I note his request, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London will also note his point. A debate on London transport on the Consolidated Fund was initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) at some unearthly hour of the night, but I am not sure whether my hon. Friend managed to speak in it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Members' interests.

Mr. Newton: I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that I have been in touch with my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnston Smith), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, who I understand has made firm arrangements for the publication of the new Register. He has also put to me proposals for debating other recommendations in the Select Committee report. I have discussed those with him in the past few days, and I shall consider them through the usual channels.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Bearing in mind today's tragic bombings in Oxford street, would my right hon. Friend consider announcing a debate to address the shameful situation in which people residing within our island seem to have no regard at all for the welfare, life or limb of others?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can promise an early debate, but all hon. Members will echo my hon. Friend's comments.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): In his report to the House on Monday about the Edinburgh summit, the Prime Minister said that the agreement on the Danish opt-out was between Heads of State and Governments and indicated that it was outwith the Maastricht arrangements. If that is the case, and if as a result it may not be possible to discuss those arrangements during debate on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, may we have an assurance that that agreement between Governments can be debated in the House?

Mr. Newton: I certainly cannot give the hon. Gentleman that assurance off the cuff. What is in order during debate on the Bill is a matter for the Chairman of Ways and Means and not for me.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): Will my right hon. Friend consider an early debate on the European fighter aircraft, because the Government's success in keeping that project afloat, if I may use that term in the context of an aircraft, has important implications, not only for this country's defences, but for the maintenance of jobs in the United Kingdom, not least in the Bristol area?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will be answering questions in the first week after the recess. I am sure that all hon. Members will welcome yet another achievement by the Government, who have brought the project to its present state with their current prospects.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made as soon as possible on the issue of dioxin in Bolsover and the fact that Coalite, a friend of the Tory Government, is planning to build a new incinerator? I have a petition containing the names of thousands of people who are protesting against the incinerator. At a time when Coalite shares have dropped to about 6p on the stock exchange, will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that a planted question on the subject by a Tory Member will be answered this afternoon so that Coalite can be given a lifeline and farmers can be allowed to operate again, just because the National Farmers Union has taken out a case against Coalite in the court? It sounds to me as if this Tory Government are aiding and abetting their friends at Coalite, and it is time that it was stopped.

Mr. Newton: I am a little uncertain about precisely what the hon. Gentleman is asking me to do. I note his

points, and I shall, of course, ensure that my right hon. Friend is made aware of the vigour with which he has put them.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House do everything possible to persuade the Prime Minister to make a statement tomorrow on Bosnia? A statement would coincide with the arrival here of the first 100 detainees from Bosnia. If the official Opposition made Bosnia the subject of their Supply day debate on the first Tuesday back, would the Leader of the House consider switching business on the Wednesday, thereby providing for a two-day debate which would enable hon. Members to address what is clearly the most serious and dangerous political crisis facing Europe at this time?

Mr. Newton: I respect the hon. Gentleman's view and the reasons for his request, but I do not think that I can add to what I said at the start of these exchanges. The hon. Gentleman asked about the Opposition Supply day. That is entirely a matter for the usual channels and Opposition Members, who I see are nodding in agreement. However, I should not encourage hopes that the Government would wish to add a second day.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to what the Secretary of State for Scotland said earlier this afternoon? In referring to his consideration of the governance of Scotland, he said that he was giving particular consideration to improving the way in which Scottish affairs are handled in the House and to increasing the effectiveness of Scottish representatives. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is a uniquely suitable subject for an early debate next year, especially as representatives of what the Chancellor of the Exchequer inelegantly calls "the other territories" within the country have a particular interest in ensuring that they are treated at least as well as Scotland?

Mr. Newton: We are always seeking to improve the way in which all parts of the United Kingdom are governed and also to improve British government as a whole. However, I do not think that I can promise an early debate on those matters in the new year.

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): On the matter of the National Lottery Etc. Bill, which is to be presented today, will the right hon. Gentleman dispel the unfortunate rumour that it might first be introduced in the Upper House? Does he recognise that, given the range of opinions on the Bill, it is important that it should be introduced in the Lower House?

Mr. Newton: It is my expectation that the Bill will be introduced in this House.

Madam Speaker: Indeed, presentation of the Bill is to be the next item of business.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On the question of the European Court's decision on Sunday trading, will the right hon. Gentleman assure us that a statement will be made by the Secretary of State for the Environment? Is not the task of catching the lawbreakers, who treat the law with indifference and effrontery by opening Sunday after Sunday, in the hands of local authorities—which are short of the money that they need to prosecute those companies? Will the right hon. Gentleman also tell us how much money he intends to give local authorities? Should he not encourage them to prosecute the big corporations that treat the law with such contempt, or are the Government being slow on that because organisations such as B and Q are considerable contributors to the Conservative party and expect something in return? If that is the truth, as I and others believe, it is a deplorable case of political corruption.

Mr. Newton: It is clear that the spirit of Christmas has now left the Chamber. I sometimes find that I am a little weary of the extent to which the hon. Gentleman sees conspiracy in absolutely everything. I have already made a brief comment on local authority financing. He is right to say that the primary role in enforcing the law on Sunday trading rests with local authorities—the precise point made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General in the answer to which I have already referred.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): If there cannot be a statement tomorrow or during our first week back, may we have a debate on Bosnia during the first fortnight after the House returns? The subject has dominated business questions today, and that should be reflected in our business after the recess.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that there has been much reference to Bosnia in our exchanges. Indeed, it has been quite striking, as it was in the Christmas Adjournment motion debate earlier this week.

I cannot add to what I said earlier, but the hon. Gentleman will have noted the suggestion of his hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) that it is a subject for debate that the Opposition, apart from anyone else, might wish to consider.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): In view of the flagrant breaking of the law by companies such as B and Q, other do-it-yourself stores and various supermarkets, and also the apparent abetting of those actions by the Home Secretary when he said that the law was in abeyance, does not the right hon. Gentleman think that the matter is too serious to be left to a written answer? Surely the Home Secretary should come to the House and make a statement, on which he can be questioned by hon. Members, about the current position following the judgment of the European Court?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. and learned Friend made a specific statement on 26 November about his intentions in the wake of the judgment, whose timing we did not then know. He set out clearly and, in my view, sensibly how the Government hoped to proceed. The interpretation of the law is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General—the very point on which he has answered a question this afternoon.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an urgent ministerial response to the statement by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis in the Home Affairs Select Committee this morning? He said that the police may have inadequate powers to deal with IRA terrorism. In particular, he voiced his concern about the need for an urgent clarification of

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the law on the ability of the police to carry out random road checks to prevent IRA terrorists from bringing lorries and equipment into central London and other towns.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will hardly expect me to comment on his account—not that I have reason to doubt it—of something that took place in a Select Committee hearing this morning. He will have seen, as I have, reports of action that the police have taken in recent weeks, which appears to be effective and precisely of the kind to which he referred.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his earlier response to the request by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) and arrange for a statement to be made by the Secretary of State for Health in the first week after the recess about the current problems facing the national health service? Many hospitals and health authorities, not least in my constituency, face an acute cash crisis, which might lead to the closure of operating theatres and surgical wards. If ever there were a need for a statement by the Secretary of State for Health, it is in the first week after the recess.

Mr. Newton: The current position in the health service, put briefly, is that we have increased spending by 58 per cent. in real terms since we first came to office, and the extra £1 billion for next year will allow nearly 200,000 more acute in-patients and day patients to be treated in England alone.

Mr. Bill Olner (Nuneaton): Is the Leader of the House aware of the decision reached today by the Secretary of State for Defence on youth training within the armed forces for junior leaders and apprentice training? Does he realise the effect that it will have on my constituency, with the closure of Bramcote barracks, with the loss of civilian jobs and thousands of pounds from the local economy? Will he arrange for an early statement to be made to the House next year?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces is answering a written question this afternoon about the restructuring of Army training bases and has written to all hon. Members whose constituencies are affected. The hon. Gentleman may be aware that one of the Adjournment debates tomorrow—admittedly it will be brief—is on redundancies in the defence industry. Perhaps he could make a brief intervention in that debate. To do so, it would be up to him to come to an understanding with one of his hon. Friends.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): I would like to think, Madam Speaker, that you are saving the best until last.

Will the Leader of the House allow time for an early debate on the 17 deaths and 9,000 injuries in the home through electrical accidents each year caused in part by the Government's failure, over the past five years, to insist that every electrical household appliance should be sold with a pre-fitted plug? We are now one of the few countries in the world that does not insist on that vital safety measure.

Mr. Newton: I shall bring that point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Points of Order

4.12 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On 8 December, a bizarre meeting was organised at a west end club by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), to whom I have given notice of this point of order. He was evoking the presence of a French political leader at a meeting that he was also to address, sending the letter out by way of a circular on House of Commons notepaper to other Members' constituents. A constituent in Harrow let me have the letter yesterday afternoon.

I am disturbed not only by the fact that a Member has addressed other Members' constituents without referral but by the fact that many hundreds of circular letters on official House of Commons notepaper have presumably been sent out in official House of Commons envelopes using official stamps. I should be grateful for your guidance, Madam Speaker, in this serious matter.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. It is clear that vicious warfare has broken out on the Tory Benches just before Christmas. Before you answer the hon. Gentleman's point of order, and as you have control over the matter, I suggest that you separate them, with the anti-marketeers on one side and the marketeers on the other—*[Interruption.]* We have already done it on this side. We made that decision a long time ago. You will have to do it for them, Madam Speaker, now that the Maastricht Bill is on the agenda for the week when we return.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Does it relate to this matter?

Mr. Gallie: Yes, it does.

Madam Speaker: I know that it is the season of good will. I did not think that I would need to take the matter further, because I have a response, but if the hon. Gentleman can throw new light on the matter, I must hear him.

Mr. Gallie: Further to the point of order, on the matter raised by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)——

Madam Speaker: Order. I answer points of order; Hon. Members do not.

In response to the point of order by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) about dividing Members of Parliament, let me make it clear that I like hon. Members to sit exactly where they usually sit, because I know then where I can find them and keep an eye on them.

On the more serious point of the use of stationery and House of Commons envelopes, that is a matter for the Serjeant at Arms, with whom I shall be raising the matter.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You must be aware that Scottish Question Time today was the site of, and the vehicle for, a concerted abuse of the Order Paper. Four out of the first 10 Scottish questions had been tabled by English Conservative Members. Several other English Conservative Members had, unusually, come into the

Chamber to ask supplementary questions. I know that you are aware, Madam Speaker, of the deep offence that this causes in Scotland. We get only one hour a month in which to question Scottish Office Ministers and to hold them to account for their stewardship of our country. If that hour is taken up by a concerted effort, presumably organised by someone, to dominate Question Time, deep offence and deep damage to Parliament's reputation, and to that of the Union, is caused in Scotland.

To add insult to injury—this is new material that I ask you to consider, Madam Speaker—the concerted effort was not just to dominate the Order Paper but to spread foul smears against my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition and against councillors elected by the people in the Monklands district, a district that has almost certainly never been seen, and could not be identified on a map, by the large number of Conservative Members who were throwing their buckets of smears at people who were not in the House to answer for themselves.

Will you consider this matter, Madam Speaker, before the reputation of the House and Scottish Question Time is further diminished to the point of negligibility in the country of Scotland whose Question Time it is supposed to be?

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me answer the first point of order.

I do not believe that Scottish Question Time is diminished in the eyes of the House or of the public in the United Kingdom. The hon. Gentleman knows that there can be no manipulation of the Order Paper because questions are drawn by ballot. A place on the Order Paper is achieved through the luck of the draw. I remind the hon. Gentleman that this is a United Kingdom Parliament and hon. Members representing any part of the United Kingdom are entitled to ask questions and supplementaries relating to the regions of England, Northern Ireland or Wales, and to be called to do so.

Furthermore, I attempt to ensure that a proper balance is achieved. Therefore, there can be no concerted manipulation of the Order Paper because it is my responsibility to ensure that no one group, or no handful of hon. Members, on whichever side of the House, can manipulate or in any way use the Order Paper to their advantage. That remains my responsibility. I am particularly concerned at Scottish Question Time to ensure that there is fair play and that, when any antagonistic or abrasive questions are raised, there is always ample opportunity for proper rebuttal, from whichever side.

Mr. Home Robertson: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. This House and the government of the United Kingdom are being brought into disrepute in the eyes of many people in Scotland, and if Conservative Members carry on conducting themselves as they have in recent months and years, the Union will be endangered.

I appeal to you, Madam Speaker, to reflect on certain aspects of recent Scottish Question Times. I recognise your important duty to protect the interests of minorities in the House, including the apparently growing minority of English Tories who want to put questions to the Secretary of State for Scotland. I agree that they are entitled to do that; but is it absolutely necessary to call such a high proportion of that minority at Scottish Question Time? Today we heard from Hendon, Reading, Thanet, Basildon, Dover, Uxbridge and Altrincham and Sale—most of these Members expressing a new-found interest in the affairs of Monklands district council, an interest likely to have been inspired by Tory Whips.

Will you reflect on the limited rights of the Scottish majority? Sixty-one of the 72 seats in Scotland are represented by members of Opposition parties, and the odds against our being able to raise issues on behalf of our constituents seem to be growing ever longer, to the point where our constituents wonder whether we are here.

Madam Speaker: If I am asked in a reasonable manner, I will always reflect on the way Question Time is conducted, but I do not think that Scottish Members do badly at Scottish Question Time or at any other Question Time.

BILL PRESENTED

National Lottery etc.

Mr. Secretary Brooke, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Clarke, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lang, Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew, Mr. Secretary Patten, Mrs. Secretary Bottomley, Mrs. Secretary Shephard, and Mr. Robert Key, presented a Bill to authorise lotteries to be promoted as part of a National Lottery; to make provision with respect to the running and regulation of that National Lottery and with respect to the distribution of its net proceeds; to increase the membership and extend the powers of the Trustees of the National Heritage Memorial Fund; to amend to law relating to lotteries promoted on behalf of societies or by local authorities and the law relating to pool betting; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow; and to be printed. [Bill 108.]

Slaughterhouses

4.22 pm

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the law relating to the regulation and supervision of slaughterhouses.

Earlier this Session, I raised the issue in an Adjournment debate. I should like to begin by expressing my thanks to my Conservative colleagues who have given me such amazing support.

We are interested in maintaining high-quality food which is safe to eat. At no point have we tried to back away from the Government's commitment to safe food hygiene, but we are faced with massive over-regulation. The fresh meat hygiene and inspection regulations implementing EC directive 91/497 are over-regulatory—and it is not just this country that is discovering the associated problems. The German Health Minister has said in the German Parliament:

"EC experts will be overseeing our small butchery businesses and butchers' slaughterhouses. I do not believe such supervision to be rational, given that these businesses only trade on the domestic market. Such monitoring—abiding by the subsidiarity principle—should remain the responsibility of the national monitoring authorities alone".

That was said not by a member of the agricultural lobby but by the German Health Minister, who is concerned above all else with public health.

Deregulation, like charity, ought to begin at home. It is not good enough for the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to blame the European Community for all the problems facing our agriculture. The current regulations, emanating from the European Community via the common agricultural policy and augmented by MAFF, make George Orwell's vision seem like that of Adam Smith. We seem to be facing ever greater regulation.

We are told that choice is important, but what about the choice that people should enjoy to visit different types of butcher, besides Tesco or Sainsbury? The Minister replying to my Adjournment debate said that consumers increasingly favour one-stop shopping. That is all very well for those who happen to live close to such shopping, but those who live in isolated rural communities that depend on the local butcher or the local farmer do not have this choice. We want realistic choices for real people in real communities.

Particular ways of life in this country need defending. We do not all, thank God, live in sprawling suburbs, and woe betide us if we try to apply one pattern to the whole population. That is the way to lose the stability that traditional ways of life have brought us.

As on previous occasions, I note that the Opposition Benches empty as soon as we debate rural issues—Opposition Members have no interest in them. Creeping urbanisation, represented by most Opposition Members, threatens our way of life in the countryside.

How will the regulations affect farmers with a small number of stock? Where will they go if their small abattoirs are closed? What will happen to casualty stock? What will all those who are worried about animal welfare have to say if the Government bring in regulations that mean that animals must be transported longer and longer distances to slaughterhouses? That will lead to more and more stressed animals at the point of slaughter and that will not help to guarantee the hygiene and quality of the food that consumers receive.

We must also remember the "minor problem" of employment. The south-west will be hard hit by the regulations, and if the costs are applied across the region, we will lose up to 1,000 jobs. The Opposition are always great when it comes to fighting for jobs in urban areas, but they do not seem too concerned about those in rural areas; it is left to Conservative Members to defend them.

It is important to consider the implications of the proposals relating to ante and post-mortem inspections. There is a fundamental difference between our practices and those of Europe. Since the 19th century, United Kingdom controls have developed through local government, under medical guidance. The principal players are the medica officers of health, environmental health officers and meat inspectors. In other countries, such inspections are not carried out by veterinary surgeons. In Holland, for example, the public health veterinarians are part of a different tradition and a different system from our own. The regulations are trying to apply a model on to the United Kingdom that does not fit our heritage and our tradition. Many of the problems with the regulations stem from that.

Our system works well in general, and it does not need profound change or to be subject to the profound centralisation envisaged by the regulations. It is important to consider the competence of those who will be asked to carry out the inspections. A written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) revealed the Government's belief that

"The degree qualification obtained by every veterinary surgeon fully equips him or her to perform both ante and post-mortem inspections."—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1992; Vol. 215, c.*718*.]

The House might be interested to know that that experience may often be equivalent to one week's training before graduation. That does not match the 30 years of experience of some of our meat inspectors. I do not believe that those inspectors will take kindly to being told by someone who has had one week's experience or even a subsequent course on inspection, which may last just a couple of weeks, that he now takes precedence in terms of carrying out those ante and post-mortem inspections.

The supervision of slaughterhouses must continue to give out with minimum regulation. It should pay full regard to the maintenance of competition, consumer choice, employment prospects and economic viability of abattoirs. That supervision should be conducted in a way that is consistent with nationally established practices, traditions and heritage. In the United Kingdom, that will mean restricting veterinary inspection and continuing to use environmental health officers and meat inspectors to carry out the necessary supervision.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Dr. Liam Fox, Mr. Tom King, Dame Jill Knight, Mr. Mark Robinson, Mr. John Sykes, Mr. Sebastian Coe, Mr. David Harris, Mr. Andrew Robathan and Mr. Bernard Jenkin.

SLAUGHTERHOUSES

Dr. Liam Fox accordingly presented a Bill to amend the law relating to the regulation and supervision of slaughterhouses: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 January 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 107.]

Orders of the Day

Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 4

APPEAL BY LORD ADVOCATE AGAINST SENTENCE IN SOLEMN PROCEEDINGS ETC

"(1) After section 228 of the 1975 Act (which provides for appeal by a person convicted on indictment) there shall be inserted the following section—

228A. Where a person has been convicted on indictment, the Lord Advocate may appeal against the sentence passed on conviction—

(a) if it appears to the Lord Advocate that the sentence is unduly lenient; or

(b) on a point of law.".

(2) In section 442 of that Act (Which provides for appeal in summary proceedings)—

(a) in subsection (1), after paragraph (b) there shall be inserted the following paragraph.

"(c) the prosecutor in such proceedings may, in any class of case specified by order by the Secretary of State under this paragraph, so appeal against the sentence passed on such conviction if it appears to the prosecutor that the sentence is unduly lenient."; and

(b) after subsection (2) there shall be added the following subsection—

"(3) The power of the Secretary of State to make an order under paragraph (c) of subsection (1) above shall be exercisable by statutory instrument; and any order so made shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.".'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 17, 18, 19 and 24.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I pay tribute to the particular interest taken in this matter by my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) and the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), both of whom tabled amendments or new clauses on it. Their concerns have been refined in the new clause and, with the amendments, it seeks to meet the undertaking that I gave in Committee. I also believe that it meets the views expressed by those hon. Gentlemen.

I am aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr has submitted a petition on this matter and I trust that the outcome of today's debate will meet in full his concerns and those of other hon. Members.

The amendments are numerous, and in most cases make technical changes to the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 to ensure that an appellant may not only be a convicted person, but may also include the Lord Advocate. The main provision of interest is the proposal to insert into section 228 of the 1975 Act a new power to enable the Lord Advocate to initiate an appeal in solemn proceedings against a sentence which he considers to be unduly lenient, or to appeal on a point of law. The new clause provides that the Lord Advocate has four weeks from the date of sentence to initiate such an appeal. The four-week period will ensure that appropriate cases are not lost for lack of time, and that there is no pressure to lodge appeals about which there has been less than full consideration simply to ensure that the time limit is observed.

As announced in Committee, the new Crown right of appeal will operate for solemn procedure on commencement of the relevant provisions. An order-making power is proposed to bring in the Crown right of appeal for selected categories of summary proceedings. The necessary consequential amendments to part II of the 1975 Act are also made.

I should draw to the House's attention the proposed replacement of section 452A(2). This provision is intended to clarify the powers of the High Court in determining stated case sentence appeals under summary procedure. I believe that the power of a Crown right of appeal against unduly lenient sentences is to be welcomed. It redresses the balance. At present, a convicted person may appeal against any sentence, but the Crown has no opportunity to do so where that sentence appears manifestly lenient. I must stress that my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate envisages that the power will be used very sparingly. It is not a power to involve the Crown in the sentencing practice of the court; that will remain the preserve of the judges. What it does is provide an opportunity to enable the court, through the appeal mechanism, to revisit that sentence where it appears to have been inappropriately light.

I commend new clause 4 and the related amendments to the House.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I thank the Minister for his opening remarks, and in particular for his appreciation of the work of my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall).

I wonder whether the Minister has had an opportunity to read the Scottish Office central research unit paper entitled "Sexual History and Sexual Character Evidence in Scottish Sexual Offence Trials". It makes extremely interesting reading, and is highly relevant to what we are discussing. There is clear evidence that in too many cases judges are not enforcing the 1986 legislation on unfair questioning of complainants in rape and sexual offence trials. If that is so, it is not surprising that some judges also fail to treat such cases with the severity that they deserve.

Like my party, I have never been a hanger, beater or flogger, but that does not mean that my hon. Friends and I agree with sentences for serious crimes so light as to amount to no more than a tap on the wrist. A Scottish judge gaoled for two years a man who had pushed a girl to the ground, stripped her and raped her. The judge said that it had not been a violent rape. The same judge admonished and freed a sex attacker who had admitted a reduced charge of indecent assault. He regarded the assault as "minor". A man who had killed his wife and month-old son was admonished and freed.

Does the Minister agree that aging male judges often seem to take sexual assaults against women less seriously than the rest of us? In the English courts, it is possible for such light sentences to be reversed; we want a similar arrangement in Scotland. Scandalously light sentences

[Mrs. Maria Fyfe]

have also been passed in the English courts for equally serious crimes. Only recently, a judge in an English court told a rapist that he had shown concern and consideration because he had worn a contraceptive. Another fined a business man £2,000 after he picked up a hitch-hiker, drove her to a deserted road and raped her. A man who abused his 12-year-old stepdaughter was give two years' probation, with the sympathetic comment that his wife's pregnancy had caused problems for a healthy young husband. I could go on, but I think that I have probably made my point.

Many of us think that such sentences betray an attitude —which is not shared by the rest of society—that such crimes are not too serious. The judge who sentenced the Ealing vicarage rapists to three years and five years shortly afterwards sentenced a pickpocket to three years. Most of us question the common sense of anyone who can equate rape with pickpocketing. I recently had my purse stolen on the London underground. I was annoyed, of course, but not seriously upset. Women who have suffered sexual assaults such as I have described have had their lives adversely affected for many years. Does the Minister agree that there is a case for giving judges who need it some awareness of the values of the society that they so abysmally fail to represent?

I hope that my points will be taken up and that the new clause will be agreed. If some judges are out of touch with society, it is important that society should take the opportunity to reverse such ridiculously light sentences.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): I warmly welcome new clause 4 and thank the Minister for his kind words in opening.

New clause 4 is based on the public perception that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) described. Sometimes the courts display inconsistency, lack of logic and a failure to match the seriousness of the crime with the sentence. That is what new clause 4 addresses.

In Committee, I referred to the Samuel Merry case in Ayr, about which I introduced a petition. A young man died, yet one defendant was given a nine-month sentence and another a four-month sentence. My constituents could not see the sense of that. In Committee, I said that the new clause offers advantages for the relatives of the victim and for those who have been sentenced, because in reviewing such sentences the facts of the case may become more known to the public, which may increase their understanding. Although there are two sides, my concern is for the victims and the public, who look to the law for protection.

I am advised that in Scotland it takes an average of 14 convictions before someone ends up in gaol. In the Scottish Grand Committee yesterday, the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) spoke of an epidemic of crime.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I am surprised by the statistic that the hon. Gentleman has just quoted. It would help me and perhaps other hon. Members if he could give the source of that statistical information.

Mr. Gallie: I am happy to do so: the governor of Shotts prison.

In the Scottish Grand Committee yesterday, the hon. Member for Fife, Central referred to an epidemic of crime in Scotland, and called for increased police resources. My argument is that a senseless circle is operating. If the courts do not back up the police when they get convictions, there is something wrong with the system. New clause 4 will deal with that issue and, once again, I thank the Minister.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: The governor of Shotts prison possesses many qualities and doubtless holds his position because he understands the prison service and how to deal with prisoners but, as far as I am aware, he has not previously been prayed in aid as a source of statistical information on which one can rely better to inform the debate. The information offered to the House should not stand between us and proper consideration of the new clause.

The new clause is a substantial departure in principle from what has been the law of Scotland since time immemorial. It is noticeable that the English Members who found Scottish Question Time such an attractive opportunity to make points about the government of Scotland are conspicuous by their absence when we come to discuss an issue which goes to the very heart of the Scottish legal system and which represents a substantial departure in principle from what has previously been our law.

Mr. Gallie: I draw the hon. and learned Gentleman's attention to the fact that many Scottish Members who attempted to ask questions, and did so, are also absent now. There are now three hon. Members on the Labour Benches, one on the Liberal Bench and none on that of the Scottish National party.

Mr. Campbell: We can accept those statistics as rather more reliable than those emanating from the governor of Shotts prison. It is worth noting the apparent lack of application to a matter of such substantial principle in this unitary Parliament, about which we are so often told.

In support of the new clause, it has been said that sentences have sometimes been passed which are apparently inappropriate to the gravity of the crime. That is unquestionably true. It will always be true under a system of sentencing in which there is no fixed tariff and where there is a substantial degree of judicial discretion. On the basis of more than 20 years practice in the criminal courts, where I prosecuted and defended, I happen to believe that the maintenance of that judicial discretion is a very important part of our legal system. The new clause will trench on that.

I shall not oppose the new clause, but it is right that the House should pass it into law only with some account being taken of the fact that it is a substantial departure from what we have known.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I bow to the hon. and learned Gentleman as we all respect his experience in the courts and of the legal system. I am delighted that he will not vote against the new clause, but I should have thought that, as a lawyer, he would always be happy for the opportunity to have a second look at anything because errors occur in human activities. That is as true on the Bench as anywhere else. As I understand it, the new clause will provide an opportunity—nothing more—to appeal. Surely that is a good thing.

Mr. Campbell: It would introduce rather more than that. If the hon. Gentleman read the terms, he would learn that the Lord Advocate has to be satisfied that the sentence which has been passed is "unduly lenient". Therefore, it is not a question of a second look but of the Lord Advocate saying to the High Court of Justiciary that in his judgment, as the principal Law Officer of the Crown in Scotland, a sentence previously passed is unduly lenient. That is not a second look but—in essence or practice—a recommendation from the Lord Advocate that one sentence should be replaced by another.

4.45 pm

That argument is offered in the context that in Scotland we are somehow guilty of imposing lenient sentences. The truth is that the sentences imposed in the United Kingdom are generally much more severe than in any of the neighbouring European countries, and in Scotland, sentences are generally more severe than those in England and Wales. One need only have regard to the view which the High Court of Judiciary has consistently taken on the possession of drugs and, in particular, on possession with intent to supply, to be satisfied that in Scotland the notion that sentences are regularly inadequate or unduly lenient is unfounded.

The Minister said that the new clause was not an effort on the part of the Crown to influence the judiciary, but one must bear in mind the fact that, if the Lord Advocate were, in the exercise of his judgment, frequently to try to take advantage of the terms of the new clause, there would be a risk that that would be seen as undue influence on the judiciary.

It is important to remember that, although the Lord Advocate is a Law Officer, he is also a member of the Government and, as such, it is not impossible for him to find himself under considerable political pressure. I have no doubt whatsoever of the integrity or robust independence of the present Lord Advocate, whom I know well, but the ancient office of Lord Advocate has not always been as well served as it is by its present incumbent. The House should recognise the risk, under the new clause, of a Lord Advocate finding himself under pressure from political sources within the Government of which he is a member to refer particular cases over a period of time in such a way that the judiciary might feel that they were being influenced as had not previously happened in Scotland.

I accept that the broad swathe of opinion is in favour of the new clause, and I shall certainly not oppose its passing into law. However, it should not be passed into law as a reflection of a desirable opportunity for a form of revenge for those who feel that sentences imposed for crimes against them should be increased.

On a more practical point, the Minister said that the Lord Advocate must exercise his right, which the clause confers on him, within four weeks of the passing of a sentence. That is a curious provision. As I understand section 231(1) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975, the person who is the subject of the sentence has only 14 days in which to mark an appeal if he regards the sentence as excessive. It is curious that the Lord Advocate needs 28 days, whereas the person on whom a sentence is passed is given only 14 days.

One must also remember that the person on whom the sentence is passed will almost invariably be engaged in a transaction with the legal aid authorities as to whether he may be admitted to the legal aid scheme. I hope that the Minister will explain why it is necessary for the Lord Advocate to be given such an extended period, for the fundamental reason that when a sentence is passed on a person, that person is entitled to know as soon as is reasonably practicable—even if the new clause were passed—that that is the sentence which he or she will be required to serve. I submit that any extended period which gives rise to uncertainty is wholly unfair and unreasonable. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us why the Lord Advocate will require 28 days.

From my own experience as an advocate-depute in the High Court, I believe that it will be instantly clear to those representing the Crown whether a particular case falls into the category embraced by new clause 4. There is no reason for an extended period.

The new clause gives a substantial power to the Lord Advocate. It is a power which, if exercised with responsibility, will be unlikely to cause injustice but which, if exercised irresponsibly, could cause grave injustice. For that reason, it is right that the House should pause for a moment to consider the implications of what we are being asked to do, and not merely rubber-stamp it as a means of assuaging public opinion.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): As the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) has said, it is difficult to argue against the sentiments of the new clause. I agree with him when he advises that we should stand back and consider what powers we are giving. Powers are fine when used for the right reasons, but when powers are used for the wrong reasons and when political influences are brought to bear on decision making, the whole process of the administration of the law is brought into disrepute.

I refer briefly to clause 3 to make my point. I am concerned when pressure is brought to bear on judges, and I am equally concerned about the powers given to the Secretary of State. The Minister may argue that the Secretary of State already has those powers. I refer to one power that has been used to the detriment of the administration of law in Scotland.

I refer to the case of a killing that happened in Larkhall almost 10 years ago. A family were convicted for art and part. A young man pleaded guilty to using a knife and to causing the death of a policeman. The father and the daughter were subsequently found guilty of that murder. I refer to Hugh Murray junior, who admitted to the murder, to his father, Hugh Murray senior, and to his sister, Mrs. Margaret Smith.

As a result of a statement made in the House by the then Secretary of State, Lord Younger, anyone convicted of killing a policeman would serve a minimum sentence of 20 years' imprisonment. That has caused some confusion, to say the least, about what is in the process of happening to those three convicted persons. As I said on Second Reading, everyone involved with her in the prison service, everyone who has met her and everyone who has seen her has said that Mrs. Margaret Smith is an ideal prisoner. She was convicted of murder because she was present when her brother committed murder. She has been up for parole and a recommendation from the parole board is lying on the Secretary of State's desk. I raise the matter because I see the Secretary of State in his place. If justice is to be served, that young woman should be released as soon as possible. I hope that that will be the case.

[Mr. Jimmy Hood]

Surely the House cannot be comfortable about allowing a Minister literally to make law on the hoof by making a policy decision that will be left to those who succeed him. I do not oppose the spirit of the new clause, but I take the opportunity to say that we should consider carefully when we empower people. I am sure that politicians are honourable men and women, but powers given to Ministers may be misused at some future date. For that reason, we should be careful. I do not oppose the new clause, but I advise some further consideration of what it means.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): The new clause provides an opportunity for an appeal by the Lord Advocate in certain cases in which he thinks it appropriate. The provision is analogous to provisions introduced in the law of other jurisdictions in the United Kingdom in recent years, which have operated on a number of occasions. In that sense, I regard it as relatively uncontroversial.

When appeals are made, every opportunity should be taken to ensure that there is a fair and just result. In the context of appeals, I ask the Minister to turn his mind to the question of ensuring full disclosure of relevant material for appeals. I do not want to go into the details of the case with which I am concerned at the moment. I have written to the Secretary of State and to others in connection with it, and the Minister may be aware of it.

It was brought to my attention that there seems to be a serious omission in legislation whereby information that is vital to the prosecution on appeal has not been disclosed and the police in Scotland seem to be reluctant to disclose it. I speak rather hesitantly as an outsider in these matters. However, from this case, it seems as if there is a gap. We want a fair and proper result on appeal. I draw the Minister's attention to that so that he can consider whether it is appropriate in the context of the new clause, of the Bill or of other circumstances, and so that we can ensure that there is full and complete disclosure when appropriate.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall answer a number of points raised in the debate. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) mentioned different sentences being given in rape cases. There is more consistency now than there was in past years and judges are more aware of sentencing patterns. They are published and that has been a matter for public comment. Only occasionally are there cases about which there is serious and substantial complaint. I welcome the hon. Lady's support for the new clause.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) also welcomed the new clause strongly, believing that the punishment should fit the crime. I repeat that complaints about cases are not frequent.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) raised the question of the length of the right to appeal. The hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that in solemn proceedings, the convicted person has to submit an appeal within two weeks of the date of sentence. That period can be extended on application to the High Court. Under the provisions, the time limit for the Crown cannot be so extended. The different time limits are proposed to allow the Crown sufficient time for considered reflection on whether to initiate an appeal on the ground of undue leniency, having regard both to the general level of sentence for the type of case and to the individual circumstances of the case.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East also asked whether the Crown should become involved in sentencing. The function of the Crown is not to contend for a particular sentence, but exceptionally to bring to the attention of the Appeal Court sentences that appear to be unusually lenient. The matter of the appropriate sentence is entirely one for the judiciary and the Crown will continue to have no involvement in it at trial stage.

The hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) raised the case of the murder of a police sergeant. The present debate is not about particular cases. I understand that the hon. Gentleman has discussed the matter with my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State and that he has promised to let him know the outcome of the review in progress. I cannot, therefore, take the matter further this afternoon.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) raised another matter. I shall look into it and I draw it to the attention of my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State. I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman receives a full reply. I cannot give him full details this afternoon as I am not familiar with them, but I shall ensure that he gets a full reply as soon as possible.

I shall now deal with the issue of political influences on the Lord Advocate in deciding to appeal.

5 pm

In the prosecution of crime, the Lord Advocate must act in the public interest. He must also apply the test of undue leniency purely in the public interest. In appealing, he would only be placing the issue once again before the court, the role of which, as at present, will be to determine the appeal by affirming or amending the sentence.

The Law Officers act independently, which is absolutely right. They do not have to give reasons as to why they do or do not appeal or prosecute. The Lord Advocate has made it clear that he envisages that the power will be used sparingly.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I apologise to the Minister and other hon. Members for my late appearance, but assure them that I was attending a meeting of the Select Committee on European Legislation.

Mr. Bill Walker: That is very important.

Dr. Godman: It is indeed.

New clause 4(1) states:

"228A. Where a person has been convicted on indictment, the Lord Advocate may appeal against the sentence passed on conviction—

(a) if it appears to the Lord Advocate that the sentence is unduly lenient;"

How is such a matter brought to the attention of the Lord Advocate? It appears worrying that some over-lenient sentences have been imposed on those who have inflicted violence on women in rape cases. Many such rape case proceedings are disfigured by a judge allowing the defence counsel to trawl through a woman's sexual history. It seems that such trawling may persuade a judge to impose a lenient sentence. How are such matters brought to the attention of the Lord Advocate?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A variety of sources, such as the hon. Gentleman, lawyers or the press, could

draw the matter to the attention of the Lord Advocate, who has said that he would use the power very sparingly. However, it is a significant change in the law of Scotland, which will give the public greater confidence in the judiciary and the legal system.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Would it not be appropriate for a report to be sent by the prosecutor of the case to the Lord Advocate as a matter of routine? The report, to be drawn up at an early stage, would give the opinion of the prosecutor—an advocate-depute in the High Court or representative of the procurator fiscal service in a lower court. That would be the procedure, and I am not sure that it would require to be put into legislation. There should certainly be some routine procedure—the idea that the matters can somehow be brought to the attention of the Lord Advocate because of the way in which they are dealt with in a newspaper or because of the outrage felt by Members of Parliament, seems wholly inappropriate in relation to a power that is, as the Minister has concluded, of such significance.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand that, in the normal course of affairs, the procurator fiscal will draw the matter to the attention of the Lord Advocate in the first instance. The Lord Advocate may make inquiries of a fiscal in some cases, but the normal procedure will quite rightly be, as has been suggested, a matter for the fiscal. The Lord Advocate and the Law Officers should not be unnecessarily influenced by other sources, and I am sure that they will not.

New clause 4 is highly desirable and I strongly commend it to the House. It redresses the imbalance whereby the convicted person has a right of appeal and the Crown does not. It will ensure that formal procedure exists so that the Appeal Court can re-examine a sentence which, in the view of the Lord Advocate, is unduly lenient. It marks a constructive development in Scottish criminal procedure.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): The Scottish Conservative manifesto for the 1992 general election stated:

> "We will give the Crown a right of appeal against sentences which are too lenient".

The Opposition tabled the amendment to that effect. This is the first and last occasion when we shall ensure that the Government stick by their manifesto pledges.

Mr. Gallie: I tabled a new clause which was worded differently from that tabled by the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall). The changes to it were made for specific reasons, but it was a Conservative clause that was accepted.

Mr. McFall: I think that the hon. Gentleman is trying to say that he had a hand in the amendment, and I would not argue with that.

I was talking of the equity between the accused's right of appeal and the Crown's right of appeal so that the accused and the prosecutor receive equal treatment. As has been mentioned, such a system exists in England and Wales. Sections 35 and 36 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 allows the Attorney-General or the Attorney-General for Northern Ireland to refer a case, so we have an idea how such legislation operates.

In a written answer to a question that I asked on 20 February 1992, the then Attorney-General, now Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said:

> "Since February 1989, when this part of the Criminal Justice Act came into force, I have sought the leave of the Court of Appeál to refer 69 cases, including five from Northern Ireland, in which the sentence passed appeared to be unduly lenient. Of these, in 36 cases the sentence was increased, seven cases were withdrawn by me, in a further 10 cases the sentence was not changed, in one case the sentence was lowered".—[*Official Report*, 20 February 1992; Vol. 204, c. *225*.]

The legislation allows the courts to increase and, if necessary, reduce the sentence. It is to be welcomed in that it corrects erratic sentencing.

I take the point made by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), but the legislation already operates. In my constituency, parents whose children have been killed in road accidents come to me and, as a layman, it seems to me that the sentences passed on those responsible for the deaths are very lenient. If people can see that the case has been referred, it could help some of them to come to terms with their grief. I say that from the experience of talking to a number of constituents about the subject.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) mentioned cases involving women. I still think that the sentencing in such cases is often erratic. I refer the Minister to the research undertaken by Pat Carlen over the years—"Women's Imprisonment: Study in Social Control". She asked a representative sample of the Scottish judiciary for their comments. In 1992, the judiciary still say of women appearing before them, "If she is a good mother, we don't want to take her away; if she is not a good mother, it doesn't matter." Attitudes like that must change, but they still exist.

It is with the intention of changing such attitudes and ensuring equity of treatment both to the accused and the prosecutor that we have tabled amendment No. 1 and shall support the new clause.

Dr. Godman: I have some sympathy with the wording of section 228A(a) in new clause 4, which refers to the fact that the Lord Advocate may believe that a sentence is "unduly lenient". Such sentences are occasionally passed, especially when people are convicted of violent criminal acts.

On the whole, our judges in Scotland are not quite so eccentrically lenient in such cases as many judges south of the boarder. It is not so very long ago that, in a case arising from the appalling rape of a woman, an English judge said that we all know as men that when a woman says no she does not always mean no. If the new clause gives women and others concerned about over-lenient sentencing in rape cases a measure of comfort, it should command the support of all hon. Members.

I am concerned about the way in which complainers in rape cases are dealt with in our courtrooms. In such cases, women should be given the same kind of protection that we have agreed should be afforded to child witnesses and child complainers in sexual abuse and child abuse cases. A woman who has been subjected to rape and who then has to face the ordeal of recounting her experiences in the courtroom is in many respects as vulnerable psychologically as a young child who has been subjected to abuse.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Goodman: Those who seek to protect the interests of such vulnerable persons will to some extent be heartened by the wording of the new clause in respect of unduly lenient sentencing. Now I shall be lenient with the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie).

Mr. Gallie: I identify with virtually everything that the hon. Gentleman has said, but I put it to him that the difference between my new clause and the new clause tabled by the Opposition was that I proposed to take out the words

"on a point of law".

Had those words been left in, the hon. Gentleman's point would not have been met.

Dr. Goodman: That was a most interesting intervention.

Mr. Hood: It is Christmas.

Dr. Goodman: As my hon. Friend says, it is Christmas, but just at this moment I am not feeling very Christmassy as I still have all my cards to sign. Moreover, if the hon. Member for Ayr cares to examine the new clause, he will find that the phrase

"on a point of law"

is still there.

As I said in Committee, those who are proceeded against and found guilty of heinous acts of violence must suffer condign punishment. That must be especially true in relation to rape cases. I agree with the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East that a memorandum should be published giving guidance on how the Lord Advocate's eye can be caught in cases of unduly lenient sentencing. I give the proposal—especially as it affects women complainers, many of whom have to watch the perpetrators of sexual violence receive unduly lenient sentences—a cautious welcome.

Mr. Hood: The hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) will remember intervening on my Second Reading speech to support my case on over-lenient sentencing and to give an example of his own. I had occasion to write to the Lord Advocate drawing his attention to the decision by a sheriff in a Lanarkshire court to impose a three-month prison sentence on a man found guilty of breaking into a pensioner couple's home with two colleagues wearing ski masks, of robbing the pensioners and hitting them over the head with a hammer. A week or so ago, I received a letter from the Lord Advocate saying that he took my point but could not interfere with the decision and judgment of a sheriff.

Does my hon. Friend share my concern that, when I complained to the Lord Advocate, he was not prepared to do anything about it even though he shared my view? I would sack a sheriff who behaved in such a way.

5.15 pm

Dr. Godman: I believe that it is extremely difficult to bring about the dismissal of a sheriff for his or her eccentric sentencing practices, but I agree with my hon. Friend and recall the case to which he referred.

I said earlier that our judges are less eccentrically lenient than some south of the border, but some of our sheriffs behave in a weird way when sentencing miscreants who have perpetrated violent crimes. That is especially true in drink-driving cases. Some sheriffs are appallingly over-indulgent to those whom they sentence for such crimes. If someone runs down someone else in his or her car when under the influence of alcohol or drugs, that person should, on conviction, receive a hefty punishment. Some of our sheriffs need people like us to bring that home to them.

Presumably, on the basis of what the Minister said a few moments ago, if we, as members of the public and Members of Parliament, are concerned about an unduly lenient conviction, we shall be able to write to the Lord Advocate and bring the matter to his attention. Presumably, we shall also be able to tell him to do something about it—to review the case. That is why I thought that the suggestion made by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North East that some form of guidance should be issued on these matters was a good one.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Surely the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that hon. Members should be prevented from writing to the Lord Advocate as a matter of public concern, which they are perfectly entitled to do at present.

Dr. Godman: The Minister is absolutely right, and I have always received courteous and expeditious responses from the holders of that august office, but the response that my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) received, however courteous, was at best extremely unhelpful. If the new clause is accepted, presumably my hon. Friend or anyone else can expect to receive a different kind of response—the Lord Advocate may be inclined to be more positive in such a case. I remember the case to which my hon. Friend referred and I thought that an appallingly lenient sentence was imposed on the mindless thugs responsible. People who perpetrate violent crimes must be told plainly that they will not receive unduly lenient sentences when convicted.

I shall be pleased to see the provision included in the Bill. Given than I am much more modest that the hon. Member for Ayr, if the hon. Gentleman deserves the credit for the new clause, I shall give him the credit so that he can put his name in whatever the journal is called. It is a useful measure.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 2

CONCEALMENT BY SCREEN OF ACCUSED FROM PERSON AGED 16 YEARS OR MORE GIVING EVIDENCE

'.—( )(1) Section 34 of this Act shall apply in relation to a person aged 16 years or more as it applies in relation to a child if application is made to the court in that regard.

(2) An application under subsection (1) above shall be granted only if the judge taking into account the age of the person and the physical condition and mental capacity of the person is satisfied that the granting of the application—

(a) is in the interest of justice; and

(b) in the case of an application by the prosecutor is not unfair to the accused.'.—*[Mr. McFall.]*

Brought up, and Read the First time.

Mr. McFall: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause concerns the concealment by a screen of the accused from persons aged 16 years or more giving evidence. We debated the issue in Committee and had a fruitful debate on clauses 32 to 44, with a positive outcome.

The reason for tabling the new clause is to highlight the inconsistency between statutory provisions for children

aged 16 and under and non-statutory provisions for adults with a mature chronological, but young mental, age. Adults in that category will not have the same provision as children, and that could result in a lack of cohesion in judicial decisions and perhaps to idiosyncratic decisions, since there will be no legislative standard to judge by.

The Law Commission recommended screens for other vulnerable witnesses. The new clause seeks to bring clarity and consistency to the approach to vulnerable witnesses, whether or not they are below the age of 16. We welcome the provisions for those under 16, but nothing exists for people over that age. If the Government can accept the Law Commission's report and recommendations for children, why can they not accept them for other vulnerable witnesses, such as people with a mature chronological but a young mental age? They suffer the same problems as young children, so the same statutory arrangements should be available for such vulnerable witnesses. The new clause is therefore moved with that in mind.

Dr. Godman: I am happy to support the new clause. The use of a screen in a courtroom is, at best, a crude protection device. It separates a child witness from the person charged with an offence. If children can be protected by such measures, other people whom I regard as equally vulnerable should be given similar help. Without wishing to cause any trouble to the Chair, I want the provision to be extended to clause 33 of the Bill where vulnerable persons are concerned, but the new clause refers to clause 34 and the use of screens.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) mentioned people who may be chronologically mature but mentally incapacitated. These days, the phrase that we are urged to use is "persons with learning difficulties". I tend to use the old-fashioned phrase and refer to them as people who are mentally handicapped. They are vulnerable and should be given every possible protection when they are called upon to give evidence in our courts.

I am not sure whether the wording of the new clause would allow it, but the same holds true for women complainers in cases involving violent physical or sexual assault. Given that screens have already been used and are in common use—that is what I was told when I visited the sheriff court in Glasgow—has the Minister any evidence of screens being used in rape cases? Do those assisting a complainer in such a case have the right to seek guidance from a judge on the use of screens?

As I said earlier, a woman involved in a rape case is often in an extremely vulnerable state of mind. Such a complainant deserves every protection. That is why I advocate the use of closed circuit television in such cases.

Concealment by way of a screen is at best a poor measure. I think that the Minister said in Committee that the accused person must have sight of the witness when screens are used. I believe that a television monitor will be used, although it can be done by a one-way or two-way mirror, or whatever it is called. That is a reasonable measure, but we should go further and extend the provision to all vulnerable persons.

This is a stage on the way towards offering greater protection to vulnerable witnesses, especially the complainers in rape cases. It is disgraceful that they should have to suffer defence counsel trawling their sexual histories; the least that they deserve is the use of a screen to hide the perpetrator of a violent assault from them.

The new clause is a means of giving greater protection to people aged 16 or more when they give evidence, but much more needs to be done and I shall return to the matter.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is unusual for me to participate in these debates. I used to do so in the last decade—I was about to say last century, but it is only a decade although it feels like a century.

Mr. McFall: It looks like it.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I was about to congratulate him on moving the new clause, with which I thoroughly agree.

The new clause is very good and the purpose behind it exceptionally good, but it could be negated if people come into contact elsewhere in the sheriff court. They may be screened in the court, but if they happen to bump into each other in the waiting rooms, corridors or anywhere else, the effects of the new clause will be negated. The facilities at sheriff courts are absolutely appalling—especially at the court in Ayr—for people waiting to give evidence and for those accompanying them. There are no arrangements for refreshments and the toilet facilities are dreadful. Witnesses can come into contact with each other and with the accused. All of that is contrary to the effective administration of justice. The excellent new clause would be totally negated by people casually bumping into each other in sheriff courts which have such appalling facilities.

I have had many complaints from witnesses who have been treated appallingly at sheriff courts, particularly Ayr sheriff court, and the same applies elsewhere. Witnesses are often nervous. They may be reluctant to attend and have to be persuaded and encouraged. They need good facilities so as to be assured that they will not bump into people against whom they are about to give evidence.

5.30 pm

Dr. Godman: Has my hon. Friend been told by the Scottish Courts Administration whether his local sheriff court is to be renovated in the near future?

Mr. Foulkes: No, I have not. That is part of the problem. The Minister may be able to tell me. I have a great respect for the Minister. He and I have often crossed swords on other occasions in other places, both at university and on the town council. I am sure that he will give a positive and helpful reply to today's debate, particularly to the point that I have raised. It is important.

I know that there is a programme for improving, upgrading and updating court houses throughout Scotland, but progress is too slow and many sheriff court houses are completely inadequate for their purpose. If witnesses are not to be intimidated and if they are to come forward willingly, they must have good facilities and know that they are not likely casually to bump into people against whom they may be giving evidence. I may be widening the scope of the amendment, but the point is relevant. I hope that the Minister will deal with it.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) showed rare ingenuity in introducing the nature of the facilities at the

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

Ayr sheriff court, and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, showed your customary tolerance in allowing him to expand upon the matter. I hope that I will be allowed to take advantage of that.

I recently visited the temporary sheriff court in Greenock, within the curtilage of what used to be the Scott Lithgow shipyard. I say without equivocation that the facilities there are a disgrace. I appreciate that the original sheriff court building in Greenock is undergoing a substantial upgrading programme, but to expect justice to be conducted in the circumstances in which it is sought to conduct it in Greenock at the moment is not good enough. I fear, as the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley made clear, that similar situations are to be found throughout the country.

I doubt whether the hon. Gentleman has ever been to Lochmaddy, but its sheriff court—I see that at least one other hon. Member knows where that court is situated—is wholly inadequate. As the hon. Gentleman properly says, such facilities negate any advantage that might stem either from the new clause or from the legislation in respect of which the new clause is a supplement. Albeit in a roundabout way, there is considerable relevance in what the hon. Gentleman says.

I have always had considerable reservations about the notion that—I put it colloquially, for which I hope I shall be forgiven—one should start by moving the furniture around in the court. We come back to the principle that justice should not only be done but should be seen to be done. Our courts are public places which people are entitled to visit.

Now that we have accepted the principle that those who are vulnerable by way of age should be given special protection, what conceivable reason is there for not extending it to others who are equally vulnerable, either by reason of age, physical condition or mental capacity.

Therefore, although I do not share the hon. Gentleman's optimism, I hope that we shall have a positive response from the Government, and that even if they are not willing to accept the new clause they will give it serious consideration. Once the principle is ceded, it is difficult to say that others who can be identified as vulnerable should not be entitled to precisely the same protection.

Dr. Godman: When discussing measures which sought to give added protection to vulnerable witnesses in Committee, my hon. Friends and I stressed at all times that in no way did we wish to harm the interests of the accused person.

Mr. Campbell: I understand that. To some extent I must accept that I have lost the argument, but I am now concerned to argue for consistency. The Government have accepted that anyone deemed vulnerable by reason of age should be entitled to protection. If it can be demonstrated that a person is vulnerable by reason of other incapacity, such a person should be entitled to precisely the same protection.

The logic of that is ineluctable and the Minister should accept it, if not within the four corners of the Bill, on some other occasion when the matter is before the House when we may even feel compelled to push the matter to a vote.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) referred to the Scottish Law Commission's proposals. The Scottish Law Commission recognised that the use of a screen would not always be appropriate. In the case of an adult witness, the protection afforded by the use of video recorder evidence will be available. It will be open to the prosecution or the defence to apply for the use of screens and the court will always consider such a request with the interests of the witness in mind.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) is not slow to take any opportunity to further the interests of his constituents. There has been a substantial programme of upgrading and rebuilding sheriff courts and particular attention has been given to the need to provide comfortable and sympathetic accommodation for witnesses. The hon. Gentleman makes his point well. I shall make inquiries about the particular position of the sheriff courts at Ayr and Greenock, and I shall write to those hon. Members who have expressed an interest.

Dr. Godman: Will it be possible to use such screens in the temporary sheriff court at Greenock? I am not a lawyer, but that temporary building is a disgrace. I look forward to the day when the original sheriff court will be restored so that cases can be heard there once again.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes. As I said, I shall write to the hon. Members about the sheriff courts that they have mentioned.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way with his characteristic courtesy. Will he give some consideration to the need to take great care in finding suitable and adequate temporary facilities when a sheriff court is refurbished. I appreciate that there may be geographical constraints. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) asked whether screens could be used in the temporary court facilities at Greenock. I do not believe they could, because the space there is inadequate. When a temporary court is being established, careful consideration must be given to ensuring that it is adequate for the purpose.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman's point is well made. He made an eloquent plea for consistency in the matter; I certainly agree with the principle and have some sympathy for the new clause. However, the amendment would extend the new evidential provisions to witnesses other than children and, as I said when the matter was discussed in Committee, the Government must be satisfied that the provisions for one category of vulnerable witnesses are working well before we can consider extending them to other categories of witnesses.

I repeat what I said to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall)—that a decision to extend any of the provisions that we have introduced for children would be premature until we have been able to evaluate how the provisions are working in practice. I stress the importance of ensuring that any special evidential provisions that are introduced to meet the needs of particular categories of witness are appropriate to their needs. As hon. Members are aware, evidence can currently be taken on commission.

Hon. Members who were present at the full debate on the matter in Committee will recall that I said that there were other means available for hearing evidence by those who may not be able to attend the courts. In the

Government's view those arrangements are sufficient to meet the real concerns of such witnesses. When we have sufficient evidence, we shall assess it and make the necessary proposals.

Mrs. Fyfe: I well recall the Minister's comments on the matter in Committee. We still disagree with him. Surely he does not need to wait for the results of practice with children in courts before he feels able to act for adults over the age of 16 who are perhaps suffering from mental handicap. The two categories are completely separate and because the system works or does not work well with children would prove absolutely nothing about people over the age of 16 who suffer from mental handicap. Will the Minister revise his view on that and accept the advice of those who are accustomed to working with people suffering from such difficulties?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The difficulty is that at present there is no hard evidence that the extension of screening to witnesses other than children would be the best way to minimise the possible distress caused to such witnesses by having to attend court. It is also important to remember the need to achieve a balance between the needs of witnesses and fairness to the accused. However, I am certain that we shall return to the subject when we have evidence, at which time it will be much easier to see a constructive way forward.

Mr. McFall: We are still unhappy at the Government's reply. Ministers say that they will have to wait to see how things work out before deciding. I refer the Minister to the proceedings in Committee. I asked about the issue of unit fines, and the Minister said:

"we must be certain that the system is operating successfully in England and Wales."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 3 November 1992; c. 53.].

I did a little detective work and looked at the first draft of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill which entered the Lords in July 1991. Clause 41 of that Bill states that the system being introduced would enable the Secretary of State to order that specific courts should operate a unit fines system. However, in his reply to me on 3 November this year, the Minister was not aware that his Government were trying to introduce that very system in that 1991 Bill. That is a precedent, and the Minister will understand our caution and suspicion at being told that we shall have to wait to see how things work out.

Recommendations Nos. 23 and 24 in report No. 125 of the Scottish Law Commission are unequivocal in their description of vulnerable witnesses. That definition is easy to interpret, because it includes

"the elderly, the infirm, the sick or the mentally ill".

We do not intend to press the clause to a vote but we urge the Government to bring matters into line so that there is consistency between those under 16 years and those who are over that age.

Perhaps I can be partisan in the fashion of other hon. Members. The conditions in Dumbartonshire sheriff court are not good and I have been pushing the Minister to make a decision on the matter. Will he write to me before Christmas so that I can give my constituents the good Christmas message that we can look forward to a new court in Dumbarton with new and spacious architectural arrangements which will enable the provision of justice to be exemplary?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall certainly write to the hon. Gentleman about Dumbarton sheriff court, but at this stage I cannot give a guarantee about the answer. The new clause is premature because the research project began in October 1991 and since that time the live television link has been used in only eight cases. It is too early to reach conclusions about the effectiveness of the procedure and to take final decisions on extending provisions which will be available for child witnesses who are especially vulnerable.

Question put and negatived.

New Clause 6

Intermediate diet

'( ) For section 337A of the 1975 Act there shall be substituted the following section—

"*Intermediate diet*

337A.—(1) the court shall, in respect of every case which is adjourned for trial, fix a diet (to be known as an intermediate diet) for the purpose of ascertaining—

(a) the state of preparation of the prosecutor and of the accused with respect to their cases; and

(b) whether the accused intends to adhere to the plea of not guilty.

(2) At an intermediate diet, the court may ask the prosecutor and the accused any question for the purposes mentioned in subsection (1) above.

(3) The accused shall attend an intermediate diet of which he has received intimation or to which he has been cited.

(4) A plea of guilty may be tendered at the intermediate diet; and section 336 of this Act shall apply accordingly.".'.—[*Mr. McFall.*]

Brought up, and read the First time.

5.45 pm

Mr. McFall: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 2 was almost accepted by default. Perhaps we shall get another opportunity.

New clause 6 is about intermediate trial diets in Scotland. Section 15 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 added a section to the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 which provides for the use of intermediate trial diets in cases heard under summary procedure. That experiment has worked very well and the potential benefits of the experiment have been explored. The findings were that a significant reduction in witness attendance at court could be achieved if intermediate diets were held one week in advance of the trial diet. That resulted in a 50 per cent. reduction in the number of accused waiting until the trial day before pleading guilty.

At present there are abuses of the system, especially by defence lawyers, who instruct their clients to wait until the day of the trial. That abuse should be eradicated and the experiment in 1982-83 pointed the way forward, resulting in substantial savings in the time of police and civilian witnesses. Trial diets held four weeks in advance of the trial resulted in fewer accused pleading guilty at the intermediate diet.

My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) turned his attention to the important issue of police and civilian witnesses. He brought the matter to the Government's attention and Lord Fraser of Carmyllie replied dismissively to my hon. Friend some months ago in a pejorative letter. However, my hon. Friend took the matter to the Accounts Commission for Scotland and a report by the Audit Commission on police waiting time

[Mr. McFall]

published in October this year verified my hon. Friend's concern. If intermediate trial diets were pursued, police and civilian waiting time would be cut.

During the summer recess, I took the opportunity to meet the chief constable of Strathclyde, in my capacity as shadow home affairs Minister. I asked him about the waste of police time and he said, off the top of his head, that more than 50 per cent. of Strathclyde's overtime budget was spent on court attendance by police; yet in only 2 per cent. of cases were police actually called to give evidence. Police officers have been recalled from their holidays and the overtime budget has been used unnecessarily.

I shall cite as an example Glasgow High Court, which has three courts. Police officers assure me that on a Monday morning more than 100 are at the High Court. An hour later, the number is 40; an hour after that, it is 20. As well as the practice being an abuse, it is a costly exercise. It also has implications for police manning on the streets. Half the number of police who should be on the streets are wasting their time in court. If the Minister talks to police officers, that is what they will tell him. Hamilton town centre had only one policeman on a particular day because all the others were in court. That should not happen.

The Minister may say that the new clause is not technically correct, but my aim is to draw attention to a scandal. I urge him to consider the issue carefully because something must be done. If the 1982-83 experiment was successful, surely that is sufficient precedent for introducing something similar now. We have waited too long for such a provision and the new clause signals our concern. I hope that the Minister will take them seriously.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I wish to add only a sentence or two to what has been most ably said by the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall). There is no doubt that a great deal of police time is wasted in court attendance. However, the police are not always entirely innocent—there are some who quite like the notion of overtime.

In my experience as a prosecutor, I came across cases where it was made perfectly clear that sending away from court large numbers of policemen because I thought that they were unnecessary would be rather unpopular. The notion of a day spent talking to their friends while being paid overtime was one that some officers, but not all, found attractive. There is always a risk in relying on anecdotal evidence. Much more fundamental is the point made by the hon. Gentleman about the proper and effective use of police resources being absolutely essential.

Earlier today, during Scottish questions, the Minister said that Strathclyde region was 181 police officers short, and he attributed responsibility for that to the regional council. I must tell him that the consequences of a shortage of 181 officers would be substantially mitigated if far more effective use was made of the time of those officers in position. The need for a proper approach to the problem has never been greater.

The Government protest their desire to do something, but the apoplectic—sometimes justifiable—response of chief constables is that the effectiveness of the forces under their command is being prejudiced by the time officers spend at court. We must take a radical approach if we are to make inroads into the problem. It may involve the Crown being rather more forthcoming about its evidence, endeavouring to put the defence into the same position with knowledge of the weight of the case against an accused person as the Crown is at the time that it decides to take proceedings. The proposals may appear revolutionary to Crown officials, but if as a consequence there is a much more effective use of police time, and provided that there is nothing contrary to the interests of justice, the proposals must be explored.

My concern about the precise terms of the new clause is that subsection (2) would empower the court to

"ask the prosecutor and the accused any question for the purposes mentioned in subsection (1) above."

That relates to

"(a) the state of preparation of the prosecutor and of the accused with respect to their cases; and

(b) whether the accused intends to adhere to the plea of not guilty."

If that power were exercised responsibly, it would not cause difficulty. However, if it were exercised irresponsibly, it could result in the disclosure of information that might be prejudicial to the conduct of a proper defence for the accused.

I would have some difficulty in supporting the new clause in its precise terms, but I have no difficulty in supporting the general thrust of the argument of the hon. Member for Dumbarton, who put the matter succinctly and persuasively. I hope that he has persuaded the Minister.

Dr. Godman: I, too, am deeply concerned about the shortage of uniformed police officers in Strathclyde. For some considerable time I have argued that Greenock and Port Glasgow needs another 25 uniformed police officers on the streets to deal with violent crime and other criminal activities. If the number of officers was increased, the crime statistics would show some decline, rather than climbing month after month.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said that some police officers liked to sit around spinning yarns with their colleagues in the adjuncts to our courts. That is something that concerns many people. I have a letter from the honorary secretary of the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents on precisely that point. It is dated 3 December and is signed by Chief Superintendent Jack Urquhart. I am sure that, if he was here, he would be listening carefully to what hon. Members have to say on the important matter of the waste of police time in court, which the new clause is intended to tackle.

Mr. Urquhart wrote:

"At our Executive Meeting held on 2 December members asked me to contact you regarding the report published on 30 November by the Accounts Commission for Scotland. This issue has been of serious concern to the Scottish Police Service for the past ten years due to the enormous amount of police time taken up with court attendance, the vast majority of which is unproductive."

That point has been made during the debate. Mr. Urquhart continued:

"Worse than that, the Report shows that the annual cost of police witness duty is now £8 million. Only one in five officers cited actually gives evidence and only 2 per cent. of their time is spent in the witness box."

That complaint was raised by senior police officers referring to the Accounts Commission for Scotland report. The Minister must heed their warnings and misgivings.

The honorary secretary's letter goes on to say:

"As you no doubt appreciate with police resources already being scarce, the situation is serious with a tremendous waste of money which could be better spent on operational policing overtime."

The executive committee of the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents makes a serious point. We need uniformed police officers on our streets. If they are to work overtime, it will be much more productive if it is spent on the streets than wasted sitting around spinning yarns or chewing the fat in our court buildings.

6 pm

The letter highlights the loss of officers from our streets, which must be an important consideration, and says:

"The police service has done as much as it can to organise its own arrangement to minimise abstractions to court by releasing police statements to the defence"—

as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East said—

"arranging for officers to be on standby for court where possible, improving the quality of police reports, reducing the number of police witnesses in cases".

The new clause deals with some of the problems attendant on officers being called to court. The Accounts Commission for Scotland report says:

"Each day 700 police officers attend court to give evidence in criminal cases going to trial but only one in five of these officers actually gives evidence."

That is a disgraceful state of affairs. Whether the Minister accepts the new clause or not, the Government must pay much more serious attention to that wastage of police time, particularly given the growing violence on our streets.

My constituency has suffered a number of murders this year. I shall not say that those murders could have been averted with more officers on the street, but some street or casual crimes could have been avoided were more police officers on the street rather than sitting in the sheriff court or in courts elsewhere.

I should be interested to know how many officers from Greenock had to attend the recent High Court case in Glasgow, which ran for 19 days. The Minister knows the case; it involved the murder of a constituent of mine in Dundaff road in Greenock. Were all those officers called as witnesses? I suspect that they were not and that much overtime money was wasted on their attending that court.

The final paragraph of the report deals with that grievous matter and says:

"The administration of justice is a complex matter involving delicate issues and for maintenance of appropriate checks and balances. The Commission recognises that others are more appropriately placed to weigh the current operation of those checks and balances to ensure that the public interest is being safeguarded. This report highlights . . . a deteriorating picture in regard to police time spent at court on witness duty."

The report says that the position is worsening literally each week. It goes on to say:

"It is the Government's wish to provide the public reassurance that flows from having police officers visibly 'on the beat'."

They cannot be on the beat if they are stuck in a court building, knowing in most instances that they will not even be called to give evidence. It has been suggested that that might please some police officers, but I believe that the overwhelming majority of officers of all ranks would rather be doing the job on the street and looking after their local communities.

The last sentence of the report reads:

"The findings of this report suggest that this desire"—

placing more police officers visibly on the beat—

"is being frustrated by current practices which impact adversely on front line policing resources."

Despite the reservations expressed by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East, the new clause makes a valiant attempt to tackle that problem full square, whereas the Government appear to be tackling it only half-heartedly. It is of considerable concern to the Police Federation of Scotland, as was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) in Committee.

The letter from the honorary secretary to the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents shows that the police want answers. The chief superintendents and superintendents in day-to-day control of policing operations want their officers on the streets, not wasting time in court. The Minister should react sensibly, realistically and usefully to the new clause.

Mr. McMaster: I shall be brief, because the case has already been eloquently made by those hon. Members who have spoken. I endorse the amendment. If there are technical difficulties with it, I endorse at least its general thrust.

The subject has been a bee in my bonnet for some months. Until now, I simply had a feeling that a lot of police time was being wasted in Scottish courts, but in the past couple of weeks my suspicion has been backed up by the Accounts Commission, which has expressed its grave concern about the matter.

There are many reasons for the situation. For instance, the citizens charter says that hospital appointments must be staggered throughout the day, rather than all for 9 am; yet the same does not apply to courts, where all the police and witnesses are told to turn up at 9.45 am. Another problem is plea bargaining, with which the amendment deals. Plea bargaining has always gone on and will always go on, but it should not happen at the last minute, as it does now. Police and other witnesses are called to court, but then find that they are not needed that day. That can happen several times. The fact that that problem exists is backed up by the Accounts Commissioner.

I wrote to the Minister of State in another place about that problem some months ago and my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) referred to the reply that I received. To say that the Minister of State's answer was dismissive of the problem and of the need for a solution would be an understatement: it is the most unpleasant letter that I have ever received from a Minister. He said that the very idea that there was a problem was facile and unenlightening, but he has been left with egg on his face because the Accounts Commission now says that the problem is one of grave concern. I wonder how a man who is not only a Minister of State but a former Lord Advocate managed to arrive at such a conclusion.

At Scottish Question Time today, the Minister referred to the success of Operation Dove in my constituency, but there have been 12 murders in K division of Strathclyde police this year, and both violent and non-violent crime are increasing. Elderly people are afraid to go out at night, and are now becoming afraid to stay in. That happens throughout Scotland—at the same time as 700 police officers are kept in court on any day, of whom only 140 will be called to give evidence while the rest sit about the court needlessly. On average, 30 per cent. of a day shift of police

[Mr. McMaster]

officers is not on the streets but in court; yet only 2 per cent. of the time will be spent giving evidence—all at a cost of £8 million.

The police are keen to keep as many officers on the streets as they can, and they go through all sorts of administrative mechanisms to achieve that. One of the methods is to ask police officers to go on the beat on their day off and to fund that through the overtime budget. If Operation Dove was a success, it was because police officers were on the streets of Paisley when they were needed, late on Friday and Saturday nights. Instead of being spent on such measures, the overtime budget is spent dragging police officers out of Greenock, Dumbarton and Glasgow to police the streets of Paisley.

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that, while Operation Dove was a great success in the Paisley area, it was only a temporary measure? He rightly said that this was achieved only by taking acting officers from other areas, thus leaving those areas vulnerable. No new funds were found to finance the operation and no more officers were employed. As we have heard, officers were redeployed in courts when they were desperately needed on the streets. We need a permanent solution to the problem, with more policemen permanently on the streets, more policemen employed and more money for the regional council. The council has been putting civilians into stations to do administrative work, thereby releasing officers to active duty, but we must stop playing about with figures and find that permanent solution.

Mr. McMaster: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The trouble with projects such as Operation Dove, as opposed to permanent solutions such as that offered by the new clause, is that if police officers are taken from other divisions to police a problem in Paisley, it will achieve that result, but then police officers from Paisley will be sent elsewhere and the problem will return. The new clause offers a more sensible solution.

Mr. McFall: Will my hon. Friend accept that those are the comments of the chief constable of Strathclyde? Furthermore, there are different social patterns now, with, for example, late night dancing in discos. I speak from experience, as I have teenage children who knock me up at 5 o'clock on a Sunday morning because they have lost their keys. As more young people are on the streets at that time of the morning, my chief superintendent has to deploy his police officers then, thereby denuding the force operating during the day. Taking such issues into consideration, my hon. Friend is correct, and the experience in Paisley is mirrored in Dumbarton and elsewhere.

Mr. McMaster: That is correct. The chief constable can only deploy the available resources. Every time we write to the Minister about a police matter, we are told that it is for the chief constable, but if the only solution that the Government can offer is to take police officers from one division and put them into another, we shall never achieve anything. That is simply chasing the problem from one place to another.

I agree with almost all that the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said, but I do not agree with his remark that sometimes police like being in court because that enhances their overtime payments. I have spoken to police officers who are fed up with the amount of time they spend hanging around courts. I rather suspect that solicitors also like the extra time that they spend in court.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I am not a solicitor, so I cannot answer for that profession. I should not like it to be thought either by the hon. Gentleman or by the House that I made a blanket charge in respect of police officers. I hoped that I had made it clear that, on occasion, from time to time, officers were not unamenable to the idea of spending time in court, on overtime, waiting to give evidence, rather than being out doing their other work. I suspect that that is true only of a small proportion of them, and I should not like too much significance to be attached to it.

6.15 pm

Mr. McMaster: I accept that. The hon. and learned Gentleman will have noted that I took great care to say "solicitors" and not "QCs", because those of us in the Whips office have to be careful about making accusations against Scottish QCs. I intend to hang on to my job at least until Christmas.

The new clause offers a partial solution to the problem of crime in Scotland because it would help to get police officers back on the streets, where people want them to be. If we did a survey tomorrow of the issues that people think affect them most in Scotland, crime would be in the top five. More and more, people are recognising that there has been a 600 per cent. increase in crime since the Government came to power and that a crime happens every 30 seconds, and they want something done about it. —*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) laughs. Perhaps he suspects that I have managed to stay in order but yet to make a political speech—as if I would. Crime affects all Scotland, and I commend the new clause to the House because it offers a partial solution to that problem.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A large number of points have been made, but the general view has been that far too much police time is spent in court and that it is extremely desirable that that time should be reduced. Procurators fiscal are under instructions to make every effort to achieve that purpose whenever possible.

It is a fundamental police duty to attend court to give evidence, but this should be done efficiently with officers spending as little time as possible away from operational duties. We want to make the best use of valuable police resources. The report by the Commission on Local Authority Accounts in Scotland published helpful indicators as to how valuable resources might be put to best use. It is encourgaging to note that measures are already in hand which should contribute significantly to reducing the time that witnesses have to spend at court.

The report comments on police duty rosters. That matter is being considered within the context of the inquiry into police responsibilities and rewards being conducted by Sir Patrick Sheehy.

The hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. MacFall) mentioned the 1982-83 experiment, which he said was successful. Although 50 per cent. of the cases went off at intermediate diet, most of those cases were adjourned, or

a warrant was taken for the arrest of the accused. This meant that the witnesses had to come back on a subsequent occasion. Fiscals are now giving copies of police statements to the defence, and there is an experiment in Paisley in doing exactly the same with civilian witness statements. It is hoped that this and other initiatives, coupled with intermediate diets, might assist the position. What is certain is that the provisions of schedule 3 on business evidence will be a great help to prosecutors in avoiding the citing of witnesses who do not speak to the essentials of a case.

The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) said that plea bargaining should be kept to a minimum. Ideally, the defence solicitor would approach the Crown with an offer for a plea at an early stage. However, they are dependent on their clients' instructions and, regrettably, I have to say from my experience that often instructions are forthcoming only once it is known that prosecution witnesses are present and the case can therefore be proved. I wish that it were different, but that is how it is.

There is already a permissive power to hold intermediate diets before summary trials. It was introduced by the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980. However, the new procedure fell into disuse in most courts in Scotland because it was found to be ineffective in fulfilling its purpose of identifying adjournments and guilty pleas in advance. I agree with hon. Members that a preliminary procedure such as this has the potential to secure improvements in these areas, but plainly the existing practice has not worked. Accordingly, it would not be sensible to make an ineffective procedure mandatory. That would simply waste more court time and result in a worse service to the public.

However, I can offer hope of improvement. The Scottish Courts Administration is supporting a review of court programming by groups under the chairmanship of Sheriff Principal Nicholson and Sheriff Cox. Part of the review involves experiments to establish an effective form of intermediate diet within the existing legislation. I am sure that the courts themselves will wish to make use of their existing powers. One court, Airdrie, has already reintroduced intermediate diets as a result of a successful experiment. Moreover, we shall be considering in the light of the conclusions of the review whether improvements can be made in the statutory framework which will result in intermediate diets fulfilling their purpose more successfully, but any proposals arising from that will be for another Bill.

I invite the hon. Gentleman not to press the new clause and to wait until the review is completed.

Mr. McFall: I thank the Minister for his reply. He will be aware of the concern of practitioners about this issue. Only a few weeks ago, Ian Hamilton QC expressed great concern about it. There was a photograph of him in the *Glasgow Herald* in full motorbike gear, saying that the system is crumbling. I am sure that his comments are echoed in many other parts of the Scottish legal system. As a result of his statement, I tabled a number of parliamentary questions asking how many cases involved plea bargaining. The Minister's rather unhelpful reply was that answering the question would involve disproportionate cost.

The Minister acknowledges that the system is not working. I do not believe that a committee comprising a sheriff principal and a sheriff gets to the heart of the problem. The Minister will know that a criminal justice commission in England and Wales has already reported. Why should not Scotland have such a commission to look into all these issues? It could examine all the deficiencies of the legal system. Setting up such a commission would be universally welcomed in legal circles.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is much more sensible to go ahead with the review, which will report before long. At that stage we can see what further measures are needed. New clause 6 would make mandatory a procedure which, so far, the courts have found ineffective. We are trying to devise a more effective intermediate diet procedure, so this is not the time to introduce a mandatory requirement.

Mr. McFall: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 3

POWER TO RELEASE PRISONERS ON COMPASSIONATE GROUNDS

Mr. McFall: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 3, line 27, at end insert—

'(1A) If the Secretary of State is satisfied that there are no compassionate grounds which would justify the release of a person on licence he shall inform that person of his decision and the reasons for that decision as soon as practicably possible.'.

The amendment would add a new subsection to clause 3, requiring the Secretary of State to give reasons for a decision not to release a prisoner on compassionate grounds. The clause allows the Secretary of State to release a prisoner if he is satisfied that there are compassionate reasons for so doing. If he refuses to release him, the prisoner has no means of discovering the reasons for the refusal and no means of requiring the decision to be reviewed. The amendment is necessary to make the Secretary of State accountable for his decision.

I remember a Labour party working group, under the auspices of Lord Macaulay of Bragar, looking into the criminal justice system and asking prisoners about their anxieties. Their main concern was not their physical conditions, although often they were not up to standard; what they were worried about was the lack of communication in the prison between governor, prison officers and prisoners. Prisoners feel vulnerable and isolated, and if the Secretary of State is not obliged to give reasons, that will serve only to heighten prisoners' fears.

It is surely not asking too much for the Secretary of State to be made accountable for his decisions in the form of a written response. The Minister remarked in Committee that the giving of reasons by the Secretary of State should be a "matter of good practice". We maintain that it should be enshrined in statute.

The suggested remedy—of a judicial review in the event that the Secretary of State does not provide reasons—is unduly cumbersome. I invite the comments of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on this. This remedy would be time-consuming and expensive. It would be much more economical and efficient if the Secretary of State were made to give his reasons in writing.

Dr. Godman: I support the amendment. If a decision is made to reject an application for release on licence on compassionate grounds, the reason for that decision

[Dr. Godman]

should be conveyed to the applicant as quickly as possible. There is nothing worse for prisoners than being kept waiting for weeks before hearing about such decisions.

Will the Minister assure me that these decisions will be conveyed to prisoners as quickly as possible? I know that decisions by the parole board used to take an interminable time to reach prisoners. I know that there are difficulties —the massive work load imposed on members of the board, and the work undertaken by the local review committees—but I have known of prisoners waiting for more than two months before parole board decisions reached them. There should be no delays in matters of this kind.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: When one man holds the power of liberty over the life of another, that power must surely be exercised reasonably, responsibly and with sensitivity. If the Secretary of State concludes that an applicant for release on licence cannot be released on compassionate grounds, it is only right and proper that the person, he or she, whose liberty is being denied should be told why. It is a simple proposition needing no elaboration. The Government claim to be in favour of more openness, so I hope that they will find it easy to accept.

6.30 pm

Mr. Hood: I agree with the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) that the amendment is not meant as a criticism of the incumbent of the office of Secretary of State; it is designed to make the decisions of the Secretary of State more publicly accountable.

I am concerned about the way in which the powers relating to licences and their withdrawal have been exercised. I do not wish to repeat all that I said on Second Reading, but the case of one of my constituents is worth considering.

George Beatty was released after 13 years in prison, but six years later he was pulled back into prison to serve the rest of his life sentence on the basis of a spurious allegation that he had kicked a social worker. When the case went to court, that accusation was withdrawn, but was replaced with a charge of breach of the peace and, lo and behold, George Beatty was pulled back into prison. It would be awful and disgraceful for that to happen to anyone, but that case is even more disgraceful because everyone, except someone high up in the judiciary, believes that that man is innocent.

On Second Reading, I spoke with some hesitation about this case because I was concerned about the sensitivities of the family of the victim who George Beatty was found guilty of murdering some 13 years ago. However, I have now been informed that the family do not believe that he murdered their daughter. Compelling reasons now suggest that there was no evidence to convict him of that crime.

I am sure that the reasons for the conviction will come out in the future. I hope that that will happen soon, because, until then, George Beatty will be in prison in Edinburgh. His case should concern not only parliamentarians but everyone in our country, because what happened to him could happen to anyone. That innocent man was convicted of a crime, yet the evidence shows that he could not have committed it. The judicial system has closed ranks on him and he is now faced with the full power of the establishment.

I hope that, in the end, justice will be done, because there is no reason why George Beatty should be kept in prison. I hope that the Secretary of State will allow his appeal to be heard quickly. When the opportunity comes to examine all the evidence, I am absolutely convinced that it will be found that George Beatty was wrongly convicted and imprisoned. For that reason, I support the spirit of the amendment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I must tell the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) that I do not propose to discuss in detail individual cases that have been the subject of meetings between him and the Minister of State. The issue of the recall of released life prisoners is not strictly relevant to clause 3, and the issue of any possible miscarriage of justice is even less pertinent to the debate. However, I will draw my right hon. and learned Friend's attention to the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

I can assure the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) that decisions on compassionate release will be communicated without delay. Normally the Secretary of State is limited by the parole board's timetable of meetings, but clause 3 allows the Secretary of State to make a decision without consulting the board in cases of urgency. That will happen as necessary.

As I made clear earlier in our proceedings, I am fully in accord with the spirit underlying the amendment. Our aim, as I indicated then, is that every prisoner should be kept fully informed of any decisions which affect him, and should have the reasons for such decisions explained to him. I suspect that, when a similar amendment was suggested in Committee, I may not have made the Government's policy sufficiently clear.

If a prisoner puts forward arguments in favour of his or her compassionate release, the Secretary of State will consider them very carefully in the light of medical, social work and prison reports. If the Secretary of State concludes that compassionate release is unjustified, when he informs the prisoner of that decision, he will state his reasons for it. If the prisoner is dissatisfied with those reasons, he or she may make further representations to the Secretary of State. If there is a change in the prisoner's health or circumstances, the Secretary of State will be prepared to review the case again.

I mentioned the question of judicial review in Committee, but judicial review will of course be a last resort for a prisoner who has exhausted all the administrative avenues of recourse. Our intention is to give reasons administratively when the decision is communicated to the prisoner. This will enable the prisoner to question the reasons if he or she wishes to do so and recourse to the courts would—as I said—be available if the Secretary of State appeared to be acting unlawfully in refusing release. Against this background, the amendment is unnecessary, and I hope that it will not be pressed.

Mr. McFall: In Committee, the Minister was not agreeable to our amendment, because we asked for the Secretary of State to give reasons for his decision. Given what the Minister has just said, however, is it the case that the Secretary of State will give reasons to the prisoner and that therefore there will be no need for an application for a judicial review? Such an application is made when the

Secretary of State does not provide the reasons for his refusal to release a prisoner, but it now appears that the Secretary of State will provide those reasons. Am I correct in that assumption? If so, the Minister is accepting the spirit of our amendment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The reasons will be given. As I said in Committee, in the previous Parliament I had to look at one case extremely carefully. I wanted to release the prisoner in question, but when I looked at all the circumstances—he had killed a young child—I did not feel that the risk to the public justified his release.

In some cases, the Secretary of State may be considering the release of a prisoner because that prisoner is very ill. However, he may not know how ill he is and the Secretary of State may not necessarily want to inform him, at an early stage, of the extent of that illness.

I can assure hon. Members that reasons for a decision will be given, so the spirit of the amendment will be met.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I do not want to interfere with the sense of agreement that is now evident between members of the Government and Opposition Front Benches. However, I am sure that the Minister will agree that one must be careful to point out that if an application for judicial review is successful that does not have the effect of producing reasons for a decision; it has the effect of quashing the Minister's decision. In other words, one is then back in the position that existed the moment before the Minister took that decision. The furnishing of reasons is separate and distinct, but it may be—this is where agreement has broken out—that the furnishing of reasons may, of itself, be enough to dissuade people from embarking upon the more complicated procedure of judicial review.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. McFall: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 4

Persons detained under Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984

Mr. McFall: I beg to move amendment No. 2 in page 5, line 11, leave out

'a report is furnished in respect of him under subsection (9) below'

and insert

'an application for admission under Section 18 of this Act has been approved by the sheriff and made in accordance with Part V of this Act.'.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 3, in page 5, leave out lines 20 to 35.

No. 4, in page 5, leave out lines 36 to 46.

Government amendment No. 14.

Mr. McFall: The amendment would ensure that clause 4 is amended so that the regular procedures under the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 apply to detainees under the Immigration Act 1971.

We tabled the amendments for a number of reasons, but our principal concern is the provision for continued detention following the expiry of sentence. We see no reason why the normal procedures under section 18 should not apply in such circumstances, operating under the same criteria and offering the protection of an application to a sheriff. The proposals contain broader criteria, and only a right of appeal to the sheriff.

Our anxieties would become crucial in, for instance, the case of a person with language or mental difficulties who had been detained under immigration provisions. Such a person would be unlikely to understand that he or she had a right of appeal, and would surely be dealt with more appropriately under the procedure governing a section 18 application to the sheriff.

The recent statutory amendments to detention procedures should eliminate concern about transitional difficulties on expiry of sentence, and thus strengthen the argument that the normal procedure should apply following expiry.

We were not convinced by the arguments advanced by the Minister in Committee.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am happy to concede that, when a prisoner has been transferred to a mental hospital under both a transfer direction and a restriction direction, and when the date has arrived on which that prisoner would otherwise have been released from prison, the person concerned should from that point on be treated in exactly the same way as a person who has been admitted to hospital under civil rather than criminal procedures. Indeed, my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and I have made much the same point in relation to clause 4 at earlier stages. I would, however, be reluctant to go as far as is proposed in amendments Nos. 2, 3 and 4.

It should be borne in mind that the provisions that we are considering tend to relate to only a small number of longer-term prisoners who require to be transferred to hospital because of serious mental disorder. Where a prisoner is serving a short sentence, or has only a short period of a longer sentence still to serve on the date on which he is transferred to hospital, it is unlikely that a restriction direction will be made. Where the prisoner's mental disorder is not such as to require long-term treatment, it is unlikely that he will be detained in hospital for very long, or that the responsible medical officer will consider that continued detention in hospital is necessary.

What is envisaged in amendments Nos. 2, 3 and 4 therefore seems somewhat unrealistic. The person concerned may have been detained in hospital for several years, and may in that time have made one or more unsuccessful appeals to the sheriff to be discharged. At the time in question, it will appear evident to all concerned —including the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland —that the person's continued detention in hospital will be necessary for a further period.

Finally, the patient himself may not wish to contest the grounds for his continued detention. Nevertheless, it is proposed that there should be a formal application to the sheriff to obtain authority for that continued detention, as though the patient were being admitted direct from the community.

Dr. Godman: When a person is transferred to a mental hospital, will the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland maintain a monitoring role? Will the Minister also assure us that he is entirely confident that no such persons who are detained in mental hospitals anywhere in

[Dr. Godman]

Scotland would have been released long ago if they had stayed in prison for the duration of their sentences? May we have an assurance that no such person has been detained for longer than his original prison sentence?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall have to check on the second point; it is possible that a person has remained in a mental hospital because he has become very ill. In answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question, I can tell him that the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland will have the monitoring role to which he referred.

I think that I can reassure the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) about Immigration Act detainees. In their case, subsections (9) and (10) of new section 74 will not apply, and an application under section 18 of the 1984 Act will be necessary to secure their continued detention.

In my view, there is no need to involve the sheriff unless a patient wishes to contest the grounds of his continued detention. Provision must, of course, be made for the patient to have that opportunity, and such provision is made in lines 42 to 46 on page 5. The effect of those words is that a patient whose detention in hospital is continued under subsections (9) and (10) has the right to appeal to the sheriff at any time during the following six months —that being the period for which the authority for his detention is renewed.

In the light of that, I do not think that anything would be achieved by amendments Nos. 2, 3 and 4 except more and unnecessary work for the sheriff and for solicitors representing patients. There is, however, a reasonable change which could be made, and which I am happy to propose to meet the purpose of the amendments to some extent.

6.45 pm

I think that we all agree that, when the day arrives on which a transferred prisoner would have been released from prison, there should thereafter be no distinction between him and other patients who have been detained with the sheriff's approval. It may be said that the existing provisions do not quite achieve that result, because they provide that, on the substitution of fresh authority for his detention, the patient is to be treated as if he had been admitted in pursuance of a hospital order. That would, in effect, mean a continuing distinction between the patient concerned and others who are admitted in pursance of an application to the sheriff. Government amendment No. 14 is intended to remove that distinction.

I hope that Opposition Members will recognise that I seek to take on board the point of their amendments as far as I can, and that they will support amendment No. 14 rather than pressing amendments Nos. 2, 3 and 4.

Mr. McFall: I thank the Minister for his assurances. None the less, I submit that the notional right of appeal is not the same as the procedure under section 18 of the 1984 Act. I feel that the difference in character between the court's scrutiny under section 18 and an appeal to the sheriff should be recognised. In view of the Minister's positive response to the spirit of our amendment, however, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: No. 14, in page 5, line 38, leave out from 'had' to '; but' in line 41 and insert

', on the date on which the restriction direction ceased to have effect, been admitted to the hospital in pursuance of an application for admission'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 14

SUPERVISED RELEASE OF SHORT-TERM PRISONERS

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 15, in page 12, line 15, leave out from 'with' to 'for' in line 16 and insert—

'(1) such requirements as are specified in the order; and
(ii) such requirements as that officer may reasonably specify,'.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With this we may take amendment No. 5, in page 12, line 38, after 'person', insert

'and if requested to do so by that person, to his legal representative, if any,'.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As originally drafted, the provisions in clause 14 would have obliged a person subject to a supervised release order to comply with such requirements as are specified in the order by the court and, subsequently, by the supervising officer.

I was happy to accept an amendment moved in Committee by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) which inserted the word "reasonable" as a qualification in respect of such requirements. I still believe that all the requirements specified in or by virtue of a supervised release order should be reasonable; I am now persuaded, however, that a statutory reference to reasonableness is necessary only in relation to requirements specified by the supervising officer.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill for drawing attention to the matter. I hope that she and her hon. Friends will be satisfied that what we now propose accords with the spirit of the amendment that she moved in Committee.

Mr. McFall: I thank the Minister for his letter to me about this point, dated 12 November 1992. He has written to me regularly about the Bill, and I have found all his letters helpful.

We intend to press amendment No. 5, because we think that a solicitor should be provided with a copy of the supervised released order. In Committee, the Minister argued that the clerk of the court could not send a copy of the order to a prisoner's solicitor as a matter of course, because if a client wanted a solicitor to obtain a copy, he could

"make that clear to the relevant authorities."—*[Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee;* 5 November 1992, c. 78.]

That is the purpose of the amendment, and I commend it to the House.

Dr. Godman: I have a brief question about amendment No. 10. Can a person who challenges a reasonable requirement that is laid upon him by a probation officer obtain legal advice? I appreciate that a social worker or probation officer must be sensible and reasonable when imposing requirements on someone who is released under licence, but has the person any right of appeal? I do not recall that question being answered in Committee.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I should first answer the question about amendment No. 5. I listened carefully to

the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), and I read with interest the explanation for the amendment that was sent to me by the Law Society of Scotland. I have every sympathy with solicitors whose clients fail to keep in touch with them, but I regret to say that the amendment would not help and I believe it to be unnecessary.

So far as I am aware, solicitors have no difficulty in obtaining copies of papers that the clerk of court is required to send to their clients; they merely have to ask. That arrangement applies to a vast range of orders and other papers. It would not be wise to insert a statutory provision in relation to one kind of order in isolation.

The point that the Law Society has in mind is that, by receiving a copy of the supervised release order, the solicitor will find out which local authority or justices have been designated for the purposes of the order. That is not so. The designation of a local authority or justices for the purposes of the order is to be a matter for the Secretary of State shortly before the prisoner is released under clause 14(4). The order will give no hint of where the prisoner intends to reside after he is released.

Since amendment No. 5 would not assist solicitors, I suggest that it should not be pressed.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 17

Revocation of licence

Mr. McFall: I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 16, line 26, after 'he', insert 'and his legal representative'.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 7, in page 16, line 31, at end insert—

'(3A) Where the Secretary of State has made a reference to the Parole Board in terms of subsection (3) above he shall inform the person recalled under subsection (1)(a)(i) who makes representations under subsection (2) above or is recalled under subsection (1)(a)(ii) above of the reference to the Parole Board and that he and his legal representatives have the right to make representations to the Parole Board in respect of the recall.'.

Mr. McFall: Amendments Nos. 6 and 7 would make two changes to clause 17. Amendment No. 6 would ensure that a recalled prisoner may make representations through his solicitor, and amendment No. 7 would ensure that the Secretary of State informs a recalled person about a reference to the parole board and about his or her right to make representations to the board.

Clause 17 establishes a regime for the revocation of a licence and recall to prison. Revocation and recall can take place in respect of long-term or life prisoners if the parole board has made such a recommendation or if the Secretary of State considers it necessary in the public interest. The prisoner has a right to make representations to the Secretary of State and our amendment provides that the representations may also be made by the recalled prisoner's solicitor. The Secretary of State is obliged to refer certain cases to the parole board under clause 17(3). It is possible that the prisoner will not be aware of such a reference. The amendment obliges the Secretary of State to inform the prisoner about the reference and to ensure that he knows that he can be represented at the board.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I was aware in Committee that I had not fully persuaded the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) that the amendments are unnecessary. I am happy to have this further opportunity to explain why I believe that to be so.

The amendments appear to reflect some misunderstanding of what happens when a prisoner who is released on licence is recalled to custody, especially as regards the purpose of referral to the parole board and the time scale involved. The purpose of referral is to give the board an opportunity to consider the circumstances that led to the recall and the question of re-release. The board may decide that the prisoner should not be re-released. Alternatively, it may decide that the prisoner should be released immediately. In the latter case, the Secretary of State has no option but to re-release. In the interests of the prisoner, referral to the board is effected as soon as possible. In practice, cases are usually referred to the board between two and four weeks after recall, depending on the date of the board's next meeting and the time that the prisoner requires to make representations.

The statutory requirements in clause 17(2) is that, on his return to prison, the prisoner be informed of the reasons for his recall and that he has the right to make written representations to the Secretary of State. I accept that some prisoners may need to have it explained to them that the right to make representations does not preclude them from making such representations to a third party such as a solicitor. I assure the House that a prisoner who is recalled will be fully informed of his rights and of the assistance that is available to him. Amendment No.6 is therefore unnecessary.

Representations made to the Secretary of State by the prisoner or by anyone else on the prisoner's behalf are automatically included in the dossier of papers referred to the board. There is therefore no need for separate representations to be made to the board, and any requirement for such separate representations would only delay the board's consideration of a case.

I hope that that explanation will persuade the hon. Member for Dumbarton that the intentions behind the amendments are founded on a misunderstanding of the recall procedure and that the rights of a recalled prisoner are adequately protected.

Mr. McFall: In the light of the Minister's assurances, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 20

The Parole Board for Scotland

Mr. McFall: I beg to move amendment No. 8, in page 18, line 26, at end insert—

'; and

(d) requiring the Board to deal with cases within such time limits as the Secretary of State may prescribe.'.

The Minister knows that we had a worthy debate on this issue in Committee. We are mindful of the fact that the Secretary of State may make rules for the proceedings of the parole board, but the amendment would permit those rules to include provisions regarding the time that the board may take to reach a decision. In the past, the board has sometimes taken too long to reach a decision. Paragraph 10 of the board's 1991 report says:

"the Board has expressed concern about the time required to complete the review of life sentence cases. The Board is

[Mr. McFall]

therefore very pleased to note that steps have been taken by the Department to reduce the time to around 10 months for the completion of reviews."

I was grateful for that, but 10 months, which is quite reasonable, could become a year or two years. Therefore, we believe that for the procedure to be efficient it must be effective. There is need for a time limit on the board's decisions and it should be written into the Bill. I know that the Minister agreed with the spirit of the amendment that we moved in Committee and agreed to reconsider the matter. This amendment brings the issue before the House again for further ministerial thought.

Dr. Godman: Although I support the amendment, I shall ask the Minister a few questions which have been prompted by observations made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), who referred to the time taken to deal with cases.

7 pm

Has the Minister reached a decision about the board and its modus operandi since the Committee stage? Has he, for example, any proposals to increase the number of its members? When I can catch his ear, may I ask him whether there have been any fresh retirements from the board or appointments to it since we met in Committee? Have any existing members of the board been reappointed?

In view of the remarks made tonight by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton and the similar comments that he made in Committee, is additional assistance to be given to officials who serve the board by way of more advanced means of dealing with the vast amount of paperwork which passes through the board's hands?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am sure that the necessary assistance will be given to officials, because I envisage that there will be more work, certainly for social workers, arising out of the Bill. I may be given further information, but I am not aware of any vacancies at the moment. The comments made in Committee by the hon. Member for Dumbarton will be borne in mind.

I am glad to be able to say that some helpful information has now been passed to me to the effect that my right hon. Friend has recently reappointed Mrs. Megan Casserly but decided not to reappoint Mr. Denis Rice. Sir Hugh Byatt and Mrs. Morris are demitting office this year. That is the up-to-date information, and I am glad that I was able to pass that on within a few moments of admitting that I was not aware of the most recent facts. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that.

Dr. Godman: I offer my compliments to the two members of the board who have recently retired, despite some less than helpful observations made about one of them by my hon. Friends. I believe that all the members of the parole board perform a valuable public duty, which should not be overlooked by hon. Members or by members of the public. I am delighted that Mrs. Megan Casserly, a distinguished social work manager, has been reappointed. Mr. Joe Scott is now chairman of the board. I said that he was a member of a large Lanarkshire mining family, but I believe that his family was involved in the steel industry in Lanarkshire.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Having seen the parole board in operation, I am aware that it does an enormous amount of work and that its cases require a great deal of study and reading.

The amendment was buried under others in Committee, so I am glad that we have been able to give it a second hearing on its own because it gives me the opportunity to explain why it is unnecessary.

In Committee the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) said that it was difficult to understand whether clause 20(4)(b) and the amendment meant the same thing or had different meanings. It is a question of interpretation, but it is not necessary to require the parole board to complete its consideration of a case within a period specified simply by length. The important factor is not how long the board takes to consider a case but when it completes its consideration in relation to the date on which the prisoner first becomes eligible for parole.

If a determinant sentence prisoner is eligible for parole on, say, 1 April next year, all the necessary consideration and procedures must be completed so that the prisoner can be told before 1 April whether he is to be released on parole then, later or not at all. The review process begins about five months before what is known as the prisoner's parole eligibility date. The board sets deadlines for the submission of papers to enable it to meet the automatic deadline which is established in each case for the parole eligibility date.

The board usually requires that the cases of determinant sentence prisoners should be referred to it at least six weeks before the date on which the prisoner becomes eligible for parole. That gives the board sufficient time in which to make a recommendation and for a favourable recommendation to be considered by the Secretary of State and acted on if the prisoner is to be released on or shortly after the date on which he becomes eligible for parole.

The board is an extremely efficient body and, like the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), I pay tribute to the work of its participants. I am not aware of any criticism of its record in meeting the deadlines imposed on it in respect of determinant sentence prisoners.

Different considerations apply to life sentence prisoners. In such cases, there is no need to impose a specific time limit on the parole board, because that would not help to accelerate what is inevitably a fairly lengthy process. The board itself has previously criticised the time taken in other parts of that process—consultation with the judiciary and consideration by the Secretary of State—but strenuous efforts have been made in recent years to achieve a speedier throughput of cases, and sustained progress has been made. The maximum time for reference of life sentence cases to the parole board has been reduced to 10 months from the date of initiation of the review, and we aim to improve on that wherever possible.

In response to the hon. Member for Dumbarton, I must point out that the Bill already enables the Secretary of State to make rules requiring cases to be dealt with at prescribed times. Nothing more is required, and the amendment would not achieve any desirable result in that limits specified by length of time would not be helpful in this context. I hope that my explanation has made that clear, and that the amendment will not be pressed.

Mr. McFall: I thank the Minister for his explanation. As he knows, the spirit of the amendment is to reduce the time taken for the reviews. I hope that the Minister will bear our comments in mind and that, in practice, the time will be reduced. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 22

PLACE OF CONFINEMENT OF PRISONERS

Mrs. Fyfe: I beg to move amendment No. 28, in page 19, line 13, at end add—

'(4) In determining which prison a prisoner should be allocated to, the Secretary of State shall have regard to the prisoner's home circumstances and access to the prison by the prisoner's family.'.

The Minister will remember our discussion in Committee. I thank him for the detailed response which he sent to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) in the past few days. He kindly let us all have a copy of that reply.

In his reply he stated that he had already introduced a scheme for long-term prisoners which became operative last July. It means that

"prisoners serving sentences of more than 2 years are given the opportunity to choose, subject to the availability of places, among a number of establishments offering appropriate levels of security."

He also said that there were opportunities for prisoners who are not considered dangerous to be considered for home leave. However, he has so far rejected legislation to enforce what our amendment calls for.

He set out his reasons in his letter. He said that the current distribution of establishments and

"the need to hold remands, males, young offenders and females separately means that it is . . . not a practical proposition to meet a requirement of nearness to family".

I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that we are asking only that he "shall have regard" to the prisoner's home circumstances and access to his family. We are far from suggesting that that is the only criterion worth considering. We agree with the Minister that a move to medium-security or open conditions may be of great benefit to the prisoner, and that it may be the right time for a prisoner to move to a less secure establishment. That might have the effect of taking the prisoner further away from his family.

However, we also suggest that in many cases, prisoners might benefit more from a move to a more open prison if in the first place they had the encouragement and support that a family could give through being close to the prison. We recognise that the distribution of prisons is not so convenient that there could be one available in half an hour's bus ride from anywhere in Scotland, but we suggest that, given the current placing of prisons, account should be taken of that difficulty.

I am sure that the Minister agrees that, if people in prison, whether male or female, have access to those near and dear to them, whoever they may be, that can only help them to get back into society, to give up the crimes for which they have been imprisoned in the first place and to restore them to decent society. Having family back-up maintained throughout long imprisonment must surely be valuable.

We agree with the Minister that the family are not necessarily those with immediate marital or blood relations. The problem of definition can easily be resolved. What is wrong with asking the prisoner himself or herself to name the people with whom he or she feels there is a close relationship? The list must not, of course, be over-extensive.

Mr. Hood: My hon. Friend makes a valuable point and I am sure that all hon. Members here understand it. This weekend I was concerned with the case of George Beatty. Although innocent, he was convicted, served a prison sentence of 13 years and is now back inside. He obviously does not have a wife. He has only a mother who lives on a state pension. The Department of Social Security is refusing assistance to allow her to visit her son, who is in prison after having been wrongly convicted. Surely that supports what my hon. Friend says.

Mrs. Fyfe: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. It is unfortunate that many people are in prison whose home circumstances are very impoverished. Their families have little money and cannot afford long journeys to visit them. Pensioners and people living on income support are especially badly placed in that regard. That is one of the reasons why we are appealing for legislation to ensure that such circumstances are taken into account.

The actions of the Department of Social Security are not, of course, the Minister's business, but we should take account of the realities in framing legislation. It is not only the length of the journey that is a problem, but the cost of the journey can put it beyond the pockets of so many families. Whether the person involved is the prisoner's mother, wife, partner or simply close friend is irrelevant. The important point is that the person who visits is someone to whom the prisoner feels close and someone from whose close contact he or she would benefit.

We called earlier for severer sentences in some circumstances, but we should never forget that a long term in prison is a drastic thing to happen to anybody. We want to try to get people to join the community again and to give up whatever crimes have put them in prison in the first place. Keeping in contact with those whom they hold near and dear will surely only help.

Mr. Gallie: I want to rectify a great wrong. In Committee, I was the only hon. Member to speak out against the inclusion of the amendment in the Bill. At that time, the Minister appeared sympathetic to it and I was critical of him for being so. I was critical because I felt that it was unnecessary to add a factor that was already considered by the authorities when a person was convicted. It is part of the process, and a sympathetic approach is taken.

I felt at that time that to legislate would mean that there was a mandatory requirement which could cause problems, because prisoners could see such a requirement as a right and would look to it as a principal justification for going to a particular location. The real reason why individuals are in prison is the protection of the public. That must be the overriding factor.

The question of the prison to which a convicted person goes could be considered, but it should not be legislated for and it should not be a mandatory requirement. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Minister has gone back on his original comments in Committee, and I hope that he sticks to his present view.

7.15 pm

Dr. Godman: I part company with the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) to some extent. When people are in prison, an immense burden is often placed on the shoulders of their families in terms of travel to and from prison for visits.

Mr. Gallie *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Godman: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. Anyone visiting Shotts prison has considerable difficulty getting to it from the centre of Shotts. If the Minister is unwilling to accept the amendment, he should at least offer some solace to the families of prisoners in those circumstances. I fully accept that there are often practical difficulties that prevent the transfer of a prisoner to a prison close to his or her home.

Some time ago, I wrote to the Minister asking for a constituent, who is serving 12 years in Perth, to be transferred to Greenock. His mother, an elderly, disabled person who is living on social security, told me that she simply could not travel to and from Perth. I do not want to identify more closely where she lives in my constituency. I asked the Minister whether he would consider such a transfer on compassionate grounds, although not for the man in question, who deserves every day of the sentence imposed on him for the crime that he committed.

However, it seems that there are establishments closer to my constituency than the one in Perth. I accept that there are difficulties about Greenock because it is a prison designated for short-term prisoners, although there are two or three prisoners there who are serving immensely long sentences.

The Minister could take measures that would make life easier for the families of prisoners rather than for the prisoners themselves. I am also glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) stressed the need to take account of the prisoners' concerns.

Not so long ago, a constituent of mine came to see me with a request that her son be transferred closer to the lower Clyde. Unwittingly, I simply accepted that that was also her son's wish. I then received an indignant letter from the laddie concerned saying that he did not want to move to Greenock, not because of its Member of Parliament, but because he wanted to keep away from his family. I had a rather difficult interview with his mother afterwards. The interests of the prisoner must have primacy. The Minister can improve matters. I have asked a number of times for the creation of a visitors' committee at Greenock. I know that I am straying out of line, and I shall not expand the point further. However, in terms of controlling the inevitable tensions and turbulences in our prisons, the Government must show some concern for the issues arising directly from the amendment.

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman has made the point that I was trying to make. The system already allows people such as him to write or make representations to the Minister on behalf of a prisoner. The system tends to treat applicants sympathetically and, where possible, meet their demands. I am sugesting that that is already happening and should not be a mandatory requirement.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his characteristically courteous intervention. I have, perhaps, more experience of such matters than some hon. Members, as it appears that a depressingly large number of my constituents are at present incarcerated in prison.

Mr. Gallie: It might affect the hon. Gentleman's majority.

Dr. Godman: There are not enough of them to affect my majority at the next election. If they were all released tomorrow and there was an election a month later—for which I devoutly pray—it would not affect my not insubstantial majority.

It is a serious matter, particularly for elderly women who exist on social security, and who find it enormously difficult to travel to, for example, that appallingly grim place at Peterhead—all prisons are grim, but that must be the grimmest of the lot in Scotland—or to Saughton in Edinburgh. They have to suffer the indignity of appealing for funds from the local benefits agency, as we are now supposed to call it. I believe that, in many cases, the families of prisoners would benefit enormously if the prisoners were not held so far from home.

I think that Greenock prison is for short-term prisoners —those serving up to and including 18 months. There are a handful of long-term prisoners in the establishment whom I have met—as a visitor I hasten to add. I spent an afternoon there, although I know that the hon. Member for Ayr would like me to have stayed longer.

It is an important amendment, and even if the Minister cannot see fit to accept it because of the reasons put forward by the hon. Member for Ayr, I hope that when requests are made for transfers, they are treated sympathetically and expeditiously. That is not always the case now.

Not everyone will visit their Member of Parliament asking for a request to be passed on to the relevant Minister for a daughter or son be placed in an establishment closer to home. Some people will be much too diffident to come to our surgeries with such requests. For a start, they will feel it shameful to have a son or daughter in prison.

I want the Minister to treat the subject with great sympathy, and not merely in relation to transfers within Scotland. Those of us with constituents in prisons south of the border—in my case just a handful—would like sympathetic consideration to be given to bringing those prisoners home. By "home" I mean prisons in Scotland that are not as far away from their homes.

There is much to be done to improve visitor facilities in prisons. The state of affairs at Greenock prison is nothing short of a scandal, but I am not certain that it is much better at Shotts, Edinburgh, Perth or elsewhere. Much needs to be done for the families of prisoners.

Mr. McFall: I have been provoked into speaking by the comments of the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), although he does not normally provoke me to do so. If I thought for a minute that the Minister was agreeing with the sentiments originally expressed by the hon. Member for Ayr, I would force a Division. However, I was gratified to read in his letter to me of 14 December 1992 that he took our concerns seriously. I am delighted to note that he has had discussions with the chief executive of the prison service on the matter.

The issue of prisoners and their families is extremely important. If we wish to promote the rehabilitation of prisoners and reintroduce them into society, we must

consider their family context. In many cases, women will be left on their own to bring up children, and support and encourage their husbands in prison. If we wish to reduce the prison population it is extremely important that we consider the position of the families. Therefore, I am glad that the Minister has recognised our considerations and stated that the spirit of his letter will be maintained. That being the case, I see no reason for us to press the amendment to a Division.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall reply only briefly as I have already written to hon. Members. We had full discussions on the matter and wanted, if we could, to provide the House with a suitable amendment. We concluded that it would be impractical for several reasons. Cornton Vale is the only women's prison and could not meet the requirement were it to be written into statute. There is a protection unit at Peterhead for prisoners who are liable to be attacked by other prisoners so they could not take advantage of the terms proposed. Similarly, those who are to be held in open conditions can go to Penninghame or Noranside, and we would not want to deprive them of that opportunity.

Prisoners serving more than two years are now entitled to choose from among a range of long-term establishment subject only to the availability of place. The Scottish prison service is working to improve visiting facilities where possible and is also reviewing arrangements for home leave to see whether more prisoners can benefit from home leave without compromising public safety. Those actions are being taken, and will continue to be taken. The proximity of prisoners' families will be taken into account. Where there is overcrowding in prisons, we felt that it would be undesirable to present prisoners with what might have been a right of judicial review, when it would be impractical always to give effect to it. However, as a matter of good practice, the prison service will certainly try to implement the facilities where possible.

Mrs. Fyfe: I thank the Minister for his reassurances and beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 28

PRINTS, SAMPLES ETC. IN CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. McFall: I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 22, leave out lines 17 to 19 and insert—

'(4A) A police surgeon may, with the authority of an officer of a rank no lower than Inspector, take from the person from an external part of the body by means of swabbing or rubbing a sample of blood or other body fluid or of body tissue or of other material.'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 10, in page 22, line 21, leave out 'or (4)' and insert

'(4) or (4A)'.

No. 13, in page 22, line 27, at end add—

'(7) In this section "an external part of the body" means any part of the outside skin of the body or any hair growing on it except insofar as these are covered by clothing.'.

Mr. McFall: This group of amendments relates to clause 28, which was debated intensely and in a lively fashion in Committee. The Opposition have tried to be helpful to the Minister by giving a definition of what constitutes an external part of the body. I think that the Minister defined an external part of the body—to put it succinctly—as one that was not an internal part of the body. There is a searing logic to that definition, which I am sure will make much money for many solicitors and QCs.

Today, I have spoken to the Law Society, to which the Minister sent a helpful letter. The Law Commission's committee has studied the Minister's letter carefully and Michael Clancy told me today that the commission is reassured on many aspects of the matter. I am happy to go along with that: if the Law Society is happy, that is fine.

I know that the Scottish Police Federation and serving police officers are still nervous about the position and have not been reassured by the Minister. That is why I referred just now to the House of Lords judgment of 26 November 1992 in the case of Pepper *v.* Hart. The Minister will know that that historic judgment stated that, as an aid to construing legislation that was ambiguous or obscure—and which of us knows of legislation that is not unambiguous or obscure—or the literal meaning of which led to absurdity, the courts could refer to reports of debates or proceedings in Parliament.

7.30 pm

With that judgment in mind, I ask the Minister to respond, so that at some stage—perhaps in the next century, in 50 years' time when the Minister and I will not be around—the Minister's name can be invoked regularly in the Scottish courts. It is important that the Minister should make the point here to reassure both the Law Society and serving police officers on that aspect of clause 28.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The amendments raise issues that were debated in some detail in Committee. It may help the House if I explain briefly the main purpose of clause 28.

The provisions in that clause are intended to clarify the powers of the police to take samples and fingerprints of both detained and arrested persons without the need for a warrant. Where a warrant is required or considered necessary, the police will continue as at present to apply through the fiscal to a sheriff for a warrant.

The Bill does not seek to determine the use to which any sample is put, whether it is obtained under warrant or not. If the police or a prosecutor considers that, for the purposes of their investigations, any sample should be subject to the DNA test, then that will be done.

It should be noted, however, that a DNA test will in most cases be of assistance only in determining the suspect's DNA profile in order to compare that profile with any determined from blood, bodily tissue or fluid found on the victim or at the scene of the crime. In such cases, a DNA test will have to be run on a sample clearly taken from an internal part of the body of that suspect —from a hair root plucked from the victim, or from a proper full sample of blood. In both such instances, the sample involved will be invasive. It could not, therefore, be taken by a constable under the provisions of the clause. If the suspect is willing to have such samples taken, it would be possible to proceed without a warrant, but it is normal in such circumstances for a warrant to be obtained in any event.

The types of sample covered by clause 28(4) are all non-invasive. The opinion of the Scottish Law Commission, which I share, is that they are of a kind for which neither a warrant nor the assistance of a doctor

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

should be required. Some form of authorisation should, however, be involved—hence the reference to an officer of a rank no lower than inspector.

The amendments require a police surgeon, rather than a police officer, to take swabs or rubbings. I fail to see the grounds for such a change. Clearly, there is no medical reason for requiring a police surgeon to take the samples because, as I have stressed, they are non-invasive. There is no evidential reason. The police, unlike doctors, are trained in how to take samples from a variety of locations, and procedures exist to ensure the correct packaging and labelling of such samples to maintain their evidential worth. The services of a police surgeon would not, therefore, add to the evidential value.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the Minister for showing his characteristic courtesy.

Am I right in thinking that a DNA testing unit is to be created in Glasgow? If so, when will it be operational? And was any consideration given to siting it in Greenock—perhaps in the enterprise zone, where it might have created some employment?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There is, indeed, to be a DNA unit. I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman whether Greenock was considered as a prime site, but I can tell him that Strathclyde and Tayside forensic science laboratories are the only laboratories providing DNA facilities in Scotland at present. Forces which do not have DNA facilities available submit items for DNA examination to Cellmark Diagnostics. Such facilities exist, and I am sure that Greenock will be borne in mind for the future.

I come now to the definition of "external". In Committe we had an interesting debate on what constituted external or internal. I fear that amendment No. 13 does not take us much further, as essentially it merely seeks to substitute "external" with

"the outside skin of the body".

In any event, as I made clear previously, if the police have any doubt about the area from which a sample is to be taken, they can apply for a warrant.

Amendment No. 13 goes on to require that, where any outside skin of the body is covered by clothing, the police cannot exercise their powers unless under the authority of a warrant.

I recognise hon. Members' intentions in tabling the amendment, but I do not consider that the proposed changes would improve the clause. It could result in warrants being required not to take samples but to remove a piece of clothing—for example, a glove—to enable the sample to be taken. Nor do the amendments help to clarify what would happen, for example, if the clothing were torn, or if there were a sample of material at the back of a suspect's neck and he was wearing an open-necked shirt. I believe that the amendment would give considerable scope for confusion.

In the light of my comments, I ask the Opposition not to press the amendment.

Mr. McFall: I am happy to accept the Minister's comments on the matter.

Dr. Godman: Will my hon. Friend confirm that considerable reservations were expressed by representatives of our police forces about the powers to be given to them under this part of the Bill, and that those reservations have largely been ignored by Ministers?

Mr. McFall: I feel that that is so. In my discussions with them, the police told me that they felt that the power were being foisted on them with no consultation whatever. They had a suspicion—shared, I believe, by Opposition Members—that the clause represented a cost-cutting exercise on the part of the Government and that the police were being asked to do what police surgeons had done previously. As my hon. Friend says, the fears of the police force have certainly not been allayed, and I urge the Government to enter into discussions with the police so that they may be reassured on these matters.

Given that the Law Society is reassured, and that the Pepper *v.* Hart case will mean that comments made here can be referred to at a later date, as well as the Minister's reassurance, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave withdrawn.

Clause 32

Evidence from abroad through television links in solemn proceedings

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move amendment No. 11, in page 24, line 5, leave out subsection (5).

When I introduced the Bill on Second Reading, I gave the House an undertaking that I would bring forward on Report an amendment that would remove subsection (5) from the new section which is to be inserted by clause 32 into the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980. I recognise the importance that many hon. Members attach to the matter, and the need to ensure that there is an opportunity for all who wish to do so to take part in the debate. I am glad to be able to discharge that undertaking this evening, and I am grateful to those hon. Members who served on the First Scottish Standing Committee for their self-restraint in allowing the matter to stand over until this stage.

As the House knows, the provisions of clause 32 will enable the evidence of witnesses outside the United Kingdom to be given to a Scottish court by way of a live television link. The new provisions will bring the law of Scotland in that respect into line with the law of England and Wales, where such a facility has been available to both the prosecution and the defence for over two years—that is, since the coming into force of section 32 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 in November 1990 in respect of certain prescribed crimes.

Were subsection (5) to remain in the Bill, its effect would be to disallow the use of modern technology in respect of one class of serious crime only, and purely on the basis that such crimes would be prosecuted under the War Crimes Act 1991. As my noble and learned Friend the Lord-Advocate pointed out when this matter was debated in another place, it would be wrong in principle to set up a special and different system for trying persons accused of war crimes. The procedures which this clause will introduce will be available to protect the rights of an

accused person, just as they will enable the prosecution to bring evidence which might not otherwise come before the court.

Concerns were expressed in another place that the television link would be used to enable witnesses to identify accused persons in circumstances that would be unfair to the accused. I stress that the provisions are framed in such a way that the principle of fairness to the accused is paramount. The court must be satisfied, before granting an application by the prosecution to have evidence given by television link, not only that the interests of justice will be served but also that the granting of such an application would not be unfair to the accused.

I have every confidence that the Scottish courts, in applying the principle of fairness to the accused which is so important to our system of criminal justice in Scotland, will ensure that, in every case in which an application for the giving of evidence by television link is granted, the right of the accused to a fair trial will not be imperilled. Given the safeguards built into the provisions, we consider it to be unnecessary and inappropriate that there should be any exclusions.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I believe that I am the only Member present to have voted consistently against the War Crimes Act 1991. I voted against the initial motion, when the temperature of the House was taken, and at every stage of the Bill. Notwithstanding that, I believe that the amendment, which the Secretary of State introduced so reasonably, ought to be supported. It seems to fly in the face of principle to exclude the use of modern technology for evidential purposes for one crime or set of crimes.

I have taken the opportunity to read the debate in another place which was the progenitor of subsection (5), to which the amendment is directed. I mean no disrespect to their Lordships, but after reading the debate carefully, it is clear to me that in large measure their interest in the matter was influenced by their antagonism to the notion of war crimes legislation—an antagonism that is widespread in the House. That is understandable, but one must accept that the Bill has become law. The Houses of Parliament have passed a measure that I would have preferred not to be passed and to which I am still opposed. However, to seek to exclude the application of modern technology to one part of the criminal system because people feel that it is repugnant for it to be a part of the system cannot be justified on principle.

While I wish that the War Crimes Act had never been passed, I am certain that we should be embarking upon a most dangerous precedent if we were to say that the nature of evidence will depend on the nature of the crime. That seems to open up a range of opportunities. In due course a system would emerge in which principle had disappeared and all crimes would be determined on a virtually ad hoc basis. For that reason, I am more than content that the amendment should be passed. It is right in principle.

7.45 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I hope that my colleagues who represent Scottish constituencies will forgive me for intervening briefly in the debate.

The subsection passed in another place is very unfortunate. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) fairly spoke of his opposition to the War Crimes Act and gave his reasons for supporting —as I do—the Government amendment to overturn what was done in another place. Unlike the hon. and learned Gentleman, who speaks from the Liberal Democrat Benches, I supported the War Crimes Act. I gave my reasons at the time and it would be inappropriate, and no doubt out of order, for me to attempt to so again today.

Although I supported the Act, I always did so on the basis that justice must be done. I was not concerned with revenge, as some critics argued. If I had been of the view that so many years have elapsed since the crimes took place during the last war that it would be impossible to get justice, I would not have supported the legislation. I am concerned with justice. Nevertheless, just because they happened half a century ago, it does not mean that the people who are alleged to have been responsible for some of the most monstrous crimes that have ever been committed should not be brought to justice, if that is possible. I believe that people living in the United Kingdom and in Scotland may well have to face justice for such crimes. Should those people be brought to court, under our system the courts will decide whether they are guilty.

Earlier today, I read the debate in another place. As several of their Lordships made clear, when the subsection was debated on 4 June it was almost a replay of the War Crimes Act. Perhaps the word "almost" is not necessary —it was as if their Lordships had decided that, as they had lost the first time round, they would use the Bill to put forward their arguments against the Act. The measure was being used by people who were totally opposed to the Act, which seems unfortunate.

I am pleased that the Government have decided to invite the House to overturn what their Lordships have done, and I am sure that the House will gladly take up the invitation.

Mr. Bill Walker: I shall be brief. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the way in which he moved the amendment.

The stand taken by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) deserves comment. He is a credit to the House and to his profession, because at least he is consistent on matters of principle. That is important, especially in legislation and law. As he said, it would be wrong for the use of modern technology to be excluded for one crime.

As everyone knows, war crimes will not be restricted to what happened during the ghastly period between 1939 and 1945. One could argue that many war crimes are being perpetrated at this moment. Who knows whether, at some future date, a resident of Scotland will be charged with a war crime? It is proper and right that the amendment should be supported by the House.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to hon. Members who have taken part in the debate. I could not help noticing how different the tone of the debate has been compared with the tone and content of the debate in the other place. Their Lordships were wrong to use the measure to reopen the war crimes issue. By so doing, they have injected anomalies into the relationship between the laws of Scotland and England and between war crimes and other serious crimes.

I am grateful to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) for his comments. I too voted against the original motion. I was persuaded otherwise as

[Mr. Lang]

matters proceeded, but I feel the same way as he does about the amendment, for precisely the reasons that he eloquently and effectively put before the House.

I also note and am grateful for the comments made by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). I hope that the unanimity of those taking part in this short but important debate will not be lost on their Lordships in another place and that they will recognise the view of this House on an important matter.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 47

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 29, line 41, leave out 'Paragraph 5 of Schedule 5 to' and insert

'This section and, is so far as relating to paragraph 5 of Schedule 5 of this Act, section 46(1) of'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 27.

Lord Douglas-Hamilton: It was agreed in Committee that the provisions in paragraph 5 of schedule 5 should come into effect as soon as the Bill was passed. It is necessary for that purpose that the paving provision in clause 46(1), in so far as it relates to paragraph 5 of schedule 5, should come into effect simultaneously.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 3

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE IN CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS

Amendments made: No. 29, in page 32, line 38, at beginning insert

'Except where it is a statement such as is mentioned in paragraph 2A(b) and (c) below,'.

No. 12, in page 33, line 6, leave out

'but', if it was supplied indirectly, only if each person through whom it was supplied received'

and insert

'unless, in the case of information supplied indirectly, it appears to the court that any person through whom it was so supplied did not both receive and supply'.

No. 30, in page 33, line 29, at end insert—

'2A. A statement in a document shall be admissible in criminal proceedings as evidence of the fact that the Statement was made if—

(a) the document satisfies the conditions mentioned in sub-paragraph (1)(a) and (b) of paragraph 2 above;

(b) the statement is made, whether directly or indirectly, by a person who in those proceedings is an accused; and

(c) the statement, being exculpatory only, exculpates the accused.'.

No. 31, in page 35, line 22, after 'but', insert ', except in paragraph 6(1)(a),'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Schedule 5

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendments made: No. 17, in page 39, line 48, at end insert—

'( ) In section 233(1) (note of appeal), the existing words from "within six weeks" to the end shall be paragraph (a) and after that paragraph there shall be added the word "; or" and the following paragraph—

"(b) as the case may be, within four weeks of the passing of the sentence in open court, the Lord Advocate may lodge such a note with the Clerk of Justiciary, who shall send a copy to the said judge and to the convicted person or that person's solicitor.".

( ) In section 234(1) (presentation of appeal in writing), after the word "appellant" there shall be inserted the words "other than the Lord Advocate".

( ) In section 236B(2) (extension of certain periods), for the words "233(1)" there shall be substituted the words "233(1)(a)".

( ) In section 236C (signing of documents), after the words "to appeal" there shall be inserted the words "or (except where the appellant is the Lord Advocate) any".

( ) In section 238 (admission of appellant to bail), for subsections (1) and (2) there shall be substituted the following subsections—

"(1) The High Court may, if it thinks fit, on the application of a convicted person, admit him to bail pending the determination of—

(a) his appeal; or

(b) any appeal by the Lord Advocate against the sentence passed on conviction.

(2) A person who is admitted to bail under subsection (1) above shall, unless the High Court otherwise directs, appear personally in court on the day or days fixed for the hearing of the appeal or of any application for leave to appeal; and in the event of his failing to do so the court may—

(a) if he is the appellant—

(i) decline to consider the appeal of application; and

(ii) dismiss it summarily; or

(b) whether or not he is the appellant—

(i) consider and determine the appeal or application; or

(ii) without prejudice to section 3 of the Bail etc. (Scotland) Act 1980 (breach of conditions), make such other order as the court thinks fit.".

( ) In section 239(1) (notice of date of hearing), for—

(a) the words "appellant or applicant", in both places where they occur, there shall be substituted the words "convicted person"; and

(b) the word "latter", there shall be substituted the words "appellant or applicant".

( ) In section 240 (presence of appellant at hearing), for the word "An", where it first occurs, there shall be substituted the words "A convicted".

( ) After section 242 there shall be inserted the following section—

"*Special provision where appellant is Lord Advocate.*

242A. Where the Lord Advocate is the appellant, sections 241 and 242 of this Act shall apply in respect of the convicted person, if in custody, as they apply to an appellant or applicant in custody.".

( ) In section 243 (provision as to warders attending court), for the words "the last foregoing section" there shall be substituted the words "section 242 of this Act".

( ) In section 252 (powers of High Court), after the words "228(1)" there shall be inserted the words "or 228A"

( ) In section 258 (sentence in absence), after the word "appellant" there shall be inserted the words "(or, where the Lord Advocate is the appellant, the convicted person)".

( ) In section 261 (notice of determination of appeal), after the word "applicant" there shall be inserted the words "(or, where the Lord Advocate is the appellant, to the convicted person)".

( ) In section 264 (disqualification, forfeiture, etc), in each of subsections (1) and (2)—

(a) for the word "two" there shall be substituted the word "four"; and

(b) after the words "228(1)(b)" there shall be inserted the words "or 228A".

( ) In section 265 (fines and caution), after subsection (4) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(4A) A convicted person who has been sentenced to the payment of a fine and has duly paid it shall, if an appeal against sentence by the Lord Advocate results in the sentence being quashed and no fine, or a lesser fine than that paid, being imposed, be entitled, subject to any order of the High Court, to the return of the sum paid or as the case may be to the return of the amount by which that sum exceeds the amount of the lesser fine.".

( ) In section 268 (reckoning of time spent in custody pending appeal)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) for the words "an appellant" there shall be substituted the words "a convicted person";

(ii) after the word "appeal" there shall be inserted the words ", or as the case may be of any appeal by the Lord Advocate against the sentence passed on conviction,"; and

(iii) for the word "this", where it occurs qualifying the word "sentence", there shall be substituted the word "that";

(b) for subsection (2) there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(2) The time (including any period consequent on the recall of bail) during which a convicted person is in custody pending the determination of his appeal, or as the case may be of any appeal by the Lord Advocate against the sentence passed on conviction, shall subject to any direction which the High Court may give to the contrary be reckoned as part of any term of imprisonment under that sentence."; and

(c) in subsection (3), after the word "appellant" there shall be inserted the words "(or, where the appellant is the Lord Advocate, of a convicted person)".

( ) In section 269 (extract convictions)—

(a) for the word "two" there shall be substituted the word "four"; and

(b) after the words "228(1)(b)" there shall be inserted the words "or 228A".

( ) In section 270 (custody of trial documents, etc.)—

(a) in subsection (2)—

(i) for the words from the beginning to "proceedings" there shall be substituted the words "Until any period allowed under or by virtue of this Part of this Act for lodging intimation of intention to appeal (or any longer period allowed by virtue thereof for lodging a note of appeal) has elapsed, all documents and other productions produced at the trial of a convicted person shall be kept";

(ii) after the words "228(1)(b)" there shall be inserted the words "or 228A"; and

(iii) the words "of two weeks or any extension thereof authorised by the High Court" shall cease to have effect;

(b) in subsection (3)—

(i) after the words "228(1)(b)" there shall be inserted the words "or 228A"; and

(ii) for the words "to his" there shall be substituted the words ", as the case may be, to the convicted person's"; and

(c) in subsection (4)—

(i) after the words "228(1)(b)" there shall be inserted the words "or 228A"; and

(ii) for the words "such period of two weeks or extension thereof as aforesaid" there shall be substituted the words "the period mentioned in subsection (2) above".

( ) In section 273(1) (register of appeals), after the words "228(1)(b)" there shall be inserted the words "or 228A".'.

No. 18, in page 41, line 48, at end insert—

'( ) In section 277(2) (list of provisions non-compliance with which may be waived), in the first column, under the entry relating to section 242, there shall be inserted the entry "242A".'.

No. 19, in page 42, line 14, at end insert—

'( ) In section 442(1)(b)(ii) (prosecutor's appeal against sentence on point of law), for the words "in such proceedings" there shall be substituted the words "on such conviction".

( ) In section 442B (method of appeal against sentence alone)—

(a) after the words "Where a" there shall be inserted the word "convicted";

(b) after the word "Act", where it first occurs, there shall be inserted the words ", or the prosecutor desires so to appeal by virtue of section 442(1)(c) thereof,"; and

(c) for the proviso there shall be substituted the words "; but nothing in this section shall prejudice any right to proceed by bill of suspension, or as the case may be advocation, against an alleged fundamental irregularity relating to the imposition of the sentence.".

( ) In section 452A (disposal of stated case appeal)—

(a) in subsection (1), after the word "subject" there shall be inserted the words "to subsection (2) below and"; and

(b) for subsection (2) there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(2) The High Court shall, in an appeal—

(a) against both conviction and sentence, subject to section 453D(1) of this Act, dispose of the appeal against sentence; or

(b) by the prosecutor, against sentence, dispose of the appeal,

by exercise of the power mentioned in section 453C(1) of this Act.".

( ) In section 453B (appeals against sentence only)—

(a) in each of subsections (1), (7) and (8), after the words "442(1)(a)(ii)" there shall be inserted the words ", or by virtue of section 442(1)(c),";

(b) for subsection (2) there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(2) The note of appeal shall, where the appeal is—

(a) under section 442(1)(a)(ii) be lodged, within one week of the passing of the sentence, with the clerk of the court from which the appeal is to be taken; or

(b) by virtue of section 442(1)(c) be so lodged within four weeks of such passing.";

(c) in subsection (6), for the word "(2)" there shall be substituted the words "(2)(a)"; and

(d) in subsection (8), at the end, there shall be added the words "except that, for the purposes of such application to any appeal by virtue of section 442(1)(c), references in subsections (1) to (3) of section 446 to the appellant shall be construed as references to the convicted person and subsection (4) and (5) of section 446 shall be disregarded".

( ) In section 453C(3) (powers of High Court at time of disposal of appeal)—

(a) after the words "442(1)(a)(ii)" there shall be inserted the words ", or by virtue of section 442(1)(c),"; and

(b) for the word "appellant", in each place where it occurs, there shall be substituted the words "convicted person".'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 20, in page 44, line 5, at end insert—

'( ) In section 14(1) (legalised police cells), after the word "under" there shall be inserted the words "section 39 of".'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 21, 22, 23, 25 and 26.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: During earlier consideration of the Bill, I made it clear that the Government intend a wholesale revision and replacement of the Prison (Scotland) Rules 1952 and of standing orders made under those rules. These amendments may be regarded as evidence that work is in progress to achieve that intention. In the course of that work, it has been noted that some of the provisions in the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1989 leave one in doubt about the nature and standing of the rules to which they refer.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

Amendments Nos. 20, 21 and 22 will make it clear that all rules made under the Act are to be made under section 39 of the Act which will ensure that the new rules that are being prepared will be comprehensive and will be made under a single enabling provision.

Amendment No. 23 will simplify and clarify the terms of section 42 of the Act which, as amended, will require all rules and orders made under the Act to be made by statutory instruments subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House. The other amendments are consequential.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 21, in page 44, line 6, leave out sub-paragraph (3) and insert—

'(3) In section 19 (provisions of 1989 Act applying to remand centres and young offenders institutions)—

(a) in subsection (3), for the words "the rules" there shall be substituted the words "rules under section 39 of this Act"; and

(b) in subsection (4), in sub-paragraph (iii) of the proviso—

(i) for the words "paragraphs (i) and (ii)" there shall be substituted the words "paragraph (i)"; and

(ii) for the words "of the Secretary of State" there shall be substituted the words "under section 39 of this Act".'.

No. 22, in page 44, line 13, at end insert—

'( ) In section 39(1) (rules for the management of prisons and other institutions)—

(a) the word "and", where it occurs for the third time, shall cease to have effect; and

(b) at the end there shall be added the words "and for any other matter as respects which it is provided in this Act that rules may be made under this section".'.

No. 23, in page 44, line 27, leave out from beginning to 'rules' in line 32 and insert

', for the words from "regulations" to the end there shall be substituted the words "an order made under section 37(1) or".'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Schedule 7

REPEALS AND REVOCATIONS

Amendment made: No. 24, in page 47, line 35, at end insert—

	'In section 270(2), the words "of two weeks or any extension thereof authorised by the High Court".'

No. 25, in page 48, line 28, leave out 'Section 39(4)' and insert

'In section 39, in subsection (1) the word "and" where it occurs for the third time; and subsection (4)'.

No. 26, in page 48, line 31, leave out from 'or";' to 'and' in line 37.

No. 27, in page 48, line 42, leave out 'committees' and insert 'committee'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read a Third time.

7.54 pm

Mr. McFall: As we said on Second Reading, we should understand the true context of the Bill. First, it emerges from a period of unprecedented upheaval in the Scottish prison service. Secondly, and just as importantly, it emerges from the fact that we are top of the league in Europe for gaoling people. We therefore need to do something to try to alleviate the situation.

The Bill provided a good opportunity to consider a number of issues. The Opposition can take comfort from the fact that we have highlighted a number of areas for future discussion and, I hope, for future progress, not least the issue of fine defaulters. Fine defaulters comprise 40 per cent. of those entering prison. That is a waste of prison resources about which something should be done and we look forward to the Government taking that on.

We have brought our concerns regarding sections 71 and 72 of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 to the Minister's attention and he has responded. In England and Wales there has been a review of health services for mentally disordered offenders and others requiring similar services. It has reported under the chairmanship of Dr. John Reid. I should like a similar course of action to be taken for individuals in Scotland. I hope that the Minister will take that on board.

I thank the Minister for his helpful letters to us during the Committee proceedings right up to today's deliberations.

We were pleased to note that the issue concerning ethnic minorities had been addressed in Barlinnie prison, where prison officers have a formal relationship with Strathclyde community relations council. That is good news, which we welcome. We welcome any progress which can be made on this.

The issue of young people and their rehabilitation is important, and we should like the Minister and others to bear in mind our concern about that. I have received a number of helpful representations from various bodies. One was from a solicitor who has defended criminal cases for more than 20 years. He said:

"It is my experience of defending the same people again and again over the years, that the vast majority of my clients give up committing crime not because of any particular sentence which is imposed on them by a Court but rather despite sentences which are imposed on them. Most people give up committing crime because they simply mature or they get a job or they meet a girl who keeps them on the straight and narrow or some other significant life event which causes them to confront the way they have behaved in the past and resolve not to behave that way again".

That illustrates the role that families and other people outside prison play in rehabilitation. That aspect must be emphasised and kept in mind.

I do not want to be too partisan, but I have to point out that there has been no input from the Scottish National party to the Bill on Second Reading, in Committee or on Report. That is a gross failure on behalf of the SNP. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) and others have occupied the airwaves for the past four or five days telling us to boycott this place. The hon. Gentleman receives more than his fair share of attention in this place. As Peterhead prison is in his constituency, it is incumbent on him to represent its interests.

I wish the Opposition to be associated with the good work that is going on in Peterhead prison with regard to the vicious circle of sex offences. Under a project being carried out at Peterhead prison, treatment is given to inmates to try to break the cycle of sex offences. *The Glasgow Herald* of Saturday 12 December contained a good report by James Freeman, the home affairs

correspondent, of his visit to Peterhead prison. I should like the Government to support the work undertaken in that prison by the governor, Alec Spencer.

I mentioned the SNP and, to be fair, I shall mention the Liberal Democrats. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said on Second Reading that hardly a Christmas goes by without a tabloid newspaper describing the pleasures enjoyed by those who happen to be in prison at that time. He said that in no way would the reporters exchange their life for that of the prisoners. That is extremely important, and with Christmas so close we should bear it in mind. I commend those comments by the hon. and learned Gentleman and congratulate him on his contribution in Committee.

The Opposition welcome the parole recommendations, the work of Kincraig and the Minister's response to the issue of children's evidence. We hope that the Minister will place the Bill in the context that I mentioned at the beginning of his speech. He will have the full support and backing of the Official Opposition for progressive and enlightened measures in the Scottish prison service. We hope that the Bill will be followed by others so that we may have a more sensitive and enlightened criminal justice system in Scotland. We therefore support Third Reading of the Bill.

8.1 pm

Dr. Godman: I shall not speak for more than three minutes, because I am starving. Scots Members who are present will not be surprised to hear me say that I intend to confine my speech to clauses 33, 34 and 35. Those who urge us to boycott this place when it is debating such important Scottish legislation exhibit a lack of judgment. As I have said before, those three clauses give added protection to child witnesses who are caught up in the horrendous circumstances of sexual abuse and child abuse and often in cases of the most appalling neglect.

Will the Minister ensure that the equipment and installations to enable child witnesses to take advantage of the Bill's provisions are installed as quickly as possible? As the Minister knows, only two courts in Scotland have closed circuit television links. They are in Edinburgh and in sheriff court No. 5 in Glasgow. England and Wales has more than 40 Crown courts with such installations. I hope that at least one sheriff court in each of the sheriffdoms will be given such equipment. That is the least that we can demand on behalf of children who are caught up in such cases. It is wrong to expect child witnesses to travel hundreds of miles to give evidence in a court or a building containing such a television system.

We are debating remarkable measures which will place Scots law in advance of the law elsewhere, because they will give added protection to children while at the same time maintaining the rights of the accused.

8.4 pm

Mr. Hood: My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) said that he would speak for only three minutes because he was starving. I am a bit peckish myself and I look forward to dining with my hon. Friend in about five mintues. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) referred to the Scottish National party. I shall not comment for partisan reasons —*[Interruption.]* Perhaps in my naive way I am not explaining myself properly and people will think that I am being mischievous.

My constituency covers more than 600 square miles and is one of the largest in the United Kingdom. On television and in the press I see reports about people who share my profession and are paid a good salary to come here and represent those least able to represent themselves. The Bill is the best example for politicians who engage in rhetoric, play gesture politics and tell us that we should not be here. They say that we should sit on our backsides, swan off on rallies or push umbrellas up and down in the pouring rain. That is not my way of representing the 60,000 people who sent me here.

Such an attitude is complete nonsense and those who hold it should speak to George Beattie, an innocent man who has served 13 years in prison and whose only chance of representation is to have his Member of Parliament speak in the House on his behalf. They could also speak to Margaret Smith, who has been in prison for 10 years. It is about time she was out, and she needs someone to speak up for her. Those who want to play silly political games should speak to people who need consideration.

The Bill seeks to improve the running of our prisons and look after the people who are in them. There has been much agreement about the Bill's aims, and for that reason they will probably succeed. We always have our failures and I am sure that we are not smug enough to think that this time we have got it right. However, all hon. Members will agree that we must seek continually to improve the way in which we treat people in our prisons and run our criminal proceedings. I have referred to George Beattie and Margaret Smith. There are also 14-year-old children in Scottish prisons. That is not right, and while it continues we must seek to improve the way in which we operate.

8.8 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I agree entirely with the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall): it is preposterous that Scottish National party Members do not appear for a major debate on important Scottish legislation. The hon. Gentleman referred to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), who has a significant prison in his constituency. This legislation is extremely important to the officers who work in that prison.

I pay tribute to the Kincraig committee, whose report has largely been implemented through the Bill. I am grateful to Opposition Members and to my hon. Friends for their constructive contributions to the debates on the Bill. We have made substantial strides on the issue of children's evidence, in which the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has always been especially interested.

I pay tribute to the Scottish Law Commission for its work. The Lord Advocate particularly appreciates the immensely detailed hard work carried out by the commission. The Bill will be important both for prison officers and for prisoners. The prison service has made significant improvements in the management of prisons and further positive changes will be made in the next few years.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) and to the hon. Member for Dumbarton that the change in the law to allow the right of appeal against

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

sentences which are too lenient is a substantial reform to the law of Scotland, and one that I believe will be welcomed. I believe that the protection of children in court proceedings will also be regarded as extremely important.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe), who put the case for disadvantaged groups. Any fears expressed by Helena Kennedy about the blindness of justice have not been borne out in the House on this Bill. We have carefully considered how accused persons, people with disabilities, prisoners on appeal and others will be affected by the matters on which we are legislating. I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) for his efforts to enhance the protection of Scotland's rare birds.

I am glad that the House has made its will plain to the other place. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made it abundantly clear in his speech that this House opposes any exclusion of evidence from proceedings brought under the War Crimes Act 1991. I firmly believe that it is right that proceedings under that Act should be conducted under the same evidential regime as other proceedings in respect of serious crimes. I hope that the other place will now accept the decision of the House of Commons.

It is fair to say that the Bill has attracted a large measure of cross-party support and I strongly commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Environmental Information

8.11 pm

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): I beg to move,

"That the draft Environmental Information Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 8th December, be approved."

I shall start with a disclaimer. Having heard the points of order after Scottish questions today to the effect that too many English Members of Parliament had participated, and having sat through a large part of the Scottish debate that has just finished, I thought it right to point out to the uninitiated who, hearing my Scottish accent, might think that this debate is a continuation of Scottish business, that I am introducing Great Britain regulations.

These regulations give the public new legal rights of access to environmental information. As long ago as 1984, we accepted a recommendation by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution that there

"should be a presumption in favour of unrestricted access for the public to information which the pollution control authorities obtain or receive by virtue of their statutory powers".

The Government have consistently supported the principle that the public should have rights of access to environmental information, and we have demonstrated our commitment by establishing public registers of environmental information through successive legislative provisions.

In seeking the support and agreement of the House to these regulations, I should like first to say something about the background, then to describe the overall approach and then to deal with some of the issues which have emerged in the course of preparing the regulations and consulting on them.

First, the background to the regulations is that they implement United Kingdom policies, but they take their present form because they also have to apply European Community directive 90/313 on freedom of access to information on the environment. When the text was finalised during the Irish presidency in 1990, we in the United Kingdom were already well advanced in the process of putting in place statutory registers of environmental information. We supported the overall aims of the directive not only because it was consistent with our national policy, but because it placed comprehensive duties to provide access to environmental information on member states elsewhere in the Community.

We published a consultation paper in January this year setting out our proposals for implementation of the directive. We received more than 170 responses from a wide variety of bodies covering industry, local government and the voluntary sector. As one would expect, most people welcomed the principles behind the proposals.

At the end of October this year, we invited comments on draft regulations to implement the directive, together with draft guidance intended to help provide the detail for which many consultees have asked. Again, we received a substantial number of responses to the draft regulations and draft guidance. We have considered the responses carefully and have made a number of changes to the draft regulations and guidance. The draft regulations, taking account of those amendments, are before the House tonight.

During the drafting of the regulations, we had to consider extremely carefully a number of technical drafting issues. I shall come back to those later. That has had an effect on the time available for consultation and the consequent timetable for parliamentary consideration. I am sure that the House will agree, however, that it is imperative that we do everything we can to honour our obligations in EC law. We are especially concerned about the performance of some other member states in that respect. It will not help our arguments in Brussels if we fail to meet Community requirements and then criticise others for the same failing—so we do not intend to fail.

In drafting the regulations, we needed to acknowledge that there was already a substantial body of existing legislation covering public rights of access to environmental information. We wanted to be sure that people continued to enjoy those rights. Therefore, the approach followed in the draft regulations is to apply their requirements to environmental information that is not already available on request under any existing statutory provision. In addition, to ensure compliance with the directive, the arrangements for making available information to the public under statutory provisions must be sufficient to satisfy the requirements set out in the regulations.

Under the regulations, "relevant persons" must make available environmental information on request. I hope that the House will bear with me if I continue to use the term "relevant persons" in the rest of my remarks as shorthand for all the bodies subject to the regulations' requirements. Relevant persons have up to two months to respond to requests for information. Refusals must be in writing and show the reasons. Relevant persons may charge for making information available, provided that the charge does not exceed a reasonable amount. Failure to comply with the regulations will be a breach of duty and an aggrieved person could seek a judicial review or pursue the matter through a private action in the courts.

Relevant persons can protect certain types of confidential information. That could include information relating to international relations, national defence or public security, internal communications or to commercial or industrial confidentiality. Relevant persons will be under a duty to protect other types of confidential information—for example, any of the types of information which may be treated as confidential and are already the subject of restrictions on disclosure. Other types of information that relevant persons will be under a duty to protect include personal and volunteered information, unless the supplier of the information agrees to its disclosure or it is otherwise authorised.

I shall now deal with some of the comments made by consultees on the draft regulations. First, on the scope of the regulations, we have carefully considered whether we should include a list of bodies to which the regulations apply. We are conscious, however, that any list that we include in the regulations will soon become out of date and will need frequent updating. We also have to recognise that production of a list which is not definitive may not be very helpful to anyone and could expose us to challenge in the European Court of Justice for failure to implement the EC directive. It will be for the bodies concerned to take a view on whether they are "relevant persons" under the regulations. Ultimately, it would be for the courts to rule on those questions.

The question of the extent to which charges should be made for supplying information has attracted much comment. There is the very reasonable concern that charges will be too high and will discourage the public from requesting information. However, there is the equally reasonable concern that new obligations to supply information will bring extra costs. We have tried to strike a balance between those concerns. There is therefore a discretionary power to make a charge in respect of the costs reasonably attributable to the supply of information. The payment of such a charge can be made a condition of supplying information. Holders of information can make a charge to cover their costs, and those requesting information may be charged only a reasonable amount. Inspection of statutory public registers will remain free of charge.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I do not wish to anticipate what others may say, but one of the questions which always crops up when one talks of "a reasonable charge" is whether it is the real, additional cost to the provider of the information, or levied according to a more subjective test. Is it the Government's view that the cost should be only the additional cost to the provider of providing that information to the person who has requested it?

Mr. Maclean: I do not intend to pontificate on what may be the reasonable cost. I shall not be the judge and jury on that matter. I have introduced the regulations and made a requirement that the cost shall be reasonable. The company must ensure that the cost is reasonable. If the person who requested the information feels aggrieved and feels that the cost is not reasonable, he or she has rights of redress.

I stress the fact that inspection of statutory public registers will continue to remain free of charge. The House should take that fact on board. We have also considered, but rejected, suggestions that we should prescribe a standard charging regime applicable in all cases. A standard charging regime would place a straitjacket on all the many and different bodies responsible for providing information, and would inevitably fail to take account of all their different circumstances and how they operate. The regulations therefore leave it to the discretion of the relevant person concerned whether to charge for information and, if so, how much.

On the key issues arising from comments on the exceptions to the right to information dealt with in the regulations, there has been concern that information of commercial value provided to environmental regulators and other relevant bodies could become available to competitors through the arrangements set out in the regulations. Those fears are unfounded. Where there are statutory restrictions on the release of commercially confidential information or trade secrets, they must continue to apply under the regulations. Where other information has been provided in response to statutory requirements, the relevant person has discretion not to provide the information to others if it is commercially confidential. Where information has been provided on a voluntary basis, the relevant person is under a duty not to provide the information to others without the agreement of the supplier. The regulations are not a charter for one company to poach commercially sensitive information from another.

[Mr. Maclean]

I shall now deal with concerns that the provisions allowing relevant persons to refuse to supply information if it is contained in internal communications or incomplete documents provides a ready formula for refusing all requests for information. The provisions are aimed at enabling organisations to conduct their internal administrative work in private. I hesitate to generalise on those issues because every case would need to be dealt with on the facts available, but that is precisely the point: it will be a matter of fact whether a document really is incomplete or whether it really is an internal communication. In addition, relevant persons will be under a duty to separate out environmental information and make it available, unless it is incapable of being separated. Ultimately, a court could be asked to take a view on those matters and be the final judge.

As for volunteered information, I know from my experience in the Ministry that regulatory authorities and industry find it very helpful to discuss information volunteered by industry when considering applications for authorisations or consents. This is information which a company will not be required by statute to disclose, but none the less it is of immense assistance in helping the regulatory authority to understand the operating practices and background of the company concerned.

Although much of that information will be "environmental information"—under the terms of these regulations, it is quite likely—indeed, I am fairly certain —that it would not have been volunteered in the first place if the supplier believed that it would be passed on to somebody else, particularly competitors. We recognise those concerns, and the regulations therefore provide relevant persons with no discretion at all to disclose volunteered information to others without the prior consent of the volunteer supplier. We think that that is essential to ensure the continued supply of important volunteered environmental information.

I must now refer to rights of redress for a person who is refused information. Under the regulations, everyone refused information has a right to that refusal being in writing and the reasons for the refusal being specified. That should establish clearly why the information has been refused, but it will also provide an opportunity to resolve any misunderstandings which may have arisen.

If a person requesting information believes that he or she has been wrongfully refused, additional rights are available under the regulations. He or she may seek judicial review of the decision concerned or pursue the matter through a private action in the courts. It should be of some reassurance to suppliers of information who feel that they have been financially damaged by its disclosure that they could, if they wished, pursue a claim for damages by a private action. But court actions are not welcomed by anyone. We saw in the last debate how only lawyers become rich as a result of such actions. It will be the responsibility of every relevant person to be open and fair in how requests for information are dealt with and they must do everything possible to explain why, if it really is necessary, information cannot be supplied.

There is clearly much support for the general principle of providing the public with access to environmental information. I have many more pages of compelling arguments which could support the regulations, but that information is entirely confidential and I cannot reveal it to the House, so I merely commend the regualtions to the House.

8.27 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I am tempted to begin by observing how far we have come in the past five years. Five years ago, I introduced into a House a private Member's Bill, which is now the Environment and Safety Information Act 1988. Surreptitious attempts were made by the Government, emanating especially from the Whips, to stifle the Bill at birth. Eventually, however, a combination of public opinion, governmental embarrassment and Bernard Levin managed to ensure that we got the Act on the the statute book. I pay particular tribute to my late and noble colleague the Baroness Ewart-Biggs, who helped to pilot that measure through the House of Lords subsequent to its passage through the Commons.

Matters have moved on since then and I welcome the Government's introduction of regulations to improve access to environmental information. It is crucial that the general public has as much access to information about what is happening to the environment as possible. After all, environmental degraduation affects us all. Even the Prime Minister appears to have woken up to this fact. About 16 months ago, he made a speech at a conference organised by *The Sunday Times*, in which he said:

"We have opened the door to environmental information."

He was a little ahead of himself in that claim, because it is only now that the door is really open. He continued:

"Every individual, every group, will in future have access to the information they need in order to act as an environmental watchdog. That information is the citizen's right, and the Active Citizen will use that right constructively."

The Prime Minister was correct. The rhetoric was fine, the objective is excellent, but I am afraid that the regulations do not measure up to the ideals. The Government are submitting them late—this is the last possible moment at which they could do so. They are seriously inadequate in a number of key respects. Not only do they fall far short of embracing the spirit of European Community directive 90/313, but I have some major questions about whether they fulfil the letter of the directive.

The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments has unearthed a couple of explanatory documents from the Department of the Environment that are helpful in so far as they go, but they do not address some of the concerns raised outside the House by Friends of the Earth and other organisations. I have a list of some of those concerns. First, what actually counts as environmental information? Paragraph (2)(b) of regulation 2 speaks of

"any activities or measures . . . which adversely affect anything mentioned in sub-paragraph (a)".

That is water, air, soil, fauna, flora and so on. How will this work in practice? How will we know whether a particular piece of information is regarded as adversely affecting some of the essential components of our environment?

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): I accept the point that the hon. Gentleman makes, but I do not understand—perhaps he would kindly explain—how the drafting in the regulations differs materially from article 2(a) of the European directive on the point that he has just described.

Mr. Smith: I am not criticising the regulations for differing from the directive in that regard. I shall come on to a number of other points of that nature, but that does not invalidate the point, which is that if we are to have regulations, we need to be certain how the basic definitions in them will be interpreted.

Let us take two examples of what counts as environmental information. One has recently come to public notice. The Secretary of State overturned a recommendation by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution that information about the inputs to power stations run by National Power should be made accessible to the public. National Power contended that this information was not relevant to the environmental impact of running power stations. HMIP demurred. The Secretary of State clearly sided with National Power. Inputs to a power station may not directly impact on the environment, but will have an inevitable consequence eventually on the environment once they have been used through the power station. In such cases, does that count, under the regulations, as environmental information? That is a valid question to which the answer is unclear.

Let us take another example, that of the contracts that British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. had for the reprocessing of nuclear wastes in the new thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield. The nature and content of those contracts have never been made public, yet, they have a considerable impact on the future running of the plant and are crucial to an assessment of the case as to whether that plant will have an environmental impact. In that instance, it is unclear whether that counts as environmental information. We need to have the broadest possible definition, but will that be what the regulations mean in practice? There is a serious question mark about that, and it ought to be addressed.

Secondly, the definition of "response" in relation to the two-month deadline is unclear. There is a world of potential difference between a mere acknowledgement of a request and the provision of a full answer, both of which could qualify as a response. Surely this ought to be more clearly spelt out. If a response is to be required within two months, we ought to know precisely what sort of response is required. Will it have to be more than an acknowledgement? The regulations are ambiguous about that.

Thirdly, it is worrying that a charge can be made for the provision of information. That has already been the subject of an exchange across the Floor of the House. Notwithstanding the qualification of reasonableness, there is always a danger that the ability to charge will be used as an effective barrier to the seeking of information. Rather than removing my concern about that fact, what the Minister said in response to questions across the Floor of the House intensified it.

Challenging a judgment of reasonableness in the courts would be a prohibitively expensive course for the applicant to embark upon. While charging of the public for access might be reasonable if strict rules about the actual costs incurred by the body providing the information were to be inserted, where no such rules apply—there are none in the regulations—it is possible that the ability to charge will be used to prevent access.

Fourthly, the exclusion from access to information relating to matters affecting international relations is a broad definition, putting anything with a third-hand connection with international relations outside the scope of the regulations. What will this involve—action taken in accordance with the biodiversity treaty, international discussions at Copenhagen on ozone depletion or in Paris about dumping at sea, safeguarding the shipment of plutonium at sea? All those could conceivably fall under the definition of the exclusion. None of them should.

Let us take another specific example—matters relating to the import of toxic wastes. The Basle convention and the recent Luxembourg agreement are matters subject to international discussion and agreement and conceivably related to international relations. In this respect, I fear that the Minister has not been particularly forthcoming. During oral questions to the Secretary of State for the Environment on 9 December the Minister of State touched on the Basle convention and the import of toxic waste, following the Luxembourg agreement. He answered my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) as follows:

> "We have just negotiated a regulation in the EC which will, for the first time, give this country the power to turn off the tap of waste coming from developed countries for disposal here."

Later he answered a subsequent question as follows:

> "Waste for final disposal should be dealt with in developed countries. That is what we have negotiated and we are implementing national plans to ensure that it is put into place when the directive is ratified."—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1992; Vol. 215, c. 836.]

That is all well and good. The impression given was that, following the agreement at Luxembourg, the Government would get stuck into the process of drawing up measures to ensure that waste coming into Britain from developed countries would be stopped.

Only six days beforehand, however, in an answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller), the Minister had said of the regulations that would be considered following the Luxembourg agreement:

> "We expect no change as a result of the regulation to existing practice within the United Kingdom."—[*Official Report*, 3 December 1992; Vol. 215, c. 289.]

It appears, then, that the Government speak with two voices. On 9 December they give the House the clear impression that there will be change, new regulations, action. When they answer my hon. Friend on 3 December, they say that there will be no change.

Why? Having sight of the relevant documents would help, but I suspect that they will fall under the exclusion of matters "related to international affairs". That is a broad-brush exclusion.

Fifthly, the regulations lack any realistic appeals procedure for occasions when access is denied. Article 4 of the directive speaks of the need for some such system:

> "A person who considers that his request for information has been unreasonably refused or ignored, or has been inadequately answered by a public authority, may seek a judicial or administrative review of the decision in accordance with the relevant national legal system."

So the Government are complying with the terms of the directive by saying that judicial review is possible when an access request has been refused.

There are, however, a number of problems. Judicial review can be a costly and cumbersome procedure. With the latest Government cuts in legal aid there is no guarantee that those in need of financial assistance to mount such a review would be able to do so. The only matter that can be considered by such a review is a matter of procedural fairness, not a matter of the real substance of a refusal. That too is a limiting factor.

[Mr. Smith]

In most cases judicial reviews do not permit of the cross-examination of witnesses or the discovery of documents, so it would be difficult realistically to contest a claim of refusal of access on grounds of commercial confidentiality. It would be much better if the Government adopted the proposal that we submitted many months ago in our freedom of information Bill at the start of this year —a proposal for a proper system of appeal to a commissioner who would act on behalf of the citizen, with the back-up of an appeal to a tribunal for the citizen, the relevant authority or a third party, if the commissioner's action did not resolve the issue. The Government have not got the need for a genuine appeals mechanism right.

Sixthly, there is also an exclusion from access for matters subject to a local or public inquiry or hearing. It baffles me why the Government included this provision. The directive states that member states may—not shall —provide for refusal of access for a number of reasons. It may be refused where it affects

"matters which are, or have been sub judice, or under enquiry (including disciplinary inquiries), or which are the subject of preliminary investigation proceedings".

There is no requirement that the regulations should exclude public inquiries, and it seems that the Government are going rather further than the directive suggests they should by cluding local and public inquiries.

The regulations also fly in the face of existing practice at such inquiries, where the earliest disclosure of each side's case has consistently been argued for by the Department of the Environment. A vital feature of our public inquiry system is that full information is available to the public throughout the proceedings. These regulations would permit that principle to be overturned. Is this a case of backtracking by the Government, and if so why? I do not understand why the Government would want to diminish the public's access to information that they have at the moment. Why not omit public and local inquiries from the list of exceptions?

Mr. Roger Evans: Perhaps I can assist the hon. Gentleman. I have not examined the French text of the directive, but it looks as though the directive is directed towards a dossier in the process of compilation by, for instance, a French examining magistrate, which is not made public until the conclusion of that process. that would be logical and understandable. Meanwhile, I agree with the hon. Gentleman: I cannot see how that can possibly be relevant to the wording of regulation 4(2)(b). The other point to which he has drawn attention, regulation 4(5), seems a classic case of mistranslation.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman is quite likely to be right about the origin of this feature of the regulations. It seems on this point that the directive permits a Government to decide to be more open when drafting their own national regulations, and the Government should have followed that principle when drawing them up.

Seventhly, one of the other exclusions from access mentions commercial confidentiality. Regulation 4(2)(e) tells us that information can be treated as confidential if it is

"information relating to matters to which any commercial or industrial confidentiality attaches".

Note the words "relating to". They allow a fairly broad scope.

Compare and contrast this with the wording of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Section 22(11) talks about information being commercially confidential

"if its being contained in the register would prejudice to an unreasonable degree the commercial interests of that individual or person."

The Government have therefore taken two different approaches. In the 1990 Act they specifically said that commercial confidentiality should be allowed only on tough grounds where it was judged that disclosure would

"prejudice to an unreasonable degree the commercial interests of that individual or person."

The definition of exclusion on the grounds of commercial confidentiality is remarkably broad in the regulations:

"information relating to matters to which any commercial or industrial confidentiality attaches".

The Government have adopted the easiest possible approach to drawing up the regulations. They have been minimalist in the way in which they have interpreted the requirements of the directive. Where it has been possible to exclude information from access, they have taken the opportunity to do so.

They should not have approached the exercise in that way. They have acted late and grudgingly. They have done the bare minimum that they needed to do, and even that is questionable in some respects.

The regulations raise serious questions about definition, interpretation and exclusion. They could have represented a real provision for full access to environmental information and a real strengthening of citizens' power. Instead, we have a flawed set of proposals. I sincerely hope that the Government will think more carefully about this and come forward in the near future with revisions that meet some of the objections of which they need to take account. As they stand, I fear that the regulations, although a small step forward, are a sadly missed opportunity.

8.51 pm

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): I respectfully suggest that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has been a little curmudgeonly in his response to the regulations, which are a classic piece of Euro legislation in the very best sense.

Enormous benefits will flow from the amount of environmental information that will become available as a result of the regulations. There is no virtue in deceiving people through ignorance. The opposition that has been mounted in certain parts of the press to the publication of the history of landfill sites, lest that adversely affects the development of houses thereon at a later time, is wholly unfair and unrealistic. People have a right to know.

It is interesting that seven substantive criticisms have been made of the way in which the regulations have been drafted. However, it appears that the Government and the parliamentary draftsmen—with one exception, to which I have already referred—should be heartily congratulated and have followed the drafting of the directive.

The first criticism made against the regulations was the test of "adversely affect." It may well be that that raises an issue of fact, but the actual wording is

"adversely affect . . . or likely adversely to affect."

That is wide language, and, provided that there is something conceivable and practical in the way of a factual nexus between the information and the adverse reaction to it, a court will order disclosure. This is how, for example, the treaty of Rome is creating actionable rights for

individual subjects for the first time in areas of public law that we have never known in this country. That is why it should be welcomed. That change represents, no doubt, in the language of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, the spread of civil liberties in a practical, direct and important manner. I have no doubt that if there was a refusal to disclose information on the inputs to power stations, and provided that there is some scientific basis, as we strongly suspect that there must be, between what goes in and what might come out, that could be challenged in the courts for the first time.

Mr. Chris Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman therefore give that message to the Secretary of State, who has said that precisely such information shall be kept confidential?

Mr. Evans: We are debating the regulations because we are going to change the law; the Government have accepted that. Under the regulations that we are about, I hope, to pass, there will be power for the first time to challenge such a decision to refuse to disclose any information.

Let us re-examine Sellafield. I have no doubt that the undesirable and highly secretive practices of the nuclear industry will be exposed to the ray of truth and light to an extent that we have never seen before. Such disclosure will not be limited just to ourselves. Those of us who have always been suspicious of the French habit of putting nuclear power stations near Cherbourg and along the coast of Brittany, opposite the Channel islands, will now have an opportunity, for the first time, to press the French nuclear industry to reveal a whole host of information that might be of great interest.

The whole point about Community action rather than national action is that pollution knows no national frontiers, and the regulations are an excellent example of the Community at work doing a great deal of good.

Complaint has been made about charging and overcharging for the supply of information. Surely some reasonable payment must be made for the burden on various organisations that must supply information. Otherwise, every otiose and unreasonable request would simply be imposed as an additional burden upon the taxpayer, ratepayer or a commercial concern, which would pass that on through its prices to the consumer. We have already accepted under the Data Protection Act 1984 a system of charging. If one has a right to know, it is reasonable that one should pay a reasonable charge.

I do not understand why a complaint about disclosure "capable of affecting international relations" should be laid at the door of my right hon. Friend. That is the precise language in paragraph 4(2) and, in any event, such a restriction, even if it were taken up, would not apply to inter-Community relations. I should be grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for guidance on that when he winds up.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury has also complained that there is no proper appeal procedure, but I would suggest to him that judicial review is a cheap, economical, speedy and effective process for challenging Ministers. Even on legal aid we have seen the radical growth of the ambit and scope of that remedy in recent years. Individual legally aided plaintiffs have challenged Ministers with increasing enthusiasm, backed up by the legal profession. law centres and so on.

There is a right under order 53 of the rules of the Supreme Court to obtain discovery of documents and a power to order interrogatories. Cross-examination is not impossible and it may be ordered at the discretion of the judge. Real remedies of substance are offered, by way of the process of judicial review, which is well established and is effective.

As to confidentiality in respect of commercial transactions and the phrase "relating to", that phrase is customary and well known and it is used in the case of discovery of documents "relating to" the issues in an action. What is proposed in the regulations is perfectly conventional and has wide-reaching implications.

However, I share the amazement and puzzlement of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury about local inquiries. For years there has, quite properly, been an increasing degree of the prior disclosure of information. I do not understand how the exception of local inquiries has crept into the regulations, unless because of a mistranslation.

I am also puzzled about another, connected matter. Regulation 4(2)(b) refers to

"information relating to, or to anything which is or has ben the subject-matter of, any legal . . . proceedings".

I would understand the enthusiasm of the French Government to preserve secrecy if a secret dossier were being compiled, given the inquisitorial system that operates in that country. Under the British system, however, all documents in the court process—whether they are pleadings or affidavits—are normally deemed to be public documents which are matters of public record.

The provision is peculiar; I do not know why it was included in the first place. It also leads to a serious anomaly. Let us suppose that a plaintiff sues a polluter for defamation, or a polluter sues someone else on the same grounds, and those proceedings compromise in the traditional way of the record being withdrawn. The information will then become secret, and the regulation encourages it to remain secret. I do not see why matters that are the subject of litigation should not be in the public domain when our court system is public.

My constituents are very anxious about the effect of proposals that are now the subject of a public inquiry: we are awaiting the results, which will eventually reach the Secretary of State for Wales. They are concerned about the health consequences, and the effect on the environment, of opencast coal mining on the Blorenge at a site called Pwll Du. There has been a good deal of community action of the classic variety, which advances human knowledge, understanding and public awareness. I am thinking particularly of the work of Doctors Taylor and Temple, who have exposed real public concerns about the environmental effects of opencast mining.

Such arguments should not take place in secret. The cards should be placed face upwards, and the promoters of opencast coal mining—or any other activity that may have adverse effects on health—should be forced to publish all the relevant information so that the public may form their own judgment and independent experts may do the same. That is precisely what the statutory instrument proposes, and I commend the European Community for its imagination. Here is a classic example of something that can be done better at Community level.

9 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): In February this year, on behalf of my party, I launched a document entitled "Good Government for a Greener

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

Britain"—which no doubt was read assiduously by all hon. Members. I would like to remind the House of what I said then and I think that this is the first time in nearly 10 years that I have quoted my own words in this place, as I crave the House's indulgence.

I said:

"Secrecy is the number one killer of the environment in Britain today, and a Freedom of Information Act is the best possible deterrent to this type of crime. Our eco-system is being let down by our political system.

The Government often uses the excuse of commercial confidentiality to keep facts from its citizens. Yet it is the countries which trust their citizens with information which are not only freer than us but more prosperous. Our unaided senses may tell us that something is wrong with the area we live in or the food we eat, but only hard information will point the way to remedy it.

The citizen must be properly informed. Green knowledge is green power."

Like the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), I am enthusiastic about what the treaty of Rome and subsequent legislation have done for freedom of information and for the environment. I have always been enthusiastic about the European Community, partly because it has pushed us further and faster towards good environmental practice. I therefore welcomed the directive requiring member states to introduce legislation to enact those proposals.

As the hon. Member for Monmouth rightly said, one of the great advances in our legal system in recent years is the interest in public law on rights to environmental information. The fact that many associations and individuals now practise environmental law is not unrelated. There is now an Environmental Law Federation, and some practitioners deal with almost nothing else. That is because the public want or require information, and often have to take legal action to avail themselves of their rights.

In recent years, Government legislation has done something to improve those rights. As he rightly reminded us, the initiative of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith)—supported by freedom of information campaigns—also put a Private Member's Bill on the statute book; but we needed more, and the statutory instrument gives us the opportunity to secure more.

Like other hon. Members, I shall not vote against the regulations because to do so might prevent us from complying with our European Community obligations—and far be it from me to wish that on the House. As the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said, we are cutting it pretty fine. This is the last environmental debate of 1992 and of the British presidency, comment about which is often made elsewhere, and we are just in time in squeezing in these regulations, which we have an obligation to enact by the end of the year—so we had better be good and allow them to go through, even if we have some criticisms about their inadequacy.

The regulations are welcome but, as the hon. Members for Islington, South and Finsbury and for Monmouth have said, we could and should have done better. I, too, shall suggest where we must do better and hope that the Minister, it being the week before Christmas, will be in a responsive mood and will say, "Yes, I accept that this is not a perfect document and we shall see whether we can improve it in due course." I hope that there will be an opportunity to review the use of the regulations before too long. One of the problems with the House is that it passes much legislation that is not consolidated, which would help the public. Often we do not review legislation or regulations until we have discovered, far too late, that they are not working too well.

Mr. Roger Evans: Article 8 of the directive places an obligation on the Government to report to the Commission within four years.

Mr. Hughes: Indeed.

Given the importance of environmental information and legislation, I hope that we shall hold an annual debate on the state of the environment, in which Ministers and other hon. Members could comment on the progress being made. Additionally, as with most Community legislation, there is a duty on the Government to report back for a Communitywide review. One of the benefits of this legislation will be that we will have access to information about what is going on not only in Britain but in other European Community countries—for instance, about nuclear power in France, pollution of rivers and seas by coastal countries, and so on.

The Minister explained in his introduction that the regulations do not extend to Northern Ireland, and nearly told us why. We know why: the normal reason is that legislation for Northern Ireland is dealt with separately; none the less, we have a duty under the treaty to ensure that Northern Ireland is covered. I should like to know when the people of Northern Ireland will be given the same rights as the rest of us. Unless I have missed something, there is barely any time left to comply, and I should be disappointed if on 1 January the people of Northern Ireland found themselves unable to avail themselves of the same rights as the rest of us.

I shall not elaborate on the criticisms that have been made but rather shall concentrate on those which seem the most germane. Lest I be accused of traditional Opposition churlishness, I should say that the regulations have been criticised by environmentalists as well. I ask the Government to take that criticism seriously.

There is a problem with the term "relates to the environment", which is the definition given in regulation 2(1)(a) and expanded in 2(2)(a), as the Labour spokesman said. However, regulation 2(2)(a) is a limited expansion and the definition is also very limited. If we went out into the streets of London on this damp and dismal evening and asked people what they understood by the term "relates to the environment" the reply would be not so limited as the list in regulation 2(2)(a).

Regulation 3 is entitled, "Obligation to make environmental information available", and covers the arrangements for replying to any response. There is also a problem with the test which is set out because it is deemed a failure only if there is no response after two months. As we know from parliamentary answers, a response can be anything and nothing—it can be helpful or unhelpful, minimalist or maximalist. It is inadequate to define a failure only as not having a request responded to at all after more than two months. I am sure that this will prove a loophole. People will be able to say that they have responded, but the response may often be nothing worth.

Regulation 3(3) provides another let-out. When I worked in the secretariat for human rights at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, we had to apply tests which

debarred applicants from getting their case before the Commission, let alone the court. One of the tests was whether the issue was too general and not specific enough. We are creating a problem here by building in a threshold which states that a request for information can be refused when the request

"is manifestly unreasonable or is formulated in too general a manner."

We, the public, may not know exactly what information is held. That is half the battle, because the information is held by the person whom we seek to challenge. Therefore, it is no good to be told, "Sorry, you are being too general —what exactly do you want?" when one does not know what information is held.

There is also a problem with charges, which are covered in the following paragraph. There is a qualification of the test for the charges, nevertheless the charges should be no greater than the cost to the provider of providing information to the person who asks. It is unreasonable to levy charges other than the cost of reproducing a copy and the cost of personnel time for information that is held. That is a weakness, because the regulation goes no further.

The hon. Members for Monmouth and for Islington, South and Finsbury and I would probably put at the top of our list of concerns the exceptions in regulation 4. The most general criticism is that regulation 4 has been chosen by the Government as a mechanism for including more and wider exceptions than were required by the directive or by good environmental practice.

I expect that colleagues will have seen the report published in November this year in the journal of Environmental Data Services Ltd., but it is worth bringing it to the House's attention. Page 35 states:

"Obstructing in Whitehall seems set to restrict the impact of the 1990 EC directive on public access to environmental information, which is due to be brought into force at the end of the year. An official from the Department of the Environment . . . has revealed that other Departments are likely to block requests for not only their own information but for industrial data claimed to be commercially confidential."

I have not made inquiries to see whether that official is in the Box tonight and I do not mean to embarrass him if he is. He is nonetheless quoted in the article, so I shall quote him now.

The article continues:

"a DoE official, Dick Baxter, at a conference on international chemicals control in November"

said that whereas his Department was quite positive, other Departments were certainly less so. He noted that the exemptions were quite wide and that other Departments had told his Department that they would probably be able to find some means of not disclosing. Mr. Baxter said:

"If their culture is agin, I believe they can find a hook to hang it on."

That is not very encouraging. Even if the Department of the Environment is being good, all the other Departments may not be good.

The article continues:

"Mr. Baxter revealed that several Departments are insisting that if industry insists that information is commercially confidential, that would be sufficient reason not to disclose it. It will be open to Departments to ask companies to reconsider, he said, 'but some might not wish to challenge it, others may.'"

In summing up the situation in which people would be left, Mr. Baxter concluded:

"The directive's success . . . is . . . likely to depend on people being willing to go to court. Groups such as Friends of the Earth and the Freedom of Information Campaign have the resources to do so, and 'if I were in their shoes, I would go straight to the European Court of Justice.'"

In the past few years, I have occasionally been to conferences where I have heard officials say interesting things—not only officials from the Department of the Environment. I remember a Department of Energy official saying that it was quite possible for Britain to do without the nuclear component for energy supply if we wanted to, provided that we had energy efficiency and energy conservation measures that worked.

If Mr. Baxter is right—he seems to know what he is talking about—we have substantial cause for concern. Departments can be obstructive and companies in the private sector can be obstructive. The regulations will rely on people going to court, which should not be the case. We should not make people go round a great obstacle course —we should be opening the doors wide so that people can go straight through.

The exception clause is therefore a great problem. Although we could argue that it is the normal legal text, the phrase in regulation 4(1)(a)—

"Nothing in these Regulations shall . . . require the disclosure of any information which is capable of being treated as confidential"—

is far too wide. The other half of the regulation says:

"or authorise or require the disclosure of any information which must be so treated."

The specific and obvious example of where the regulations are drawn in a way that is far too wide—I do not intend to elaborate on the well-made points about international negotiations which relate to regulaton 4(2)(a)—regulation is 4(2)(b). The regulation says:

"For the purpose of these Regulations information is to be capable of being treated as confidential if, and only if, it is . . . information relating to, or to anything which is or has been the subject-matter of, any legal or other proceedings (whether actual or prospective)".

It is a ridiculous proposition that one will allow an exemption—the hon. Member for Monmouth went down this road too—for anything that has ever been the subject of any sort of legal proceedings, no matter how widely defined. Once the case is over, whether traditional legal battle, public inquiry or any of the other proceedings set out in 4(5), under the British system, information should be open and available. There is no excuse at all for such documents to be exempt and it is completely unjustified.

Many issues are the subject of public inquiries. Examples are whether Sizewell B should be built, whether THORP—the thermal oxide reproducing plant—should be brought into operation, whether the M3 bypass should go across Twyford down and whether there should be an east London river crossing at Oxleas wood. All those are the subject of public debate, possible legal cases or applications for judicial review. All that should be in the open. It is disgraceful that we are seeking to grant that exemption, particularly as the directive, as I understand it, does not require it. It provides an opportunity, but not a requirement. The Government are being traditionally defensive on the subject. I do not know whether it is the Department of the Environment or other Departments which have urged the Government to be so.

The list of confidential information on the following page also allows room for ambiguity and prevarication. It states:

"information relating to the confidential deliberations"—

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): At the end of regulation 4(2)(b) there is reference to

[Mr. Mike O'Brien]

"any legal or other proceedings (whether actual or prospective)".

The word "prospective" makes the condition so expansive that anyone seeking to restrict any information, according to the regulations, need only say that they intend to consider taking legal proceedings and they will not have to reveal the information.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He is absolutely right. I was so carried away with my earlier point that I forgot to deal with that. It would be as if we, in this place, were told that matters could not be raised because they were sub judice simply because they might be the subject of legal action at some future date. That would allow anything to be exempted. If there were controversial proposals for orimulsion and it was reported in a newspaper that a campaign group would take legal action if BP went ahead, the regulations would threaten us if we revealed the information.

The regulations also refer to

"information relating to the confidential deliberations of any relevant person".

That contains a hidden question relating to the relevant person—who could be a local councillor, or a member of a Government Department or a quango—and whether specific parts of their deliberations should be confidential.

Regulation 4(2)(d) could allow for real skulduggery. It refers to

"information contained in a document or other record which is still in the course of completion".

We all know how hon. Members occasionally chance upon documents. If we wave our spoils about and say that we have found a secret document belonging to another party, the defence used is normally that what we have is not the final document, but only a draft. It is very difficult to know when a document has been completed, and it is always a defence to say that it has not. The regulations we are debating tonight are not complete—they are only draft regulations. We do not know whether it is a completed document or not. Would it be completed if it had been shown to one person in the Department, or to one person and an expert outside the Department, or to 25 people? The regulation provides a minefield of excuses.

Regulation 4(2)(e) refers to

"information relating to matters to which any commercial industrial confidentiality attaches or affecting any intellectual property".

Public interest should override commercial confidentiality. It is not good enough for a private sector company or a nationalised company, or a company such as PowerGen, which is an in-between company, to say that the matter is commercially confidential. That assertion must be tested. We know that, if the matter is taken to court, a plea can be entered stating that the information is commercially confidential and the matter will not be aired.

There should be a public interest test. Environmental information is no good if it is available only from the public sector. People living in Pontypool need to know what ReChem is doing, and people living just outside Presteigne or Kington near the borders of Powys need to know what the local garage is doing burning tyres——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Or Coalite.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman refers to Coalite. There are loads of issues, and they include opencast mining, the Bolsover farmers and the allegations about the pollution of milk. It is no good allowing the private sector merely to say, "This is a confidential matter."

The next part of the regulations elaborates on what "confidential" means. It really is not good enough to define "confidential" in such a way as effectively to allow pleas of confidentiality always to win the day. That is the danger of the regulations: although they open a door, someone the other side of that door who wants to close it can do so by saying that commercial confidentiality is at stake.

The problem is that the directive allows Governments to be far too restrictive. It would have been better had there been a standard way of providing information, but that opportunity has gone. It would also have been better if the Government had not availed themselves of the right to exempt unfinished documents or data. That blanket restriction is not necessary and should not have been included.

Finally, as the official from the Department of the Environment said, we should not have regulations which need constantly to be tested in court. Like many other hon. Members, I trained as a lawyer, but I believe that the test of good legislation, particularly freedom of information legislation, is not the amount of work that it gives to lawyers but the extent to which it allows the public access to information without having to have recourse to lawyers —in other words, how easy it is for the public to get the information that they require.

I hope that we shall review the workings of the legislation in the light of experience, before the end of next year, and yearly thereafter. As far as they go, the regulations are welcome, but they do not prove that the Government are yet converted either to the cause of environmental openness or to real freedom of information. To some of us, that comes as no surprise; even so, we had hoped that, after all this time, this very necessary open door might have been opened slightly wider tonight.

9.27 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): Let me take the opportunity to make some comments about the relationship that surely exists between the availability of environmental information and public confidence in the way in which the Government and other bodies handle environmental issues. It seems to me self-evident that, even if the Government took all the correct action, full public confidence in their actions would be unlikely to be forthcoming unless sufficient environmental information was available to members of the public.

I hope that the Minister will be able to tell me whether the regulations would assist the public on two specific issues. If the answer is no, the regulations are deficient. If the answer is yes, they may be helpful. The first issue concerns the import of toxic waste into the United Kingdom from developed countries, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has already referred.

For several months, hon. Members, including me, have been engaged in a fruitless correspondence with Ministers and in exchanges at oral questions on this issue. We have regularly been told that the Government have negotiated the power to limit the import of toxic waste. We have not yet extracted a simple pledge that the import of toxic waste from developed countries will be stopped. That is a matter

of considerable local concern in Southampton, both because thousands of tonnes of toxic waste from developed countries are imported through the docks and travel our roads and railways and because there is a ReChem incinerator plant on the waterside.

The fact that ReChem was recently successfully prosecuted for exceeding discharge limits has done nothing to reassure local people about the operation of the plant. Having listened to the debate, and given ReChem's tendency to find itself in court over these matters, I wonder to what extent the regulations will help local people to obtain the information that they need about the ReChem plant's operations. Will the regulations make it easier to get an idea of what the Government intend to do about importing toxic waste from developed countries?

Secondly, I am concerned about the ability of the regulations to reduce the conflict surrounding projects with major environmental implications. Every hon. Member will be aware that the construction of the M3 through Twyford down is one of the most controversial and environmentally damaging projects under way in the United Kingdom. The scheme has been bitterly opposed by many people, both locally and nationally. Within the past week the conflict has degenerated into violence and thuggery against protesters on Twyford down.

The inadequacy of the environmental impact assessment of the scheme, and of assessment of the benefits of alternative schemes, has been one of the consistent themes behind opposition to cutting a major road through the down. The absence of good assessment and decent information has disillusioned environmentalists throughout the United Kingdom, and has been a source of dispute with the European Commission.

Having listened to the debate, and recognising how much of the information has been subject to local inquiries, I wonder whether the regulations would enable better environmental information to be made available to the public. It is certainly true that the deep and widespread belief that the environmental consequences of the M3 cutting have been ignored has directly fuelled continuing protests against the motorway in recent months. They also fuelled the violent scene on the down last week.

I have spoken to reputable witnesses, and it has been widely reported in the press that the peaceful protesters on Twyford down were subjected to unprecedented violence by the employees of private security firms—violence that took place under the eyes of the police.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. That is not covered in the regulations. The hon. Gentleman is right to raise queries on what is contained in the regulations, but it is not in order for him to go into detail about local issues.

Mr. Denham: I accept your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wished to make it clear that, if environmental information is not made available to the public in an acceptable and usable form, it contributes to a breakdown in public confidence in the planning process and in Government actions, which triggers a chain of events. At Twyford down, that led to peaceful protests and a response by private security firms and—I am told—by the police, which I find utterly unacceptable.

The House must face up to the question whether the regulations will give the public sufficient confidence in the planning processes for projects such as the M3 and whether they will lead to a consensus that the Government are acting properly. If the regulations contribute to that, they are helpful. If they fail to lead to that consensus, they are not.

People who have studied the regulations in detail have mentioned exclusions on the grounds of confidentiality, on the grounds that projects are subject to public inquiries —as are motorways—and on the grounds that they are subject to international law, which presumably refers to the European Community challenge as to whether the M3 scheme has been planned properly.

The regulations will not restore public confidence. If it is not restored, protests of the sort that I described will take place. Young people with what some may view as eccentric or unusual life styles are Thatcher's children. They have never known a Government with values different from the materialistic and anti-environmentalist attitudes of this Government. That is why they became involved in the protest. If the Government wish to restore widespread confidence in their planning processes, good environmental information must be made available.

I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your tolerance. I accept that I have stretched the debate a little beyond the narrow legalistic terms of the regulations, but it is important to note that the sort of conflicts that have been witnessed recently stem from a breakdown of public confidence in the planning process. Therefore, the regulations are not dry legalistic matters, but relate to the way in which the Government and our society conduct their affairs without conflict and by consensus.

9.34 pm

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): We are better off with the regulations than without them, but they do not go far enough. They could have been so much more and so much better.

Access to information on the environment is fundamentally important to environmental groups such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, to individuals who have an interest in environmental protection and to legislators. It is also essential to business and industry, and the regulations fail to address the needs of business and industry.

There is in the regulations an assumption that confidentiality is important to business. It is a bureaucrat's assumption. Access to a free market in information on the environment is important to business. The regulations allow too many bureaucrats to put too many obstructions in the way of people seeking information to which they should have a right.

The taxpayer will often have paid, through grants or contracts, for information to be collated and, in principle, access should be denied only in rare cases. The opportunities that the regulations provide for bureaucratic obstruction are legion. For example, regulation 4(2)(d) allows unfinished data or information to be kept confidential. That is much too broad. Organisations could unreasonably withhold information on the excuse that it forms part of a larger and still incomplete study. That may allow important information to be withheld almost indefinitely.

Regulation 4(2)(e) allows information to be restricted if it relates to commercial or industrial information or affects any intellectual property.

[Mr. Mike O'Brien]

There is a nice restrictive definition of what relates to the environment in regulation 2(2)(a), but when we come later to the nature of information relating to commercial or industrial information, it is left open. It simply refers to "information relating to". It does not have to be the actual confidential information itself. Any information which relates to any other information which may be confidential can also be excluded. Again, that is much too broad an exclusion.

Yes, there is a legitimate area of business and product secrecy. Businesses will want to protect some of their processes. But business also has a right to know. I am looking here just at the way in which business would view the matter. A free market in industrial and commercial information is to be encouraged to enable all companies to take advantage of best practice and to ensure that they protect the environment. Regulation 4(2)(e) gives licence to bureaucratic secrecy and it encourages the wrong thing in terms of the needs of business.

In addition, that regulation is either badly worded or it simply says that there is a right to exclude information relating to any intellectual property. That is a definition with a real blunderbuss approach to the law. Business needs an open market to information, and as open a market as possible, to ensure that it can influence legislation to be able to seize the initiative in a new green market for products and to ensure that, unknown to itself, it is not polluting. For example, if data show that a business is polluting in a way previously not known, it is important that that information should be readily available.

Towards the end of the 1990s and into the 21st century, business will move into a much greener market. Whether from Europe or domestically, there are likely to be more laws to protect the environment, perhaps new taxes and new customer requirements. All that must be planned for and anticipated, and new investment programmes have to be framed, within the context of knowledge about the environment. If some of that important knowledge is not available to business because the bureaucrats who hold it are able to use the clauses to restrict it, business will not be able to be involved in the early stages of deciding what sort of environmental regulations are required.

In Germany and other EC countries, the large companies have lobbyists who are always ready to become involved at an early stage in framing legislation to regulate the European economy. All too often, German businesses can become involved at the beginning in framing Euro-regulations in a way that will benefit them. That is because they have access to information supplied by the Government. Under the regulations, such Government support may well be denied to industry in this country. Business in Britain is not encouraged to become involved at an early stage in framing regulations. There is an unwillingness to allow information to be made available to British companies. The Government should encourage business to become involved.

I am lucky enough to have in my constituency a 3M factory at Atherstone. That company has a very good attitude towards the environment. It wants to be involved and to have as much information as possible about its processes and the products that it will provide for customers in the green market of the future. That company needs access to as much information as it can get, because it has to make long-term commercial decisions about the sort of future market in which it will operate. The regulations do not address the needs of that business or of other businesses which should be encouraged to deal with regulations at an early stage. Access to information that can be used to frame arguments in the EC and in Whitehall is essential. If local authorities or the Government hold back on such information, it could have a long-term impact on jobs.

Out there is a large, new green market which is estimated to be worth £50 billion. Many consumers are interested in buying products with a green tinge, products that are environmentally sound. They want to buy from companies in which they can have faith, and those companies must be able to demonstrate integrity. In order to be in that green market, businesses must invest. Their products in which they have invested so much may have been subjected to research, the data on which are controlled by the Government or by local authorities and not revealed. As a result of the regulations, bureaucrats will be able to withhold that information, and those British companies will not be able to take full advantage of a market in which they might well have been the leaders.

I say again that the regulations do not respond to the needs of business. Companies must be able to anticipate the changes in environmental legislation. Governments may well legislate on the basis of information that is available to them and which they will not divulge. Therefore, businesses do not know about it and cannot make essential plans. This bureaucrats charter will prevent information being revealed about the environment. The Government pride themselves on being pro-business, but the regulations have a narrow view about what is good for business. They should be about open information that will help citizens and business. Instead, it is about how to create conditions for restricting information. It is a failed opportunity.

In some ways, inherent in the regulations is a restriction on information that might be available in other EC countries. That could damage British industry and British jobs in the long term. It is time that the Government reconsidered the needs of business in access to information. They should realise that a free market in information on the environment is now essential. Business is moving into a different market position, and it must have access to information. The regulations do not provide it with that access, so they should be reconsidered. As has already been said, they will result only in more lawyers earning more money from more litigation in an attempt to get greater access to information. That is not the way to approach these matters.

When I mentioned information being available in other EC countries, the Minister shook his head—obviously suggesting that it would not be available. He kids himself. The contact of many other countries with their business communities in providing information is much more open, direct and valuable than the Government's attitude to our businesses. That is evident from the regulations.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I hope that the Minister will respond to the hon. Gentleman's valid points—and, indeed, to the valid points raised by other hon. Members. It appears that there is concern within the Department—for example, the quote from the official—and it is clear that other Departments have put pressure on the

Department of the Environment. It may be that it is those other Departments that do not understand the benefits of more open access for the commercial world. It would be interesting if the Minister specifically answered the question about where the pressure to restrict information has come from—his Department or elsewhere. If we knew that, we would know where to apply pressure in the months ahead.

Mr. O'Brien: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it would be useful if the Minister identified the culprits. They are prepared to put not only the environment at risk, but many businesses that want both to protect the environment and to take advantage of the big green pay-off that will be available if they manage to get a lead in the green market of the future. If there are culprits among Ministers and bureaucrats in Whitehall, the House and the public have a right to know the identity of those enemies of the environment. They may not be the Minister and his Department, but we must know who they are.

9.48 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): One thing is certain: during the time that I have been a Member of Parliament there has been a huge change in people's perception of the environment. That is no better demonstrated than in my constituency, where there were 15 or 16 pits when I first became a Member of the House. Now there are only four, and if the Government have their way there will be none in north Derbyshire in a few weeks. I hope that the great public show of determination during recent weeks will persuade the Government to think again.

Because of that change in people's perception, many more of our constituents are now aware of their rights and powers in environmental protection which hitherto they would not have thought to use. It used to be argued that, if a Member of Parliament had a middle-class constituency and loads of suburbia-land, he had a great number of complaints about the environment. My experience in Bolsover over recent years with the Coalite issue has been staggering. Many of those directly connected with the firm and many who work in the pits have wanted to exercise over and over their right to express an opinion on the environment.

That is why, when I listened to my hon. Friends and others discussing the regulations, I was drawn to the conclusion that the Government were simply seeking the least common denominator among the regulations. They have obviously said, "How can we best use the regulations without giving too much away? How can we protect our business friends who pay large sums of money to the Tory party at election time?"—as opposed to the business people my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) referred to. My guess is that that is what motivates Tory Members in everything that they do. If they add a little flavour and try to attack trade unionism at the same time, it adds grist to the mill. That is the angle from which the Tories approach such matters. The previous Prime Minister used to ask whose side people were on before they were appointed.

The regulations would help companies such as Coalite Management in my constituency. Coalite has got by pretty nicely as a result of the Tory Government. In the past 18 months, it has put three farmers out of business, and made the population of Bolsover and Shuttlewood live in fear. The Government have now come along with regulations that will fortify such firms, which do not want to let people into their secrets.

In the *Evening Standard* the other day I spotted the fact that Coalite's shares had fallen to 6·5p. I also find that the National Farmers Union is belatedly suing Coalite for compensation for the three farmers who have been out of business for some 18 months.

I then hear that a planted question was tabled by a Derbyshire Tory Member today, asking about dioxins in my constituency. That hon. Member has never raised the matter before and I am bound to conclude that some fishy business is going on. When I saw the regulations, it all added up: the Government are operating on the basis of tightening the regulations to their benefit in the finest possible way while at the same time giving the green light to a beleaguered company called Coalite by saying that certain things involving farmers can now take place. From what I hear from the farmers, that can only benefit the firm. The Minister knows a little about that subject, as he used to be in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Why have the Government found it necessary to have that question planted and stage this reply about the matters affecting Coalite? Why, under the regulations, do the Government always favour their friends?

Were it not Christmas, with many hon. Members already gone, we should have voted against the regulations.

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman can still do so.

Mr. Skinner: I am searching for a teller, because one Member cannot divide on his own. I am toying with the idea at present. Some of my hon. Friends have said that half a loaf is better than no bread at all. Perhaps we shall sustain that argument for tonight.

Why do the Government feel it necessary to give Coalite the green light when it is in trouble, with its shares having plummeted, the National Farmers Union suing it, and the National Rivers Authority having taken out a case against it for river pollution? Why cannot the Government just sit idly by? Why do they feel the need to rescue the company's directors?

The regulations will not make it easier for people who are protesting against Coalite and the thousands of people who have signed a petition to stop an incinerator at Coalite. Is it possible, under the regulations, for the people who do not want the new incinerator to seek redress from the Government? Do they help them? What I have heard from my hon. Friends makes it sound as if they do not. It sounds as though they will not give them any assistance, and I thought that the regulations were to help people not only to be informed about environmental protection, but to protest against what they see in their locality. From what I gather, they will not be able to do anything of the kind.

The Minister is well informed on this subject, so I hope that he will answer in the affirmative and make it clear that, as a result of the regulations, the people in Bolsover who are protesting against the new incinerator to be built by Coalite will stand a chance of stopping it.

9.55 pm

Mr. Maclean: I shall respond first to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). As usual, I admire the way that he can walk into the Chamber reasonably near the end of our debate and pick up the thread of the argument and still make his local case on behalf of his constituents—in this instance over the dioxin and Coalite case. He will be aware from his reading of the regulations, which implement an EC directive—it is intriguing that he does not, at the moment, intend to vote against them—and from my opening remarks that his constituents will have considerable new rights to obtain information from the relevant bodies and organisations. He will be able to decide, from the careful consideration that he will have given my opening remarks—wherever he may have heard them—whether Coalite would consider itself a relevant body to give information.

I cannot comment on what was presumably a written question, which may have been answered by another Department. The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that, when the question was answered, I was still in Brussels negotiating for his constituents even more rights over access to information. It must be a matter for him to decide, on his reading of the regulations, whether they are of as much help to his constituents as I believe they are.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Minister entirely misses the point. The question is not whether Coalite is a relevant body, because clearly it is, but whether Coalite will take refuge in the commercial confidentiality clauses in the regulations to claim that information that is material to the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is commercially confidential. That is the loophole that it will use.

Mr. Maclean: It is clear that relevant bodies are under a duty to provide information, but that there are certain exceptions to that, although each case must be decided on its merits. If the bodies fail to provide information, those who wish access to it have the right of redress.

I have one point to make about public bodies and Departments in relation to the hon. Gentleman's constituency. In my time in the Ministry—if anything, that trend will have strengthened over the past few months—it has made available all relevant information which it had on the dioxin incident, commissioned research and made available as much of the resulting information as possible. I should not speculate at the Dispatch Box, but I suspect that the National Farmers Union has only now been able to take legal action because of the Government's information, which the research came up with, which was published and which the hon. Gentleman's constituents are able to make use of. If they are to take action, I shall not comment further on the case because I should not want to prejudice it.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) came along with a long wish list of what he would ideally like in terms of freedom of information law. He seems to have forgotten that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is committed—the Prime Minister has committed the whole Government—to reviewing Government information access. A paper will be published in the new year dealing with the wider question of access to all Government information.

The hon. Gentleman's wish list is simply not relevant when we are faithfully trying to implement an EC directive such as this. I suspect that his party's view is that we should always faithfully implement EC directives; if we depart from that and come up with something different that would bring us into the European Court in no time at all, and presumably he would not be pleased.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether we would review progress on legislation. My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) in a splendid intervention—adding to his brilliant speech—reminded us that we are under a duty to report on progress within four years——

Mr. Skinner: He is after the Minister's job.

Mr. Maclean: In many circumstances, I would be happy to hand it over, especially when answering technical or legal debates such as this one.

In Brussels this morning we reached agreement on a unique British initiative on reporting and reviewing legislation. All Ministers of the Environment Council were unanimous on this. The EC is good at churning out information; it has not been particularly good at reviewing legislation or monitoring its progress. At our instigation, the Commission produced a paper that received unanimous approval. In future Environment Councils—I hope that the practice will spread to all others as well—we will find time every year to review existing legislation, to report on progress and to amend legislation where necessary.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I remember that the Government set that as one of their objectives for the presidency. It is wholly commendable. The Minister said that I was inconsistent in arguing for the implementation of the directive at the same time as arguing for the widest possible freedom of information. There is no inconsistency in that. As he well knows, the directive would have allowed the Government to do more than they did, but they refused to use that leeway to the full. They have implemented the document too narrowly—that is the criticism.

Mr. Maclean: I reject that, but I accept the hon. Gentleman's point that this was one of our presidential objectives. I have today answered a written question setting out our achievements over the past 48 hours in Brussels. The achievement of this objective was only one of many. They include the drastic tightening up of the Copenhagen agreement on chlorofluorocarbons and ozone. We shall return to look at hydrochlorofluorocarbons and methyl bromide in the new year—another British aim. This morning we unanimously agreed the fifth action programme. We have drastically tightened up on van emissions; and we have given a full agenda to Denmark to go on with, even though we inherited a rather lighter agenda. I hope the the whole House will read that written answer. It has been a spectacular triumph, and I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on it. We like to have our little triumphs to add to the Edinburgh triumph.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey asked me about Northern Ireland. He knows that separate legislative procedures operate for Northern Ireland, and it will be up to the Northern Ireland office to implement the regulations as soon as possible.

The hon. Gentleman asked what will happen if someone who has approached a relevant body for information gets an inadequate response. The inquirer has a right of redress if he or she feels that the response has

been inadequate. The hon. Gentleman also said that often inquirers might not have a clue what information they wanted. I would say: tough luck. An inquirer should not be able to ask for all the information that a body has and then fish through it to see whether anything hits the fan. He must be more specific than that.

The hon. Gentleman made great play of what he saw as an obstruction in Whitehall. If there were any truth in that, I would not tonight be urging the House to agree to regulations that apply to all Government Departments.

We have got agreement across Whitehall. We would not have been able to reach agreement two years ago unless we had such agreement. The hon. Gentleman shows his complete lack of knowledge of how government works. Before we go to any European Council and agree legislation, all Departments must, of course, be in agreement; otherwise, we would not sign up to any legislation. We reach such agreement automatically, as a matter of course. Whitehall was in agreement two years ago when we agreed the directive under the Irish presidency. We were in agreement when we produced the regulations. There is no obstacle course.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Maclean: No, I will not give way. It is pointless.

The hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) asked whether individual constituency cases will be covered by the regulations. All I can say is that they give the public many more rights to acquire environmental information from many public and relevant bodies. There is one point on which I must take issue with him. He must not inadvertently mislead the House on the subject of toxic waste by saying that we have not announced our policy. I made our policy abundantly plain in Question Time two weeks ago. We had yet another success at the meeting of European Environment Ministers this morning, when we managed to get agreement on how we would implement the Basle convention on the trans-frontier movement of toxic waste.

We have made our policy clear. We fought hard to include the self-sufficiency principle in the regulations on the trans-frontier movement of shipments of waste. We fought hard for it and we got it. That will allow us to draw up national plans, which we are starting on now, in readiness for when the EC regulations take effect. Ratification of the Basle convention is a matter for the Community—we cannot ratify it unilaterally, because that would be illegal. Once that convention is ratified and the regulations take effect in 1994, we intend to have our national plans in place. They will allow us to turn off the tap on the importation of toxic waste from major developed countries.

Mr. Denham: The Minister has just said, as he has on a number of occasions, that the regulations will allow our Government to turn off the tap on toxic waste imports. That is not in dispute. However, we have not heard yet from the Minister that the Government will use that power to turn off the tap. I will be entirely satisfied if the Minister can give a pledge that toxic waste imports from developed countries will stop.

Mr. Maclean: I have made that pledge before. The only reason that we argued for that power to be included in the regulations was to use it, not to leave it on the shelf. I am drawing up plans to take advantage of, use and implement the regulations so that I can turn off that tap. It is not a question of just having the power to do that, otherwise there would be no point in agreeing to the regulations.

Mr. Denham: That is the first time that pledge has been given.

Mr. Maclean: Please check back in *Hansard*.

The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) claimed that bureaucratic obstruction would somehow destroy the ability of British industry to seize the green initiative. That is absolute nonsense. He was unable to cite one instance where the regulations that we were putting through tonight depart from the directive by one jot or tittle. We are implementing an EC directive, and it also happens to be British Government policy.

The hon. Gentleman was unduly pessimistic about the way in which British industry will react to the initiative. In the past few months, I have addressed a number of seminars of representatives of British industry on matters such as eco-audit, eco-labelling, and the follow-up to the Earth summit at Rio. The message has got through to British industry that the environment and environmental equipment, techniques and technology represent mega bucks in the future.

If industries want customers, staff to work for them, their shareholders to be happy, insurance companies to insure them and the banks to lend them money, they better be clean and green in the future. They should develop such products. That is why an unprecedented number of industries are applying for information on the new British standard, BS 7750. That is a positive sign.

The hon. Gentleman also said that many individuals would want to know whether the products from certain companies are environmentally friendly. We are keen, of course, on eco-labelling, and it is a pity that there have been some problems in the EC in getting some of the rules and systems for that labelling up and running. We have clearly said that, unless things move much more quickly, we reserve the right to take our own action—although I do not want to do that; I want to stick with an EC-wide regulation.

This morning, we nearly secured agreement on the eco-audit scheme. Under the scheme, all EC companies that show that they have environmentally friendly policies will satisfy the requirements of the legislation. We encountered severe difficulties last night: seven major objections were advanced by other countries. None the less, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment persuaded all those countries to withdraw their objections—with the exception of Germany, which maintained a general reserve. I hope that we shall secure agreement early in the new year. To get the whole eco-audit regulation up and running would be a tremendous achievement, and I hope that Germany will appreciate the wishes of the other 11 countries.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) came up with what seemed to be a strong list of objections. He presented seven points of substance which, he seemed to think, proved that the regulations were inadequate, or that we were not implementing the directive in some respect. To be fair, he began by saying that, generally speaking, the regulations were very good, and that we had made considerable progress.

A casual observer would probably have concluded that there was something in the hon. Gentleman's seven points

[Mr. Maclean]

—until, that is, my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth demolished every one of them. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend: I have never seen a more competent demolition job applied to an Opposition spokesman's argument. All seven points were proved to be spurious, and my hon. Friend demonstrated that we had faithfully implemented the directive without departing from it.

Mr. Chris Smith: Will the Minister address himself to the one point with which the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) agreed—the inclusion in the regulations of a provision limiting access to information on matters relating to public and local inquiries?

Mr. Maclean: I shall come to that in a moment.

Let me deal with another aspect of the hon. Gentleman's speech, which I consider very important. I had always considered the hon. Gentleman to be fair—slightly misguided, perhaps, but fair. Tonight, however, he was very unfair when he inadvertently gave the House a misleading impression of the terms of a written answer that I gave. Let me place on record exactly what I said.

The hon. Gentleman seemed to imply that I had given a duplicitous reply to a question about the waste shipments regulation. He seemed to suggest that I had said that we would implement it and ensure that we had national plans, having said in an answer six days earlier that there would be no changes to existing UK law and practice. In fact, I answered two questions together. I was asked what steps I intended to take

"to implement the EC regulations agreed on the supervision and control of shipments of toxic waste; and when he will publish the regulations".

I was also asked whether I would make it my policy, in implementing the proposals,

"to ensure that toxic waste is disposed of as close as possible to its source within the United Kingdom and that no waste is imported for commercial gain."

In answer to the first question, I said:

"The regulation will be published in the Official Journal after adoption by the Council and is likely to apply 15 months after publication. We shall be giving careful consideration to the application of the regulation's provisions in relation to imports for final disposal."

In answer to the second question, I said:

"We expect no change as a result of the regulation to existing practice within the United Kingdom."—[*Official Report*, 3 December 1992; Vol. 215, c. 289.]

In view of my assurances now and at the last Question Time that we are keen to implement the regulation on toxic waste imports and to ratify the Basle convention, and that I shall draw up national self-sufficiency plans which will allow me, for want of a better phrase, to turn off the tap of toxic waste, will the hon. Gentleman accept my assurances and that he has misled himself about the interpretation of my answer? Will he kindly say that my explanation is correct?

Mr. Chris Smith: I am happy to accept the Minister's explanation, but the distinction that he draws between the two parts of his answer is not specified and it is not clear from the answer as it stands on the printed page. He has, however, admirably clarified what he meant, and tonight he has given us for the first time a clear assurance that the Government intend to stop the importation of toxic waste from other developed countries. That is an extremely welcome assurance. We have been demanding it for months and we are glad to hear it from the Minister.

Mr. Maclean: I accept the hon. Gentleman's explanation. It was obvious from the answer that I was answering two separate questions: it is slightly disingenuous of the hon. Gentleman to suggest otherwise. There is no need for me to repeat what I said about toxic waste. We shall take advantage of all the provisions in the regulations that will allow us to make national plans as far as the EC regulations allow us to go in turning off the tap of toxic waste from developed countries.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury and my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth asked about local inquiries. The discretion to withhold the information in regulation 4(2) (b) will be exercised in a few cases where such information is not automatically available—for example, where it may be withdrawn from the record or background documents and advice. I accept that this is a complex issue. I am happy to write to my hon. Friend and to discuss it with him.

We have had quite a good debate. I am sorry that some Opposition Members, while saying that they support the regulations and their party's policy on the EC and are keen to implement EC regulations, were then so carping about the fact that we have faithfully implemented the regulations I did not hear a single comment from an Opposition Member to suggest that we have failed in any way to implement the provisions of the directive.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: No, I will not. The hon. Gentleman made a long speech, and I must wind up.

It would be foolish in the extreme for us to introduce regulations that we did not believe implemented an EC regulation, because we know full well that that would land us in the European Court of Justice. We consulted widely on the regulations and prepared them carefully. They provide new rights of access to environmental information to 56 million people in this country. I commend them to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Environmental Information Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm that, procedurally, nothing would have prevented the Government from laying before the House the Northern Ireland regulations—the missing part of the jigsaw of the regulations that we have just debated—after the last debate and before the two orders that you are about to put to the House? Could that have been done, because if it could people should realise that the Government chose not to do so?

Madam Speaker: That is rather hypothetical, because no such order has been presented to me.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together items Nos. 3 and 4 on the Order Paper.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

NORTHERN IRELAND

That the draft Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries (Repeals) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 19th October, be approved.

That the draft Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 (Amendment) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 30th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Question agreed to.

WAYS AND MEANS

ROAD TRAFFIC (DRIVING INSTRUCTION BY DISABLED PERSONS) BILL

Resolved,

That, for the purpose of any Act resulting from the Road Traffic (Driving Instruction by Disabled Persons) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment of any fees into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Expo '92 (Seville)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

10.19 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Between 20 April and 12 October this year, Seville hosted the first universal exposition to be held in Europe since the Brussels exposition of 1958. One hundred and eight nations displayed the best that they could offer. As with the Olympics, the Spanish showed their flair for organisation. The event, which was fittingly proclaimed the eighth wonder of the world, brought back fond memories of the 1951 Festival of Britain and was an ideal opportunity for the British Government to show the very best of Britain.

In April this year, expectations were high. The *Today* newspaper wrote:

"a £28 million showcase of British excellence will be the main attraction at EXPO 92. The British Pavilion, a steel and glass structure the size of Westminster Abbey, will bring lucrative business deals to fifty UK sponsoring firms."

The pavilion, which reputedly cost £25 million of taxpayers' money—perhaps the Minister will say whether that was so—was built for that occasion and for that occasion only. It had a six-month shelf life. Other pavilions were built with a second purpose in mind once the expo was over. For example, the Spanish pavilion was sold to Spanish universities and is being put to good use. Am I right in presuming that there is no function for the British pavilion and that taxpayers are paying £25 million which is then to be written off?

The Department of Trade and Industry claimed:

"Britain will have a first-class pavilion to demonstrate her originality and the scale of her resurgence in many areas of manufacturing, technology and services."

Tragically, the reality was very different.

The British pavilion was on one of the main promenades where some of the larger pavilions were based. It was not far from the United States pavilion, but it was a pity that our Government did not take a leaf from the Americans' book. The American pavilion was funded not by the taxpayer but business sponsorship. I am told that the entire bill for the British pavilion is to be picked up by the British taxpayer.

Our pavilion looked like some others—water flowing from the roof and a pond below. That seems to be the favoured design today. The only trouble was that there was nothing much inside other than a procession of escalators transporting people to small floor areas which were supposed to reflect the essence of Britain. There were three or four displays illustrating Britain as a leader in the scientific world.

Oddly enough, the public seemed to judge the success of each country's exhibition by the length of the queue outside. The question was, "How long is the queue at such and such a pavilion?" Canada topped the list with a five-hour wait but the United Kingdom's queue was only about 40 minutes, in spite of the fact that the designers had so designed the pavilion that there was a bottleneck at the entrance which restricted the number of people who could enter.

The governing factor was the number who could watch a video being shown in the entrance to the pavilion. In the meantime, the rest of the pavilion was virtually empty. It was a pity that the video made so little mention of our heritage: our grand buildings, the history of our

[Mr. Anthony Steen]

monarchy, our traditions, the beauty of our countryside, the peculiar British institutions, the wonders of Scotland —the highlands and the islands—the mountains and language of Wales and the special flavour of Northern Ireland.

Once the eight-minute film had finished, there was a rush to the escalators like the first day of a Harrods sale or the Northern line during the rush hour. On one floor there was a Land Rover perched in the middle of nowhere; on another, in a sealed container, Marks and Spencer underwear. Such was the dearth of products that it looked as though the bailiffs had made a recent visit to the inside of the British pavilion. Perhaps it was a true, but unfortunate, reflection of our country. Certainly those experiencing Britain through the pavilion must have come to the sad conclusion that the country must be nearly bankrupt. That is not so. This country has history, imagination, flavour, creativity, skills, ingenuity, a race of various cultures, colours and religions, a variety of different political views, democracy and a rich culture. It is a country in which it is safe to invest and it is a unique place in which to live.

The public wanted souvenirs, but I am afraid that they were nowhere to be found. All the other pavilions had stickers and souvenirs and people rushed to get them. In the British pavilion, there was none. At the information desk, I was told that there were no stickers, no pins, no tourist information and no shop in which to buy things. That was not entirely true. There was a shop, but I am afraid that it was not doing much business: a young man who was hovering around the shell of the shop confessed in hushed tones that the shop was in fact in liquidation and that the liquidator was somewhere about, but not easily located.

What other country at a worldwide exposition would tell the world that the sole concessionaire to a great pavilion, which had won the franchise against all other competition and been granted this special favour by the DTI, had gone bust? Perhaps, of course, it was a somewhat novel idea of the DTI that the pavilion was designed to exploit our skill as a country in dealing with bankruptcy. Perhaps, after all, this was part of the DTI's grand design. Perhaps it was proud that we were the only country able to provide on-the-spot advice on liquidations. The bareness of the area and the windswept look of the first floor gave the impression of one of the British seaside resorts off-season—Clacton, perhaps.

In its wisdom, the DTI selected Bickerton Associates as exclusive concessionaire for all the products displayed in the pavilion. Bickerton was the sole distributor and was appointed as such. No doubt the DTI officials were most cautious when selecting the concessionaire, bearing in mind that it would reflect the business profile of Great Britain to the world. The DTI is the guardian of trade and industry. Those who dealt with Bickerton took it that the DTI had looked carefully at the antecedents of the company, its track record, its management and the acumen of its directors. All industries in Britain wishing to exhibit or to sell goods in the pavilion had to do so through Bickerton. It was an exclusive franchise.

It is odd that DTI officials did not ascertain that an identical company, run by the same directors, had been struck off the Companies house records in 1989. That company had failed to submit accounts and annual returns. Could one conceive of anyone, let alone the DTI, appointing as the United Kingdom's ambassador a company whose board comprised the directors of a bankrupt company?

Bickerton representatives, together with DTI officials, selected British companies to sell stock at the shop. Bickerton requested advance payments of 8 per cent. of projected sales from each of the participating companies, including Dartington Crystal, whose managing director lives in my constituency. He was asked to send an advance of £10,200 to Bickerton and Bickerton was apparently supposed to forward that money, as an 8 per cent. advance, to the DTI. I should like the Minister to tell the House whether that money was actually sent to the DTI or whether Bickerton pocketed it. Bickerton took its stock to Spain without paying any of the British companies for it, and it started to trade. I should perhaps mention that we are not talking about peanuts but about £500,000-worth of goods or more.

The number of people visiting the pavilion was unfortunately far below the DTI's expectations. That is no wonder when one realises that there was not much inside to see. The DTI predicted, quite wrongly, 18,000 people a day. It now says that it got the figure wrong and that the actual figure was 12,000 a day. The British companies involved say that the real figure was 9,000 a day. Other pavilions had double or treble those numbers because people wanted to go and see what they had to offer. Understandably, sales were far lower than had been envisaged. The sales were less than £400,000, compared with Bickerton's forecast of £1·4 million and the DTI's own inflated sales forecast of £2·4 million.

Bickerton went into receivership in August, leaving 54 companies stranded and owed more than £500,000. The companies have just recently had their deposits returned after a battle with DTI officials. As for the rest of the money owed—£40,000 in the case of Dartington Crystal —the DTI seems to be washing its hands of the matter, saying that it is not the Department's responsibility. Who is responsible? The DTI introduced Bickerton to all the companies, saying that it was Government-appointed, Government-selected and Government-approved. The DTI's claim that it is not responsible for the concessionaire's activity is one of the shabbiest attempts to avoid responsibility that I have ever heard.

The DTI was involved in the pavilion's activities up to its eyeballs. When the concessionaire, Bickerton, discovered that under Spanish law it could not trade as the main retailer at Expo 92 without registering as a Spanish company, the DTI took on the main retailer role and banked all the credit card receipts in a DTI account set up in Seville. I am told that the account still exists. The Minister may wish to be briefed on the subject—I am prepared to give him time to be so—but will he tell the House how much money there is in the secret Seville account? Why did we open an account in Seville? When will the Minister get the money out and pass it over to the companies which have lost so much?

Given that the DTI had an intimate involvement in the retailing operation, it must honour its commitments by repaying the suppliers who were persuaded to offer to sell goods at the exhibition. After all, we are the party of small firms, and I should have thought that the Minister would want to salvage some pride from what has become an appalling affair.

The scandal was not hidden away in the corridors of Whitehall: it was there for all to see at the most prestigious trade fair ever. That is the sort of incompetence that one might expect from a third-world dictatorship or a banana republic, not from a member of the exclusive G7 club of industrialised nations and the country that holds the presidency of the EC.

As well as there being no pins or stickers, no propaganda or shop, and nothing for visitors to take away, those in the pavilion could not use the computers to show Britain's high-tech profile. I do not know whether the minister knows the appalling catalogue of disasters. The Apricot computer system crashed two months after it was installed, and was inoperative for three months, so it is understandable that there was not much throughput in the British pavilion: there was nothing very much for people to do—they could not buy or see anything; all they could do was go up and down the wretched escalators.

After queueing for about 30 minutes, watching two films, travelling up and down the building and searching in vain for any little reminder of our day, I thought that nothing would be better than a refreshing cup of tea. I was with my brother-in-law, who works for the EC Commission, and we decided to go down to the basement and enjoy a nice cup of British tea. I thought that Twining or Jacksons would go down a treat, so we went to the bowels of the pavilion and asked, "May we have a pot of tea?" A smiling student offered us a teabag. "Cucumber sandwiches?" asked my brother-in-law. We were offered a scone the size of a football and as dry as the Nevada desert.

The cakes were Spanish; the place was messy, undistinguished and unpleasant—like a typical British greasy spoon café. There were dirty plates and cups everywhere, napkins all over the floor and the staff seemed to be inexperienced students. I had heard rumors that the café was not only undistinguished, but was selling non-British goods, which was certainly borne out by the cakes. We had a battle even to get English wine in the pavilion.

I heard about the appalling things going on at Expo 92 in June, and posed a number of parliamentary questions to the Minister of State about English wine. On 30 June I asked whether he would remove all Spanish wine from the British pavilion. It seemed sensible to have English wine at a British pavilion.

Needless to say, the Minister said that he would not remove the Spanish wine. Even though it was the British pavilion, he wanted to keep the Spanish wine:

"Although I have insisted that the catering concessionaire makes available a range of English wine"—

that was good of him—

"this alone does not provide the choice of price and varieties required to run a commercial operation."—[*Official Report*, 30 June 1992; Vol. 210, c. *530*.]

I am puzzled: was it the British pavilion or the Spanish pavilion that we were running?

Then we had the problem with Bollinger, which insisted that no English sparkling wine should be sold in the pavilion because it had paid to sponsor the champagne. So all English sparkling wine was out. At this point, I should declare an interest: I am the adviser—originally, the honorary adviser—to the English Vineyards Association, which represents 200 commercial vineyards and was pretty sore that English champagne could not be sold in the pavilion. English champagne is delicious. One can buy it for £7 or £8 and, at a recent blind tasting, the English sparkling wine was declared to be as good as the non-vintage champagne—a view that I can certainly support.

Neither sparkling nor plain English wine was served on the occasion of the British national day. I believe that Spanish wine was served on that occasion. In his answer of 30 June, the Minister said that no English wine was suitable for the occasion of the British national day. What is wrong with Impresario, a sparkling white wine which has recently been ranked with the top three non-vintage champagnes, even though it cannot officially be called champagne because it is English? What is wrong with us that we will not promote our own products, and think that everything that we buy from abroad must be better?

It seems to me that the Department of Trade and Industry officials were not up to the job. It would be invidious, in this short debate, to mention names, but I will let the Minister have the list. I hope that all the officials concerned have been promoted, because that is probably all that can be done with them. I was not so much upset and angry as dismayed that such a sloppy and bad impression should be given not only to millions of foreign visitors but to the renowned British companies which had been invited to sell their goods.

We now reach the epilogue. Many of the pavilions had water themes, and ours was no exception—the water came down over the front of the pavilion, and there were pools of water, rather like a moat, around it. It was clear that the people visiting our pavilion felt that something had gone wrong with Great Britain. They were saddened by the image. They obviously had some affection for our people and some understanding of our plight. Unlike any other pond anywhere in all the acres of the site, our pond had coins thrown into it. Clearly, the public of the world realised that Britain was in a bad way, and threw coins into the moat to show that they understood our problem. I was concerned that there was no liquidator in the shop; perhaps he was down there in his gumboots picking up the coins to help the shop to make good its losses.

Such was my experience of our great British pavilion that I feel that the DTI has something to answer for. I would not trust any of the DTI officials concerned to run a business in which I was involved, and I certainly would not give them a chance to spend my money.

10.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Edward Leigh): I am well aware of the keen interest of my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) in promoting British industry—an interest that is shared by every hon. Member. We all admire and respect his unflagging energy and vigour. My hon. Friend is also a firm believer in "buy British" campaigns, especially if they include the sale of English wines. I recall that my hon. Friend tabled no fewer than 12 parliamentary questions in March and June about the availability of English wines at the British pavilion at Expo. I shall return to the specifics of English wine if time allows.

In summer 1988, the Prime Minister, then Mrs. Thatcher, made it clear that Britain's contribution to Expo was to be

"the best, the very best";

and from the reports that I have received, it was. That is not to say, in fairness to my hon. Friend, that there were no lessons to learn from our participation. With the benefit

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

of hindsight, there were. But, as I shall explain, the British pavilion at Expo' 92 attracted a great deal of interest and a great deal of comment—the vast majority of it favourable comment.

The British pavilion was acclaimed as the most significant and attractive pavilion on the whole Expo site—and there were more than 100 pavilions from which to choose. It was the envy of many other national participants. The man-made water wall along the length of the frontage attracted universal admiration. It was technologically the most advanced pavilion, both in structure and design. Moreover, it won four awards for construction and design and one for the audiovisual presentation, and has been entered for three more.

During the planning stage, an early decision was taken that the pavilion should be truly designed and built in Britain. With the exception of groundworks, that objective was achieved. The architects, engineers, quantity surveyors and the supporting professional team were all well-established United Kingdom practices, and were all appointed on a competitive basis. To conform with Spanish law, we were required to appoint a local associate architect to advise on the requirements of the building regulations in the locality. That role did not include any creative input.

Construction work on the pavilion was tendered competitively in the United Kingdom, in the form of approximately 50 works packages.

Mr. Steen: I am complaining not about the design but about what, or what was not, inside the pavilion.

Mr. Leigh: I shall get to that, but my hon. Friend has made some serious allegations about our efforts, and it is important to set the record straight.

The structure was built in the United Kingdom and shipped to Seville for erection under the supervision of British engineers and technicians. Unskilled labour was recruited locally. The supervisory management contractors were also from the United Kingdom.

The interior design is obviously of particular interest to my hon. Friend and he has been critical of the interior arrangement of the pavilion. I respect his views, even if I cannot share them. However, he may not be aware that private sector management consultants were appointed to examine Spanish perceptions of the United Kingdom and of the British people before detailed planning of the interior began.

The consultants' findings were: the British were viewed as being not very friendly; there was a lack of awareness of United Kingdom artistic and technical creativity; there was a strong interest in the United Kingdom as a tourist destination; and the Spanish response to British fashion was negative.

Those findings were taken fully into account in the interior design developed by Conran Design, which was chosen by a panel of judges representing the private sector and the sponsoring Government Departments. Conran's interpretation projected an outward-looking, thrusting and forward-looking nation. That was reflected in different ways through audio-visual and static displays and through the multi-media theatre production.

The interior layout contained five elements, which each addressed the overall concept: a welcome area, where a 288-screen video presentation invited visitors to discover Britain today; the upper terrace depicting British scientific and engineering achievements in the four elements; the theatre, where a multi-media spectacle showed how future discoveries depended on communications, in which Britain excels in many ways; the lower terrace, where visitors continued to explore the elements; and the concourse, where Royal Doulton, Land Rover and Marks and Spencer displayed examples of original British products.

The consultants who had been commissioned to analyse Spanish perceptions were retained to question visitors to the pavilion. Well over 4,000 interviews were carried out. Most visitors thought that the pavilion was impressive, and 38 per cent. thought it very impressive.

The pavilion aroused increased interest in Britain as a leisure location, and nearly half the visitors left with a more favourable impression. The theatre show was considered excellent by visitors of all nationalities and several said that it was the best that they had visited. The British team of young navigators was highly praised. I hope that that sets straight the record on the interior design of the pavilion.

The British pavilion was one of the largest. It occupied nearly 7,000 sq m and stood 27 m high—almost as high as Westminster abbey. In short, the pavilion was, and remains, a glowing tribute and testimony to British engineering and arthitectural expertise.

The pavilion attracted a total of 2·2 million visitors, which required an orderly throughput of 12,000 visitors per day throughout the six months of the Expo. Some pavilions had a larger throughput but on a free-flow basis, not in such a structured way. Furthermore, no other pavilion had pre-planned that its visitors would spend at least 45 minutes touring the various displays.

Mr. Steen: What will happen to it?

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend keeps asking me what will happen to the pavilion. There has been a lot of interest in its future. It is generally recognised that it was one of the best designed and most successful, and there is every possibility that it will be retained on site as part of the science park. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend.

The organisers predicted, fairly accurately, that there would be a total of 40 million visits during the Expo—an average daily throughput of more than 200,000 visitors. No pavilion, including that of the host nation, Spain, could hope to cater for that number.

Some pavilions allowed a free flow of visitors, as we had done ourselves at other Expos. That was certainly one way to build up impressive numbers, but on this occasion the design team for the British pavilion devised a system under which multilingual navigators escorted groups of 200 visitors through the pavilion at 15-minute intervals.

Even expert opinions vary on the effectiveness of that approach, and my hon. Friend is entitled to be critical. Some are critical that the 2·2 million visitors to the British pavilion, representing a little more than 5 per cent. of the total Expo visits, was too low. Others would argue that to hold captive the attention of more than 2 million visitors for at least 45 minutes was a very laudable achievement.

I believe that there is something to be said in favour of both the brief and the extended visits. On the one hand, more people get at least an impressionistic view of what

Britain has to offer; on the other hand, the 45-minute visitor is likely to go away with a more lasting impression of what he or she has seen.

I should point out that the concessions to operate both the shop and the restaurant in the British pavilion were put out to competitive tender. The successful tenderers for the shop were selected partly on the basis of their experience in operating gift shops in museums and at fairs.

The Department of Trade and Industry tender for the shop concession specified that the products available should be British and of high quality. The selection of products was made by the concessionaire, but the DTI retained the power of veto.

The DTI guaranteed that the products of four British sponsoring companies would be available in the shop, provided that they met the terms set by the concessionaires. In all other respects, the business conducted between the concessionaires and their suppliers was a private commercial matter.

As my hon. Friend has explained, the concessionaire ran into financial difficulties when sales targets were not reached and they could not meet payments due to the suppliers. It is too easy to blame the problems of the shop concessionaires on lack of foresight, but nobody could have predicted that the Expo visitors in the first three months of Expo would come almost entirely from Seville and spend very little.

Nobody could have predicted the financial difficulties faced by a large number of Expo concessionaires. The British pavilion shop was not the only one which failed to reach its sales targets. Nor could anyone have expected the very high entrance fees to Expo to dampen on-site sales so dramatically. *[Interruption.]* In reply to my hon. Friend's sedentary intervention, let me say that, unlike some states, we were not prepared to subsidise the shops. It was a commercial arrangement.

An unexpectedly high proportion of Spanish visitors brought picnics to the Expo and spent relatively little in the shops. One reason may have been the excessively high entrance charges which, for a family of two adults and three children, could have been up to £100. There is little doubt that the high royalty payments demanded by the Expo authorities added to the problem by exerting upward pressure on prices in shops, restaurants and other concessions.

Mr. Steen: What concerns me is that £500,000-worth of British industry's money is locked up with the DTI or lost. What will the DTI do about that?

Mr. Leigh: If my hon. Friend will allow me, I shall come to that as quickly as I can, but it is important that I should set out the facts in order to put the matter straight.

It is hardly surprising that some concessions lost money. One could argue that a larger retail company might have coped better with the cash flow problem. The House should know that the many large retailers invited to tender all declined that opportunity.

Because of the unforeseen failure of the pavilion shop, DTI Ministers decided to make an ex gratia payment to those British suppliers who had made advanced royalty payments to the concessionaires. To help finance their own royalty payment to the DTI, the shop concessionaires had required an up-front royalty payment from their suppliers. Although there was no legal requirement to do so, the DTI made a without-prejudice ex gratia refund of those royalty payments to the suppliers.

A total of 15 separate ex gratia payments have been made to companies which supplied the pavilion shop. I am aware of only two companies which have expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of money that they received. Their disputes, however, involve wider issues and it would not be appropriate to discuss the detail of them in the House. I hope that that answers some of the questions that my hon. Friend asked about the concessionaires.

The total budget allocation from Government funds for the British participation at Expo was set at £28·9 million. The £1·2 million expenditure on the cultural programme was included in the overall cost. Private sector sponsorship, in cash and in kind, was valued at £5 million.

Expo '92 was staged in Seville to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the discovery of the new world. It ran from 20 April to 12 October 1992, attracted more than 40 million visitors and 110 nations participated which, together with theme pavilions, corporate participation and the autonomous regions of Spain, collectively amounted to a larger number of pavilions than at any previous Expo. The theme was the "age of discovery"——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at eleven minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 17 December 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Rosyth Dockyard (Defence Diversification)

9.34 am

Ms. Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): I wish to present two petitions on behalf of Dunfermline district council. The first is about the future of Rosyth royal dockyard and the importance of a Government industrial strategy which enables employers to promote defence diversification. You will be aware, Madam Speaker, of the uncertainty over the future of Rosyth royal dockyard as it is no longer absolutely guaranteed the work of submarine refitting. The petition about the uncertainty over submarine refitting has been signed by every councillor in Dunfermline district council, representing all political parties, and it ends by stating:

Wherefore your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray that the Honourable Members of the House of Commons will act speedily to convince Her Majesty's Government that any such measures do not take place.

The second petition, on defence diversification, ends by stating:

Wherefore your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray that Honourable Members of the House of Commons will act speedily to convince Her Majesty's Government that recognition must be given immediately to the need for an industrial strategy, a diversification agency and a pro-active regional policy to assist the people of Dunfermline District in preparing for the changes which may affect establishments within Dunfermline District.

I should like to place those petitions with the House.

To lie upon the Table.

Somalia

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

9.36 am

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I feel immensely privileged this morning, on the last opportunity for debate this year, to be able to speak for the Somali people of the north, the former British Somaliland, whose plight has been invisible in the media and to the international community during the past year. The extent to which Somaliland is invisible is shown by the letter to all hon. Members from the Minister for Overseas Development, Lady Chalker, dated 10 December. That letter does not mention the north, Somaliland, once. In view of the discussions that we have had over the past two or three years, I find that quite incredible.

I hope that what I say will accurately reflect the views of the all-party group on Somalia, many of whose members found it impossible to change their arrangements to be here today. My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) particularly wished to be here to speak for the Somalis in her community; and I know that the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), as the co-chairman of the group, and my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) hope to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sure that their contributions will be welcomed by the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

The plea that I am about to make is endorsed by aid workers and by leaders of the Somali communities in Britain. I bring to the House a passionate plea from the mayor of Hargeisa, a video of enthusiastic recruits to a new police force, new evidence which arrived from Somaliland only this week, and an endorsement from the Police Federation of England and Wales. But, above all, I bring the plea that this House and Ministers face up to their responsibilities and loyalties over which Britain has hesitated for far too long.

I also have a terrible feeling of responsibility, because if I fail to persuade the Minister to act on some simple suggestions, the plight of people in the north will continue to deteriorate. In that event, in 1993 we could see the famine and violence which we have seen in Mogadishu repeated in Hargeisa and Berbera. That must not be allowed to happen.

Let me make it clear that, when I wrote to seek the debate, I sought a discussion on the north of Somalia only —call it the republic of Somaliland, the north or the fromer British Somaliland if hon. Members wish, but I will call it Somaliland for ease of reference. The name is not important, but what is important is that its history and its present situation are totally different from that of the other Somalia—call that the south, the former Italian Somaliland, or the area around Mogadishu—which appears on our television screens day by day.

Before coming to the essence of the debate, I will make two points. Terrible violence, famine and confusion have racked the south. The bravery of aid workers from voluntary organisations in Britain and from other countries has been colossal. The suffering of the people in the south has been immense.

The decision of the United Nations to take up military aid was right, and one must ask why the international community waited so long before acting and then did so only when America offered to do the job. The only mistake was the suggestion that American troops could move in and be gone in days, when careful work is needed in co-operation with the elders and faction leaders to establish stability and the conditions for long-term development. The Americans now appear to have a better appreciation of the situation, and President-elect Clinton is showing sensitivity—thank God—and a willingness to grapple with the real problems.

We must acknowledge that conditions in the north are totally different, and I will briefly describe the history in the hope that the Minister will agree that my account is accurate and can be taken as common ground in this Chamber.

The Somali nation is mainly to be found in five areas —the former French Somaliland, now the independent state of Djibouti; the former British Somaliland; the former Italian Somaliland; northern Kenya; and Ethiopia. When they both gained independence in 1960, British Somaliland rushed to merge with Italian Somaliland with what many of those involved now consider to be indecent

[Mr. Alun Michael]

haste, based on faith and trust in a united future. Together they formed Somalia—a land shaped like the figure seven, with the former British territory forming the horizontal part of the seven.

Under the despotic rule of President Siad Barre, Somalia became a client state of first the Soviet Union and then the United States because of the strategic importance of naval facilities in the vicinity of the gulf. Barre's rule was characterised by violence and the violation of human rights. When the people of the north rebelled, he responded ruthlessly with the devastation of towns and villages, while many of those who were not killed fled into the bush and to refugee camps of Ethiopia.

While the excesses of Barre's Government were well documented, little came to the attention of the media and the international community, so we still talk of it as the hidden war. Britain stood aloof, deferring to the Italians, whose influence in the south was considerable but not always positive. The Somali National Movement enjoyed immense popular support in the north and successfully swung the tide of events against Barre. Opponents in the south gathered strength to challenge Barre as well.

The factions about which we have heard a good deal in recent months, led by General Aideed and Ali Mahdi, fall within one of the southern rebel groups, which have no greater claim to recognition than the SNM, which has maintained a fragile unity through trying and difficult times. As the fighting moved south towards Mogadishu, the media and the international community woke up to the existence of the conflict and their focus has remained on Mogadishu and the south. That concentration rightly awakened the conscience of the world eventually, but that is no justification for allowing the north to remain all but invisible. It is the north—the self-styled Republic of Somaliland—on which our debate must concentrate, not least because its people fought for Britain in two world wars and served in the Merchant Navy for more than a century, and because the family links of many British citizens are in the north.

I appeal to the Minister to leave the south on one side for the purposes of this debate, as I hope that there is no difference of perception between us about that part of the country. I ask the Minister also to set aside the question whether or not the north should be recognised as an independent state—as the Republic of Somaliland. Certainly the people of the north have a rock-solid conviction of their right to independence. As Edna Adan Ismail puts it—her husband was the Prime Minister deposed by Siad Barre in a coup—the two former colonies united in too swift a marriage and the experiences of recent years have led them to seek a divorce.

The United Nations has wisely decided that the lack of a real Government in Somalia means that help must be provided region by region. In time, there may be national reconciliation, and we will have to see whether that leads to an amicable and friendly divorce or to the continuation of a single Somalia. However, I hope that the Minister agrees that that matter is not one that must be decided now but can be put to one side for the time being.

For the moment, the priority is to understand the entity that exists and to build on whatever positive aspects exist. The question of recognition can therefore be left on one side for a future occasion: the question now is how best to help the Republic of Somaliland.

Let me come to the simple nub of today's debate: what is Britain's responsibility, and how can Britain help to save the situation in the north? In Somaliland, the situation is relatively stable, with no need for military intervention. That fact is recognised in a parliamentary answer given to me by the Minister only last week, so it is not in dispute. But a generation of young people in that part of the country were brought up when their families and the whole community were engaged in fighting a ruthless dictator. They need education, skills, and stability in order to settle down to a positive future. The will is there, but the cash and the structure are not. For instance, there is no police force and no local or regional structure of government. Britain must help the establishment and training of a police service and then of a Government service.

Yesterday, with my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar, who has been a tower of strength as we have tried to find ways of helping Somalia, I viewed a video that includes a number of interviews, including British officials meeting the elders three weeks ago. It also shows a community celebrating hope as 300 men, recruited as police, march into Hargeisa. They are without training and without pay, and that very occasion seems a triumph of hope over experience, but it is one of two cornerstones on which we must now build.

The other cornerstone is the meeting in Boruma on 9 January when elders from all tribes in the north—not just from the SNM—will seek to establish a realistic basis for an Administration. It is anticipated that the present embryo Government will step aside to allow a new leadership team to take over, binding together the whole community.

Let Britain put on the table an offer of help that can offer motivation and increased hope to the meeting at Boruma and let that be done now. There are three steps that, taken now, would be the best investment ever in the future of Somaliland.

First, following his response to me in the September debate, the Foreign Secretary sent an expert to consider how best to provide a telephone system for the north. I welcome that response, but please can it be speeded up? It will help enormously if decisions taken at Boruma and afterwards are communicated quickly to the outside world.

Secondly, let us offer money to pay the police, and to pay for uniforms and for advisers to help train and support the embryo force for a limited period of weeks or months, at least in the first instance.

Thirdly, let us provide advisers from the civil service and from local government in Britain to help reconstruct the administration and stabilise the situation. Working closely with Save the Children and others who have continued to work in Somaliland, the good that could be done in a short time is enormous—and it is what the people in Somaliland want.

The Minister will agree that that is a simple and limited programme which I feel reflects the minimum that members of the all-party group on Somalia believe that Britain can do to get some way to fulfilling our obligations. I say to the Minister, by all means stress as loud and long as he wishes that those actions imply no formal recognition of a new state, but for God's sake allow these minimal steps to be taken. The people of Somaliland look

to Britain to take a lead, and so do people such as the United States Under-Secretary of State and our European partners.

The sense of this set of proposals has been recognised on all sides and confirmed as acceptable by the Somaliland head of mission in London, Mr. Osman Hassan, only this week. To strengthen our plea, let me read a letter brought to me by hand yesterday from the mayor or Hargeisa, Omar Mohamed Handulle:

"I would like, if I may, to advise you on the current situation in Somaliland and request that you use your best offices in enlisting the help of the British Government in answer to this appeal.

You already know that, following the defeat of the dictator of Somalia, Siad Barre, a meeting was held in Burao in May 1991, at which a mandate was received by the present Government from the Somali National Movement and the people of Somaliland as a whole to rule the Independent state of Somaliland for a period of two years, following which a fresh election would be held.

During the time of its rule the Government has experienced continuing difficulties through lack of finance. Its Ministers remain unpaid, as do also its militia, teachers, medical officers and indeed all civil servants.

It is a matter of small wonder, therefore, that looting by groups of brigands has occasionally caused some non-governmental organisations to withdraw from the country. The need to avert this type of development is urgent. We are afraid that appeals to the international community through the United Nations will result in too late aid arrive. It is for this reason that we appeal to you for aid. Already we have made strenuous efforts towards establishing a peace agreement signed recently in Erigavo, Shekh and Hargeisa. However, it is one thing to establish an concord, while it is another to secure an environment for the maintenance of good order. It is in this area where we need outside help of utmost urgency. My reason for making this appeal to you arises partly because I think you may feel, in view of past British rule in the former Somaliland Protectorate, a degree of moral responsibility in taking the lead among nations. Also, the Somalilanders as a whole feel a strong affinity with the British and fought with them against a common enemy in two world wars. We think that an amorphous body such as the United Nations cannot have the empathy which we believe still exists in many British minds today. The British Government's responsibility regarding recognition of Somaliland as a separate state is our determined expectations. We cannot agree that present circumstances in the Somaliland and in Somalia is a rational policy. The problems of Somaliland are not those of Somalia. In Somaliland there is a popularly appointed democratic Government; in Somalia, there is no Government! In Somaliland there is peace and in Somalia there exists civil war of a most cruel kind; in Somaliland there is a little famine and in Somalia there is drastic famine. Thus, one may ask with pertinent logic, 'Why is a common solution being attempted to solve problems which are diverse?' Hitherto, British aid and funding through other sources has been small grants to non-governmental organisations. This has, however, been productive at least to certain level, in mines clearing, water supplies, sanitation and partly education. It is a matter of internal security that holds the key to future development."

That is the point that I underline, above all else, to the Minister. The mayor of Hargeisa continues:

"Several of us have talked together about this and would now like to put forward a formal proposal that the British Government provides us with a few experienced Police officers as technical aid who would train our police. We have already recruited a mixture of Militia and former Policemen and 300 to patrol the capital Hargeisa, but they need training, uniforms, food rations, transport, means of communication and eventually housing and pay. We cannot at the moment meet expenses for any of these because we collect no local taxes as yet for security reasons."

That is the vicious circle that is illustrated by the letter. The mayor ends with these words:

"If such an exercise could be mounted by the British, it could then extend and be duplicated throughout the country, even eventually becoming the envy of Somalia. A colleague of mine has recently met Mr. Turnkington of the British ODA in London and discussed this issue with him and he was assured that the British were backing Ambassador Sahnoun's efforts in these matters. Sahnoun's resignation has since created a serious vacuum and a tacit neglect of Somaliland by the United Nations as a whole."

That plea, from a local authority in Somaliland, surely demands a response from us.

I am grateful for the kindness of Robert Turnbull, Somalia field director of Partner Aid International, for acting as postman and for providing a fascinating video which has confirmed the views of those in Somaliland.

The mayor's plea is endorsed by the President of Somaliland and by the elders, but, coming from the mayor of Hargeisa, it gets us away, despite his references to independence, from the question of recognition and the authority of national or regional leaders. We can start here and, if it works, help it to spread. Stability in the north will benefit the whole region, the hard-hit south and neighbouring Ethiopia.

It is a plea which I discussed yesterday with leaders of the Police Federation of England and Wales. They saw great merit in the secondment of British police officers and quoted examples of where that has worked in the past—perhaps by recruiting experienced officers who are on the point of retiring, to avoid a negative impact on police strength in England and Wales, which is not the subject of today's debate but which is important to us all.

It reflects the strong view expressed at a packed meeting in the Grand Committee Room recently, organised by the all-party group, in co-operation with Brigadier Malcolm Page for the Anglo-Somali Society and attended by many Somalis and British people who served in the former Administration during and after the end of British rule.

It is a plea to which only Britain can respond because of the trust and confidence that people in Somaliland still place in us, though, God knows, we have done little enough to deserve it. It is a way forward that experts on the ground——

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I congratulate my hon. Friend on having secured this debate. I concur with him on the need for a British initiative, but does he not agree that it was disappointing that it took until November for the British ambassador in Addis Ababa, who is responsible for northern Somalia, to visit northern Somalia in order to find out what is happening there? I agree with my hon. Friend that no other country is as well placed as Britain to show some initiative. My extensive contacts with Somalis in this country have demonstrated that they cannot understand why that initiative has not already taken place.

Mr. Michael: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who visited Somalia during the summer, for his confirmation of that point. His view is supported by the Save the Children Fund and other groups, which believe that such an initiative would work.

The overwhelming consensus is that Britain must take this step and that nobody else can do it for us. The international community would understand and respect a move by Britain to help now. Others may help, but we must take the lead.

Frankly, despite the genuine concern which has been shown by Lady Chalker and other Ministers, we have done

[Mr. Michael]

too little to fulfil our historic obligations to Somaliland. As a recent parliamentary answer showed, the Government have not even kept records to show how much aid from our aid budget went to help the north. I appeal to the Minister to make an offer now, in time for it to be discussed by the people of Somaliland and their leaders at the conference in January.

I also ask the Minister to arrange for the Foreign Secretary to meet personally a number of people after the holiday period in order to consider the mayor's letter further. As well as officers of the all-party parliamentary group, I would suggest that he should meet representatives of the aid organisations, particularly the Save the Children Fund and the Anglo-Somali Society. Each of those organisations would be able to offer practical suggestions and help on how to make progress.

Too many ministerial answers say that the Somalis must solve the security problem before we can help. That is not a tenable argument. The fact is that we have the opportunity to help to establish just that security which is certainly needed so that Somali can show the pride and independence of spirit which has always characterised them and help themselves to build a new Somaliland.

If the Minister gives a positive response, I know that it will be received with enthusiasm on all sides. It will be the best possible answer to an elder on this tape who, recalling his memory of the negotiations in 1948, says:

"You are in a deep sleep, the British. Now what we need is not food but help with training, with demobilising the army, communications and media to tell the world we are independent and different from the South."

He says that cash is the problem.

I have one final suggestion. It will be some time before a Parliament exists, in the full sense, for Somaliland or Somalia, but the support and interest of British Members of Parliament is seen as a symbol of hope. Will the Minister agree to a visit to Somaliland early in the new year by representatives of the all-party group? That is something that my co-chairman, Lady Chalker and I agreed to some time ago, with the caveat "when the time is right". I am sure that the time is now right for us to be seen to be taking an interest and to be closely involved with the situation in Somalia.

The elders in Somaliland accept, albeit reluctantly, that one does not need recognition or independence in order to run a police force, or to provide education, or to start rebuilding. We can unite on the point of working in the regions, a point with which I know the Minister agrees and the United Nations supports. However, to do any of these things, we need security, law and order and a police force. Britain can help to achieve that stability. Britain has a duty to do so. Parliament has a duty to help. Please, I appeal to the Minister, let us not fail in that duty.

9.49 am

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I thank my co-chairman, the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), for the way in which he introduced the debate, for his choice of subject and for allowing me briefly to support what he has said about the people of Somaliland. My hon. Friend the Minister knows why we are raising the problems of that area in particular—it has constituency contacts going back many generations, and more recently with the refugees.

The eyes of the world have not been on Somaliland. The television cameras are not there, the press photographs do not come from there, the United Nations does not look there and nor does the European Community. That is why we must look there. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman read out the rather moving letter from the mayor of Hargeisa. It is the sort of message that we knew existed, but it is the first time that it has been in writing before the House.

I wish briefly to refer to another part of Somalia, which is not to the south but to the west. The charity Concern, which is based in my constituency, operates in that part of Somalia. It is an example of the sort of aid that is needed in the north. Concern has focused its work on nutrition, in particular targeting severely malnourished children, but also malnourished adults, the sick and the elderly. It has also been involved in agricultural sanitation and education work.

Concern has 38 expatriate personnel in that part of Somalia, ranging from doctors and nurses to engineers, administrators and agriculturists. It has 850 Somali staff. The charity is achieving a great deal. It has opened 14 wet feeding centres, two 24-hour therapeutic centres for children and one for adults, and it is about to open a second for adults. The numbers attending the feeding centres were rising, but they are now falling, and there is good news in that. They rose from 650 in May 1992 to 30,955 in September, but then dropped to 21,339 in November. The reason for the fall is that many families now feel able to return to their farms. The death rate has also dropped. That is a tribute to what those people have achieved.

Concern has distributed food to 83,600 beneficiaries, and provided 43 million tonnes of sorghum, 6·3 million tonnes of cowpeas and 3·2 million tonnes of groundnuts. It has distributed 40,000 blankets, 70,000 T-shirts and more than 240,000 m of cloth. Vegetable kits have been distributed and seeds are being planted. The crops are growing. It is fortunate that there has been rain in recent weeks, so the crops are doing well.

We all share their concern about security. I hope that the Government are keeping in close touch with the Americans because there is a risk of retaliation to the expatriate workers and their Somali colleagues as the American troops move through the country. The interests of those workers must be paramount.

The message that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has brought to the House is that everything is possible if the will exists. I hope that I have shown that everything has been possible in one part of Somalia; we want it also to be possible in the north. Somaliland has called this morning, and I hope that the House and the country will respond.

10.2 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) for allowing me to participate in the debate. I appreciate the work of the Committee, and in particular the work of my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon), who unfortunately cannot be here this morning.

Everyone must be deeply concerned and alarmed about what is happening throughout Somalia. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth was right to

say that the world has transferred its attention to the former Yugoslavia and is largely ignoring the crisis in southern Somalia. The bottleneck at the port of Mogadishu and the warlords who are fighting around it have caused an enormous problem. Aid cannot get through and, obviously, it is being stolen and pillaged.

Somalia has the misfortune that it was of great strategic interest to the super-powers of the past, which in a sense is the base of its current problems. It was of great interest to the British in the 19th century and later to the Italians, the Soviet Union and the United States. That led to the way in which the Barre regime behaved—the playing of super-power politics that ultimately ended in its own destruction. Unfortunately, large numbers of people were killed at the same time.

United Nations resolution 794 points out the need for security to bring in the necessary food aid and vital equipment needed to restart normal human life in southern Somalia. There is a great danger in that. I do not understand how the United States can get in and out by 20 January. I fear that it does not have any carefully thought out political agenda.

I am also concerned about the fact that the American troops are not under United Nations command. I would be much happier if it was a United Nations force under United Nations command, and preferably drawn from a much wider group of countries. There should be a political agenda that recognises the fact that a political structure already exists in Somaliland in the north and also in parts of the south. We should not seek to impose a solution from elsewhere; we should work for a solution from the indigenous people.

There was a good article in *The Guardian* on 3 December by Said Samatar, who is a professor of African history at Rutgers university. He explains the problems very well and points out that if there is to be any resurrection of hope throughout the country, and if there is to be normal government, that cannot be achieved by flying in experts from around the world to impose a system; it must be done through the elders working through the local communities, gradually building up a system of government. I commend the article to the Minister and pay tribute to the expertise of Said Samatar.

My constituency, together with many others, has a significant number of Somali refugees. Many sad families live there. They may be sad, but they are proud people who have come from a background of pride. They have also come from a background of anger and horror about what has happened to their country. They are looking for safety in this country. They want to contribute; they are not supplicants at the window. They also want to take their skills back to Somalia when safety and other conditions there allow that.

I ask the Minister to say to his colleagues in the Home Office, "Please understand the needs of asylum seekers." I want him to pass a strong message to the British missions in Addis Ababa, Cairo, Khartoum and Nairobi that there needs to be a far greater degree of understanding of the desperate need for family reunion and of the horror felt by elderly relatives who are left waiting for months on end for news of what has happened to their families. I end on that plea.

10.7 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) for raising the question of Somalia today. It is very timely. The House knows of the great interest that he takes in all aspects of Somali affairs, especially in the north-west. He has done a great deal of work for charity and his tremendous and tangible commitment to the cause of those he respects and of whom he is fond is visible to all. I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) and to the hon. Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) for their contributions.

I want to make a few quick points. I shall attempt to answer the questions raised, but it would not be wise of me to try to make policy on my feet, especially during the last seven minutes of a debate. The Government understand the enormous bitterness felt by people from the north about the treatment that they endured from Siad Barre. Now that he has gone, I hope that Somalis everywhere, both north and south, will co-operate with the United Nations in securing reconciliation throughout the country. I am sure that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth agrees that that transcends the political ambitions of people in the north-west to seek independence.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development sent a letter on 10 December immediately we heard news of the United States/United Nations expanded military operation which, I am sure the hon. Gentleman would agree, focuses rightly on the centre and the south. I know that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has discussed the north with my right hon. and noble Friend, the Minister for Overseas Development, on many occasions. She is in no doubt about the situation in the north-west, but the reason for her letter was different.

Of course we stand ready to help in many of the ways that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth described. We have now received the report from the telecommunications expert and we are considering it quickly. The BBC has already agreed to broadcast messages. With regard to the United Nations development programme, the Germans are already involved in the police. We do not want to duplicate and confuse. We are prepared to consider help with civil administration, but we want to work with the United Nations. I apologise for making such a short comment on that point, but I do not have time to do more this morning.

I am most grateful for the copy of the letter from the mayor of Hargeisa, and its contents will be communicated to my right hon. and noble Friend immediately. I know that she will be prepared to meet the all-party group again and representatives of the Somali people and discuss whether it would be right for the parliamentary Somali group to visit the country in the near future.

In response to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie, I must point out that officials from the embassy in Addis visited northern Somalia in February well before the visit of the ambassador in November. In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea, I stress that we work very closely with Concern. Concern is extremely good, as are so many of the non-governmental

[Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd]

organisations as we are all aware. We have encouraged Concern to make new requests to us for assistance from the new pledge of £4·5 million announced on 4 December.

I am aware that the concern of the hon. Mininster for Islington, North is genuine, but I hope as gently as possible to put him right. Of course there has, in the past, been a lack of political attention to the problems of Somalia although not in humanitarian terms so far as Britain is concerned.

However, the world is now paying considerable attention and a major world power has made a commitment. Whatever the hon. Member for Islington, North may say about the desirability of it being a United Nations operation or an American operation, we should give the fullest possible credit to the United States for making that commitment to try to help those troubled people in a part of the world which most people in the United States would have difficulty locating on a map. It would be churlish of us not to give profound and deep recognition and gratitude to the American initiative following the Security Council resolution.

I must now spend a minute considering British aid, as I must in every debate. We have given enormous support and are one of the largest donors. Since the fall of Siad Barre, we have provided £37 million of humanitarian assistance. That includes 34,000 tonnes of food, 19,000 tonnes of which has already been delivered. No one can doubt our commitment to Somalia as a whole.

Many issues must be considered in the next few months. First and foremost is security over the whole country. Secondly we must consider relief. Thirdly, we must consider political reconciliation and finally we must consider rehabilitation and reconstruction. Obviously, I cannot make many structured remarks today. However, the Government and I recognise that the threats to the relative peace of northern Somalia should not be discounted. They must be considered in the current operation. We know that some of the armed gunmen from the south are moving northwards, and that is naturally a matter of concern.

Mr. Michael: Will the Minister try to give a positive response which will enable British support to be seen specifically for the meeting on 9 January?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I take note of the hon. Gentleman's request and I shall give him a more considered reply in due course.

The political situation is obviously of concern to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth and his friends and contacts in the north west of the country. Political reconciliation must begin first at the grass roots level. We all know that it cannot be imposed through military strength. That is why the United Nations initiative to conduct local and regional consultations with military leaders and clan elders who are such an important part of Somalia's traditional system of authority, and other civil groups, to begin to establish a framework for national reconciliation is so important.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said that there may be an amicable divorce in due course. I cannot comment on that. However, the important point is that there will be consultation through the United Nations. That is an enormously important way forward and we strongly support that approach. That approach will take time, but it will start soon.

I am pleased that the United Nations Secretary-General intends to become involved. We understand that he plans to begin the process by meeting Somali factions and other Somali representatives in early January, possibly as early as 4 January although it may slip a day. We hope that that will be the beginning of a fruitful dialogue and will enable the factors that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has mentioned to be taken into account.

Textile Industry

10.15 am

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): I am pleased to have this opportunity to raise matters of concern and interest to the textile industry. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry is not new to these debates. Indeed, he and I have participated in such debates on many occasions. I am delighted to see him in the Chamber and I welcome him to the debate.

The textile industry is of considerable importance, both in the country as a whole and in my constituency. The industry employs 420,000 people, of whom 15 per cent. are employed in my region of Yorkshire and Humberside. It is interesting to note that there are 95 textile firms in Huddersfield. That figure is exceeded only by Bradford, which has 130 firms while Leeds has 72. That shows the importance of the textile industry to my area.

Of course the industry has suffered seriously during the recession, just as every other part of British industry has suffered. However, it is not all bad news. Many people believe that the textile industry is now more forward looking and better managed than in the past. Exports have increased by 25 per cent. over the past four years and we have seen further improvements in productivity. The industry has become more responsive to consumer requirements and now pays more attention to quality, design and innovation.

The fact that the BBC provides prime viewing time on a Sunday afternoon to "The Clothes Show" is a positive sign and reflects well on the textile industry. Indeed, I think that "The Clothes Show" is one of the best programmes on television. I say that not simply because I made a recent appearance on the show when supposedly modelling swim wear during the House of Commons versus House of Lords swim. I am not going to tell the House how I did in the swim, except to say that I think that my modelling, which was not up to very much, was better than my swimming. However, it was certainly a very enjoyable occasion.

My purpose in initiating this debate is to ensure that the textile industry is kept at the forefront of Ministers' thoughts and to ensure that some of the important issues can be aired in the House. It is important that we have regular debates so that the issues can be discussed and debated.

I want to examine developments within the GATT round, the multi-fibre arrangement and the need to tackle the unfair trading practices of other countries. I want to consider the way in which some of our European partners are providing anti-competitive subsidies to their home industries, thereby putting the British industry at a disadvantage. I will also consider the environmental standards with which British companies have to comply, along with Government support for overseas trade fairs. However, at the end of the day, the general state of the British economy will be the most fundamental factor in the fortunes of the textile industry. I shall deal with that later.

I welcome the agreement eventually hammered out in the GATT round between the Community and the United States. I am glad that the French Government did not repeat their threat to veto the GATT round on agriculture at the Edinburgh summit last weekend. It would be unforgivable for the French Socialist Government to scupper the GATT round simply to curry favour with their featherbedded farmers in the run-up to next year's elections. Such a veto would be a hammer blow to the Community.

Despite the agreement on agriculture, we have not yet finally agreed a GATT settlement, although it looks certain that such an agreement will be signed. Some issues are still outstanding. The United States currently levies a 36 per cent. duty on this country's wool cloth exports. So far, the United States has offered only a token tariff reduction which would leave most tariffs at more than 30 per cent. The American negotiators have offered to reduce the tariff on very fine wool cloth to 20 per cent., but such cloth makes up only about 1 per cent. of British exports to America. Therefore, it means little and is just not good enough.

I hope that the Minister is pushing the Community to seek a more substantial reduction in American tariffs. A danger is that the incoming Clinton Administration could have a more protectionist outlook than the outgoing Administration. I hope that the Government will take every opportunity to persuade President Clinton and his team not to go down the route.

Other developed countries, such as Australia and South Africa, also levy high tariffs. Australia's tariffs range up to 55 per cent. There is no fixed maximum, so those tariffs could be increased after a GATT deal. Many developing countries, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Thailand, India and Pakistan, levy prohibitive tariffs, some of which are as high as 200 per cent. All those countries have burgeoning middle classes who find British cloth attractive. Some people find it hard to imagine that we could sell some of our fine worsted cloth to those developing countries, but there is a demand for it. However, the tariffs that are imposed on our exports significantly increase the price and suppress demand.

It is extremely important for the European Community to make it clear to all the countries involved in the GATT negotiations that the EC's commitment to phase out the multi-fibre arrangement within 10 years is conditional on binding tariff reductions that cannot be raised in future. I hope that the Minister can confirm that the Government and the Community are taking that approach in the negotiations.

I hope that the Minister will have some news about the extension of the multi-fibre arrangement during the interim period before a new GATT agreement. I understand that the roll-over of the MFA has still not been agreed, although the Minister may have up-to-date news about that. An interim agreement is important.

There is a need to end trade distortions in the Community. It is feared that some European Governments are cheating by handing out anti-competitive subsidies, thereby subverting the spirit of the single market and its law. The Minister will know about the Belgian companies that have been ordered by the European Commission and the European Court to repay subsidies but have still not done so about five years after being ordered to repay the money. There is an example of £120 million worth of illegal subsidies being paid to an Italian textile firm. That money has still not been repaid, and that is not good enough. I am not one of the Maastricht treaty's greatest fans, but I welcome the treaty's provision to give powers to the European Court to levy fines in such cases.

There are other examples of European Governments subsidising their textile industries at the expense of the

[Mr. Graham Riddick]

British textile industry. Some may say that the British Government should subsidise our industry. I do not accept that approach and, as far as I can see, the Commission does not accept it either. The Minister may like to comment on that. As we have seen in this country over the past 20 or 30 years, Governments are not good at picking winners. The EC's objective should be to create a free and fair market. We should not be in the business of featherbedding inefficient companies which have lost market share and, for whatever reason, are no longer profitable.

The French company VEV went bust two years ago, but it has been rescued by the French Government and the Credit Lyonnais bank, which is 100 per cent. state-owned. That company collapsed despite earlier large injections of illegal grant, but the French Government are keeping it going at the expense of British companies—its more efficient competitors. The Wallonian regional authority in Belgium is of course renowned for its subsidies to textile companies. One hears much anecdotal evidence of back-door subisidies by continental Governments to their home industries. I urge the Minister to do what he can to ensure that the Commission prohibits anti-competitive state aids which distort competition. The Commission must also enforce rapid recovery of illegally granted aid.

Environmental obligations have been placed upon textile companies and strict standards for the discharge of effluents have been imposed. I was told by a senior representative of the industry that Britain's environmental standards are more stringent than those of any other country. There is evidence that some inspectors in Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution are less flexible than they might be. Will the Minister ensure that the Government show understanding and flexibility to the industry, especially during these difficult economic times? He may need to speak to Ministers in the Department of the Environment about that.

We should not impose unduly tough or unnecessary environmental standards. Plainly, we must ensure a clean environment, but there is a feeling in the industry that Britain alone in the EC has gone for the most stringent interpretation of European environmental targets, thus costing our industry enormous sums in new investment simply to meet those high standards. Companies have been making a great deal of new investment, but some of it has been for environmental reasons and has not contributed to greater productivity.

I am not suggesting that we do not want to clean up the environment, but the Government must ensure a flexible and sensible approach. Without such an approach, we are at a competitive disadvantage. I trust that future legislation for the environment or for any other area will be examined for its economic implications. I hope that the Minister will take that point on board.

About three weeks ago, we had an extremely useful debate on small businesses. One of the key features of the debate was the way in which hon. Members on both sides of the House, but especially Conservative Members, homed in on the problem of red tape and regulation. Those representing small businesses in my constituency complain increasingly about the regulations with which they must comply. I am pleased that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has taken the matter on board. He is launching a crusade against too much red tape and regulation within the European Community generally and in the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is in charge of the battle against red tape, and I wish him well. We know that red tape can impose a great deal of extra cost on businesses.

I shall touch on the hope that the Government have provided to the industry in its export efforts. It has undoubtedly benefited from various export promotion schemes, but it is somewhat concerned about the so-called three-times rule, which restricts the support that is provided by the Government for a company's participation in trade fairs in a particular country to only three occasions. The rule is likely to hit the textile industry particularly hard because of the many fairs—often they are repeated twice a year due to seasonal factors—that textile companies have to attend. I hope that my right hon. Friend will give me an assurance that he will reconsider the rule.

The industry would appreciate receiving more help from our embassies, especially in the form of telling it and representative bodies as well as the Government of unfair trading practices, be they dumping, subsidising or whatever, of which they learn.

I have listed several issues that are of concern to the textile industry. The most important factor for the industry, however, is the state of the economy, both at home and in the wider world. I have no doubt that, in the context of the British economy, there have been put in place the appropriate economic conditions for recovery at home. Interest rates have been reduced by three percentage points. The reduction will give enormous help to companies in investing for the future as well as putting more money into consumers' pockets. The more competitive pound will help our exporters, and there is some anecdotal evidenced that overseas orders are increasing. The slowdown in Germany is alarming, especially as it will have a knock-on-effect throughout the rest of Europe, particularly northern Europe. As a counter-balance, it is encouraging to see that the American economy is showing clear signs of recovery.

This is the third debate on the economy and on issues of interest to industry in which I have spoken over the past six weeks. As I have said, I spoke in the debate on small businesses which took place about three weeks ago. I spoke in the recent debate on unemployment, and now we are debating the textile industry. At the end of the day, the key factor is to ensure that we get the right economic conditions.

We all know that interest rates have been too high for too long, and I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been able to reduce them by three percentage points over recent months. I do not know whether there is scope for reducing them still further. Some economists—some of the seven wise men—argue that intest rates could be further reduced without necessarily creating more, inflation simply because companies will not be able to pass on the increased costs that are associated with a devalued pound. These are judgments for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Government as a whole to make.

The autumn statement was a positive factor. Industry widely welcomed the measures that it contained, which helped to boost confidence generally among industrialists. There is no doubt, however, that confidence is still brittle. It is important that we show the key decision makers

within industry that economic stability is here for a year or two. We need to keep inflation down. Interest rates should remain as low as possible. We must ensure that red tape is kept to a minimum. Taxes, both in the corporate sector and for individuals, must be kept down. Those are the conditions that brought such success in the 1980s, and I hope and believe that they will bring repeated success in the 1990s. I am confident that we are coming out of the recession. I think that we shall see a recovery in 1993, and I look forward to it.

There is no doubt that the textile industry has the skill and resilience to compete in world markets. However, it needs a level playing field, and that patently does not exist at present. I hope that my right hon. Friend will do everything in his power to ensure that a level playing field is brought about. I know that the expression is heard in every debate on the textile industry, but I make no apology for repeating it. If we have a level playing field, I have no doubt that textile manufacturers in my constituency, in Yorkshire and throughout the country will play their part in creating employment, contributing to our balance of payments and generating wealth for the benefit of the British people.

10.35 am

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): I welcome the opportunity that has been provided by my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) again to debate the textile industry. I congratulate him on his diligence in pursuing the interests of the textile and clothing industry in the interests of many of his constituents who are involved in it. As my hon. Friend said, it is not the first time that we have had the pleasure of debating the industry, and I hope that it is not the last.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on his extremely well-informed comments. They were so well informed that I am tempted to make an embarrassingly short speech—"Hear, hear. I agree"—and resume my place. I know, however, that the Government Whip would find that slightly inconvenient, as you would, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Accordingly, I shall respond more fully to my hon. Friend's comments.

I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of the textile and clothing industry, which has long been a major contributor to our economy. The industry, as we all recognise, has been of particular importance to certain areas. My hon. Friend's area—Yorkshire and Humberside—with its traditional and justly world famous woollen textile industry, is one of those areas.

We all know that the industry has declined in size, but it still accounts for 6 per cent. of United Kingdom manufacturing output. The latest figures that I have show that it employs no fewer than 372,000 people. I hope that my Department reflects its importance. The restructuring of the Department by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade included the establishment of sectoral divisions to improve dialogue between the Department and all sections of industry. That has led to the creation of the textiles and retail division. Among its responsibilities is the specific task of ensuring that we can continue to have a high-level dialogue with the industry, good contact at all levels and a good knowledge of the industry. I hope that this will enable my Department to make a contribution to its continuing success.

In recent years, to meet the challenges of growing competition in home and export markets, there has been significant modernisation within the industry, leading to great improvements in productivity and in quality, to which my hon. Friend referred. I am happy to take up his comments, because, if we do not achieve world levels of quality, we shall not achieve success in export markets. I pay tribute to the improved quality that the industry has achieved.

In addition to improved productivity and quality, the industry has shown a great improvement in its ability to respond quickly to changes in customer needs, whether those customers are found in the British market or overseas. As a result, our textile and clothing companies are now much better placed to compete against the best in Europe and the world.

I congratulate the industry on the efforts that have led to those changes and on its continuing remarkable success in export markets. Total exports of fibres, textiles and clothing during the first half of 1992 were up 8 per cent. compared with the same period last year. Earnings in Yorkshire and Humberside from wool textile exports in the first nine months of this year were up 9 per cent. on last year. That is an impressive achievement in today's difficult world trading conditions.

My hon. Friend had a lot to say about a subject of great importance to the industry—the GATT Uruguay round. There is perhaps no other industry to which a successful outcome of the negotiations is more important than the textile and clothing industry. The Edinburgh Council stated the Community's commitment to an early, comprehensive and balanced agreement to the Uruguay agreement. The OECD has estimated that this could add nearly $200 billion to annual world trade. That would be of immense benefit to all industries, not just the textile and clothing industry.

A successful outcome of the round will entail agreement on the phasing out over a 10-year period of the multi-fibre arrangement, which at present provides protection for the clothing and textile industries in developed countries. Under those proposals, developed countries would, at least once every two years, be obliged to identify a range of textiles and of clothing products to be removed from the MFA quota regime. Quotas for those products not yet integrated into GATT will be progressively increased.

The draft agreement permits safeguard action against imports that threaten injury to domestic production. In other words, quotas can be reimposed on goods that threaten to damage our home industry. In return for phasing out the MFA, the Uruguay round will bring significant benefits to all industries, but particularly the textile and clothing industry. Those benefits include something of great importance—strengthened rules and disciplines governing the behaviour of all GATT members, including developing countries. As my hon. Friend will know, happily, an increasing number of countries have become subscribers to GATT.

I should like to highlight three points of particular importance concerning subsidies and anti-dumping. First, the Government and British industry have long been concerned about the potentially trade-distorting effects of foreign Governments' subsidies—a matter to which my hon. Friend understandably referred. The Uruguay round envisages the elimination of direct export subsidies and others that clearly distort or impede trade, while permitting domestic subsidies that demonstrably do not

[Mr. Tim Sainsbury]

affect trade. Those provisions, it is true, do not go as far as we and our industry would have liked, but they represent a significant improvement on the current GATT subsidies code, which imposes effectively no obligations on developing countries. That is progress on subsidies, and also on safeguards, where there are also proposals that will benefit United Kingdom industries.

Safeguard action is different from anti-dumping, in that it presumes that the goods in question have been fairly traded. Thus, it is right that stringent conditions should be met before a country can take safeguard action under the GATT regulations. The GATT secretary-general's text that is being considered establishes adequate disciplines and sets limits on the periods over which action may be taken.

There is also a clause that allows for provisional safeguard action to be taken where delay would cause damage that would be difficult later to repair. The main advantage of the proposed new code is that it establishes better disciplines and greater transparency without allowing other countries to take indiscriminate or arbitrary action against our exports. That would clearly not be in our interests.

When the negotiations stopped in late 1990, anti-dumping was one of the sectors on which agreement was a long way off. There is much to be welcomed in the secretary-general's text, which attempts to strike a balance between conflicting interests. It contains no specific provisions on the dumping of textile and clothing products but it is intended to cover all products. One proposal in the code that should help the clothing and textile industries is the provision for the investigating authorities to employ sampling techniques where large numbers of exporters are involved. As my hon. Friend will know, rapid changes in the exact description of products has made the application of anti-dumping procedures to textiles particularly difficult. This proposal should help to speed up investigations.

My hon. Friend, quite understandably, had a lot to say about tariffs, and I entirely share his view that there are too many tariffs in the world at unacceptable levels. The Uruguay round is concerned with tariffs, and the textile and clothing industry is equally concerned with the current tariff situation. The outcome of the tariff negotiations, especially those being conducted bilaterally between the Community and the United States, will have a significant impact on the export prospects of those industries. British textile exports to non-EC destinations far too often face prohibitive tariff barriers, as my hon. Friend pointed out. Some exports to the United States face duty rates of up to 36 per cent.

The tariff negotiations are still in process. I emphasise to my hon. Friend that a reduction in textile tariffs, especially those in the United States and certain developing countries, is a priority for Britain. We shall urge on the Community that it continues to make this its priority in the market access part of the negotiations. We have constantly made clear, particularly to the United States, that we expect big reductions in the peak tariff, especially those on textile exports.

The British industry's view of the prospective package of MFA phase-out, coupled with strengthened GATT rules and disciplines and reductions in tariffs, was given some months ago by the chairman of the Apparel, Knitting and Textiles Alliance with which, I am happy to say, the Government have maintained close links throughout the negotiations. The chairman wrote that, while the textiles and clothing industry was disappointed with some aspects of the proposed agreement, it was nevertheless the best on offer, and better than other alternatives that would not deal with the problem of trade distortions.

The Government share that assessment. The overall settlement in prospect, from the textile industry viewpoint, is certainly not perfect, but it contains a range of positive features and offers the best way forward for integrating textiles and clothing trade into the GATT system on an orderly and gradual basis. The British industry is rightly continuing to press for the best possible outcome in the tariff negotiations, and I assure my hon. Friend that the Government are striving to ensure that that is achieved.

My hon. Friend referred to the temporary renewal of the MFA, pending the conclusion of the Uruguay round negotiations. The Community's bilateral agreements with supplier countries are due to run out at the end of this year. The delay in reaching agreement on the Uruguay round has made it necessary to renew the MFA and agreements under it. The Community has now reached agreement with 12 supplier countries on terms within the strict mandate given to the Commission. The Commission hopes to have reached agreement with all MFA suppliers by the end of the year. My Department is keeping the industry closely informed during the process of these negotiations.

Another important subject to which my hon. Friend referred is state aid. I fully agree with him on the importance of keeping up pressure on the Commission and our Community partners to ensure that the European Community state aid rules are rigorously applied so as to ensure fair competition throughout the Community. I am afraid that, as my hon. Friend said, there have been a number of violations of the rules in the textile industry and we have frequently made recommendations to the Commission both about the general issue and about particular cases.

We have secured an important provision in the Maastricht treaty to enable the European Court of Justice to fine member states that fail to comply with their obligations under the state aid rules. Industry has been commendably vigilant in drawing the Commission's attention to suspected violations of the rules. We encourage industry, through its United Kingdom and EC trade associations, to keep up its efforts in that area. The Government are ready to take up specific cases whenever it seems useful to do so.

A unit in my Department is dedicated to helping industry remove barriers to trade within the EC that should not exist under the single market. It is called the single market compliance unit, and I hope that the industry will not hesitate to contact it if it encounters obstacles that should not exist.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley also referred to the importance of environmental protection measures. He was right to identify those as a potential area of difficulty. I am sure that he will welcome, as I did, the resolution adopted at the recent European Community Industry Council calling for the costs and benefits of proposed environmental measures to be properly assessed before adoption. The resolution also called for an even-handed enforcement of environmental standards in

all EC countries. Those will be welcome words to many in British industry. Again, the Government are ready to take up cases where there is evidence that failure by other member states to enforce environmental standards risks distorting trade.

As my hon. Friend knows, the Government have several environmental grant schemes for research, development and demonstration of new environmental technology. One of those, the environmental management option scheme, known as DEMOS, supports the adoption of environmental technologies and best practice techniques, which offer wide environmental benefits. Under DEMOS, my Department is working with the Textile Finishers Association on a project to define best practice technology for waste minimisation and effluent treatment in the textile dying and finishing industry. My Department is providing £145,000 towards total project costs of £290,000 over 18 months. I hope that the industry will welcome that provision because that sector of the industry has problems with environmental protection rules.

My hon. Friend also mentioned the three-times rule covering attendance at trade fairs. My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade and I are aware of the concerns in the textile and clothing industry about the rule under which companies may receive British Overseas Trade Board assistance for participating in overseas trade fairs no more than three times in any one market, apart from the United States, Germany and Japan. However, I am not sure whether the position of the textile and clothing industry is unique, and the limitations on the budget may make it difficult to implement the change that the industry would wish to see. We are nevertheless always interested to consider suggestions from industry of ways to improve our services to exporters.

I shall think carefully about the point that my hon. Friend made. The operation of aid to exhibitions and fairs will come up for review next year, and I shall ensure that my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade takes note of the comments that my hon. Friend made.

The industry is already a major recipient of export support provided through BOTB. During 1992-93, we expect no fewer than 1,350 textile and clothing companies to exhibit at 45 overseas trade shows with the help of support from my Department valued at £1·6 million. In addition, more than £100,000 will be provided to assist the industry through inward and outward missions targeted at important export markets. Those figures are clear evidence of the industry's strong commitment to exporting and to the effectiveness of industry and trade promotion groups such as the British Knitting and Clothing Export Council and the National Wool Textile Export Corporation.

My hon. Friend referred to communication between companies in the industry and our overseas posts. I agree that such communication is extremely important, but the issue is not unique to the industry under discussion. I hope that I can say that, for the most part, good communication now exists. I am convinced that all our overseas posts are committed and determined to provide a good commercial service to our exporters.

All our overseas posts have trained and experienced commercial staff, tasked to promote the interests of United Kingdom companies and send back commercial intelligence. They are now under the management of the joint directorate which brings together my Department and the Foreign Ofice. In some of our larger posts, where resources permit, some of those commercial officers specialise in textiles and clothing. I shall pass on my hon. Friend's comments to my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade, who will take note of them.

I was delighted to hear my hon. Friend mention deregulation, a subject that is dear to the hearts of all Ministers in my Department. I shall correct him on only one point. He said that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was launching a new campaign. In fact, it is a relaunch. Deregulation requires constant vigilance and we are relaunching a campaign throughout Whitehall to ensure that deregulation is given the priority that it deserves. We wish not to burden industry with unnecessary rules, regulations or red tape but to give it every opportunity to flourish. That is particularly important for small and medium-sized enterprises that find such regulations difficult.

I end as my hon. Friend did by saying a few words about the importance of achieving the right economic climate for the textile and clothing industry, as for every other industry in the country. In his autumn statement, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out clearly the Government's new framework for economic policy. I share my hon. Friend's view that the statement has provided a further encouragement to confidence through the monetary policies set according to the needs of the domestic economy, the priority to continue to control inflation but, perhaps most positively, as my hon. Friend said, the advantage to the textile and clothing industry of lower interest rates—not just the recent reduction of 1 per cent., worth another £1 billion off British industry's interest bills, but also the £9 billion already saved as a result of previous reductions.

I share my hon. Friend's view of the importance of the industry and assure him that my Department will continue to help by deregulation, help to exporters, and direct dialogue with the industry. I look forward to further occasions to debate this important industry and hope that we shall then have an opportunity to congratulate the industry again on further export success, further improvements in productivity, further improvements in quality and further improvements in its ability to meet consumers' demands.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you will have observed, something has arisen this morning that has caused great concern to Scottish Members of Parliament. Only this morning on the Order Paper, the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) put down a question to ask the Secretary of State for Scotland asking when he intends to announce the outcome of the current applications for NHS trust status in Scotland and whether he will make a statement. We have learnt that a written answer is to be given to that question later today and that there is to be no public announcement, yet we know—the Scottish press is already aware of it—that no fewer than eight of those hospitals are to be announced today, with a further announcement next week on another six.

That is utterly disgraceful. The whole of Scotland has expressed its disagreement with trust status for its hospitals. Communities and patients have expressed their disagreement. Furthermore, the Health Select Committee only recently expressed grave disquiet about the performance of the trust status hospitals in England. Yet the Government are not only pressing ahead but doing it in a utterly hole-and-corner manner because they are too

[Mrs. Maria Fyfe]

gutless to come to the Chamber and express their wish to do so. Can we demand that a Minister comes to the Chamber at 12 o'clock to answer questions on the matter?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I have listened carefully to what the hon. Lady had to say. I can sense from the support that is being expressed from behind her that there is real strength of feeling on the matter. Those on the Treasury Bench will have heard the hon. Lady——

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Ministers did not even listen.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Treasury Bench is occupied. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) will know that matters of state are nothing to do with the Chair. I hope that those on the Treasury Bench will have heard and listened attentively, because it is obviously important.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that they are new points of order.

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): Further to the point of order. Although the Victoria infirmary has been mentioned in the press releases, there has been no mention of Rutherglen maternity hospital in my constituency, which is linked to the Victoria. Surely it is wrong that people who have worked there and those who are served by those two hospitals have no information from the Government about what the future holds for them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That would be part of the content of any statement, if one should be made. It is nothing to do with the Chair.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I will take one more point of order, provided that it is not on the same matter.

Mr. McMaster: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not a disgrace that the press knew of the decisions last night and certainly before the House knew? Is it not a disgrace that this unwanted policy has been forced on an unwilling people by an unelected Government?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Respect for the Chair is appreciated. These are matters of policy which have nothing to do with the Chair. It is 11.1 and this day is traditionally for Back Benchers. I call Mr. David Trimble.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not taking any more points of order on the matter. I call Mr. Trimble.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand that hon. Members feel very worried about the matter. That is self evident. However, three hon. Members have made a virtually identical point of order. Hon. Members' views are clear. Those on the Treasury Bench will have heard them and they do not need to be repeated. The Chair has now ruled.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have called Mr. David Trimble.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm to me that Madam Speaker has not stipulated that the announcement of any new trust hospitals should be made in the House of Commons? Several hospitals have become trust hospitals but the announcements were not made here in the House. We saw how Scottish Members suddenly came into the Chamber all at the same time just before 11 am. Is it not clear that this is a publicity stunt? It is an abuse of the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not for Madam Speaker to produce an opinion on any aspect of Government policy. Madam Speaker is here to ensure that there is considered debate on the matters which are scheduled for debate. I have taken three points of order on a specific matter which is outside the powers of the Chair.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a different point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If it is a different point of order, I will take it, but I shall listen attentively. Time is coming out of the debate of the hon. Member who has the next Adjournment debate.

Mr. Foulkes: I understand that an announcement is to be made today in a written answer on eight hospital trusts but that others, including the North Ayrshire, and the community trust in Ayrshire, will not be announced today. Apparently they will be announced next week, not even in a written reply—such is the insult to the House. That is of grave concern, particularly because the Minister of State, Scottish Office, Lord Fraser, abruptly cancelled a meeting with me on Tuesday at which we were to discuss the matter. The Government are clearly rushing the measure through against the wishes of the Scottish people. We must have an opportunity to have a statement and a debate on the issue as quickly as possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That was not a new point of order.

Mr. Foulkes: It was.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With respect, it was not. The hon. Gentleman must accept that I have some understanding of these matters, and that was not a new point of order. I expect that all the others are not new points of order. I urge hon. Gentlemen to understand that today is a special day for certain hon. Members who have worked hard to prepare a case about another important part of the United Kingdom.

I plead with hon. Members to understand that they are taking time out of that debate and no new point of order has been made. Hon. Members have put their case forcefully. The hon. Member for Maryhill put the case with considered deference to the House and showed that

the matter was vital to her and other Scottish Members. She put it with such strength that I hope that other hon. Members will resume their seats and I can call Mr. David Trimble.

Mr. Trimble: I have some sympathy with the views that have been expressed by Scottish Members——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is no good hon. Gentlemen——

Mr. McMaster: And hon. Ladies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I ask hon. Members to recognise that this is the season of good will—[HON. MEMBERS: "Not for these hospitals."] Order. I have now heard three hon. Gentlemen sitting on the fourth row say, "Not for these hospitals." Clearly, their point of order is identical to the one that we have already discussed.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): On a different point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. No. The hon. Gentleman said that it was on hospitals——

Mr. Galloway: It is a procedural matter. It will take you 30 seconds to hear it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. With respect to the hon. Gentleman, I have ruled, and I expect some recognition that I am standing here in the absence of Madam Speaker. I ask hon. Gentlemen to recognise that I listened attentively to the hon. Member for Maryhill and to two further hon. Gentlemen, who made the same point of order and did so with conviction. There is no point in hon. Members continually making the same point of order.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will take the final point of order from Mr. John McFall.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): There is an intensity of feeling on the Scottish Benches because yesterday we spent five hours closeted with Scottish Ministers in the House in Scottish questions and then in the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Bill until half past eight. They all disappeared and we were told about the decision last night. The intensity of feeling is great—so much so that we have consulted with our Chief Whip this morning who, through the usual channels, is trying to arrange for the Minister to come to the House at half past two this afternoon to make an announcement and be decent and respectful to Parliament.

It is with that in mind that we are pushing the matter this morning. Given that information, can the Treasury Bench tell us whether any advance has been made so that we can have a statement and the Scottish people exercise their right to know exactly what is happening in this House of Parliament?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He has driven home his point with considerable conviction. He mentioned that negotiations were continuing and hoped for something at half past two. Let us see what happens then.

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): On a new point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): On a new point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady and the hon. Gentleman are now stretching my patience.

Mrs. Adams: On a new point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must resume her seat. It is no good her standing up and saying that she has a new point of order when I am standing. I am sorry. The hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) made it clear that negotiations were proceeding and hon. Members are seeking a debate at 2.30 pm. Let us see what happens. Now we must move on——

Mr. Galloway: I beg to move, That strangers do withdraw.

Notice being taken that strangers were present, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of Strangers from the House), put forthwith the Question,* That strangers do withdraw.

Question negatived.

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

Mr. Trimble: I was about to observe——

Mr. Galloway: I spy strangers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I put the Question——

Mr. Galloway *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. He has been in the House long enough to know that. The hon. Gentleman may not understand the procedure. I put the Question. There were no ayes, but there were noes.

Mr. Galloway: You may not have heard them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should pay more attention if he is moving a motion.

Mr. Galloway: In that case, I will move it again. I spy strangers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may wish to move the motion again, but he is not allowed to do so under Standing Orders. I appeal to hon. Gentlemen and hon. Ladies to recognise that today is an important day for all Back Benchers. The Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, on a further point of order, made it clear that he was seeking a statement and that negotiations were proceeding. I suspect that the hon. Members who are interfering will undermine that. Certainly, undermining the Chair does not help hon. Members. Hon. Members must recognise that I stand here in place of Madam Speaker. I do not think that hon. Members, least of all today, will want to upset Madam Speaker and challenge the Chair. I think that we can now move on to the hon. Member for Upper Bann.

Terrorism (Media Coverage)

11.11 am

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I must tell Scottish Members that they should come to Northern Ireland. We do not even get written answers. More than eight hospital trusts were announced recently and we were not given the courtesy of a written answer. Although I have some sympathy for what Scottish Members were saying, they should understand the difficulties elsewhere. In view of what has happened, I hope that there is a concept of injury time here; otherwise, I am afraid that it will come out of the Government's time.

The question of media coverage of terrorism, especially terrorism in Northern Ireland, is huge, but in the limited time available I intend to cover only a couple of aspects of it. I realise that "media" includes all media, including print media, but we normally use the term with regard to the broadcast media, especially television. Special considerations apply to television.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I apologise to the hon. Gentleman, but I think that he makes a fair point. The next debate will start five minutes later than scheduled.

Mr. Trimble: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The special position of the television media was recognised by the Government when they imposed broadcasting restrictions, which were imposed by the Home Secretary in 1988. Those broadcasting restrictions have been criticised as imposing some sort of restriction on free speech and reporting. Of course, they are nothing of the sort. They do not conflict with the European convention on human rights because that convention permits restrictions in the interests of, among other things, national security and territorial integrity. Clearly, both those restrictions apply to the situation in Northern Ireland.

The restrictions do not prevent the reporting of the situation in Northern Ireland. Broadcasters have had no problem whatever in finding surrogates for terrorists who will explain the so-called point of view of those terrorists. The problem with the broadcasting restrictions is quite the opposite. The restrictions have become ineffective because they contain loopholes which do not appear on the face of the directive. The loopholes were created by the Home Office.

At the outset in 1988, a senior Home Office official gave guidance to the broadcasting authorities and, in the course of that, created two loopholes. The loopholes are set out in a letter which appears in the law reports of the case of Brind and others *v.* Secretary of State for the Home Department. The first loophole is that

"the notice permits the showing of a film or still picture of the initiator speaking the words together with a voice-over account of them, whether in paraphrase or verbatim."

Of course, we see the picture of the terrorist and a skilled actor speaks the terrorist's words in circumstances in which it is impossible to tell whether one is dealing with the actual terrorist speaking. One must often look and listen carefully to see whether such broadcasts are within the loophole or breach the directive.

The second loophole is also referred to in the letter:

"A member of an organisation cannot be held to represent that organisation in all its daily activities. Whether at any particular instance he is representing the organisation concerned will depend upon the nature of the words spoken and the particular context."

That loophole has been deliberately abused to enable broadcasters to broadcast terrorists when they are nominally dealing with other matters. The extent of the abuse in such circumstances is getting bad.

When we examine the other jurisdiction within the British Isles—that of the Republic of Ireland—it is ironic that we find a much better example. As the Minister knows, the Republic operates exactly the same broadcasting restrictions. The directive issued under section 31 of the Broadcasting Act in the Republic of Ireland is identical to the directive issued in the United Kingdom.

The same loopholes do not exist in the Republic. That was graphically illustrated in a report in yesterday's *Irish Times*, in which RTE refused to broadcast a member of Sinn Fein in his capacity as chairman of the strike committee, simply because he was a member of Sinn Fein. There is a strike at his place of employment at present. The gentleman is going to court to compel RTE to broadcast him. That is a clear example of how the directive should be interpreted and applied. The directive and the words are the same. That case is an example of the broadcasting authorities in the Republic of Ireland behaving responsibly. That is in clear contrast to the way in which the broadcasters in the United Kingdom are behaving irresponsibly by extending the loopholes.

Obviously, it is my submission that the loopholes should be closed and the damage repaired. We have raised the matter before. As the Minister knows, on 7 December my hon Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) raised the most recent and flagrant example of abuse. A Sinn Fein councillor was interviewed about a terrorist incident on the supposition that he was a bystander who had some knowledge of it. The councillor did not witness the accident. He did not live nearby; he had come on the scene several minutes later. He was given the opportunity to broadcast the Sinn Fein view of the incident.

That was a clear breach of the directive. The question is: what will be done about it? Unfortunately, the Secretary of State for National Heritage said that it

"is a matter for the broadcasters themselves. They must decide whether a person is speaking on behalf of an organisation . . . or is speaking in a different capacity."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1992; Vol. 215, c. 577.]

What is the point of having a directive if no effort is made to enforce it? With the exception of the question of the loopholes which should be plugged, there is a question of enforcement. If we have the opportunity, I should like to hear the views of the Minister on enforcement. If no precise method of enforcement were set out in the Act or the charter, Her Majesty's Government would have no difficulty obtaining injunctions to restrain broadcasting authorities. There are clear and repeated examples of breaches.

Over and above all that, there is the question why broadcasters behave irresponsibly. Instead of respecting the directive and acting more in accordance with the spirit of the directive and the needs of society generally, why do broadcasters seek to extend and broaden the loopholes?

Obviously, that question broadens into criticism of broadcasters generally. The programme makers and broadcasters in Northern Ireland which we deal with directly—BBC Northern Ireland and Ulster Television—

behave with considerable responsibility, care and sensitivity. I think that the same is true of those which operate in the Republic of Ireland.

Our experience over the years is that the problem lies specifically with the television journalists who operate from London. They tend to fly into Northern Ireland, usually with their minds made up. They are anxious to make their reputations, and the bigger the sensation the better it is for them. They then fly out to enjoy their publicity without regard for those who must stay and perhaps pick up the tab. We are especially conscious of that matter and the lack of balance in broadcasting. The London media seem to think that the only sides which exist are often the Government and the terrorists. They forget that other sides are also involved.

In the past 22 years, I cannot recall many programmes which have dealt accurately, or even sympathetically, with the view of the majority of people in Northern Ireland. One honourable exception was the recent broadcast on Remembrance day dealing with the aftermath of the Enniskillen bombing. However, that programme stands out as an exception. Few programmes have dealt with the matter in a balanced way. Rather than deal with general issues, I want to focus on a specific matter.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Does my hon. Friend accept that broadcasters have not only acted in such a dishonourable way but have spent hours interviewing some of us as representatives of the Unionist community and then refused to put us on the programme because it did not square with what they were trying to say? Will he also confirm that the person interviewed in relation to the Falls did not even come from the Falls so could not have been said to represent that community?

Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government should now examine the regulations, especially when 25 per cent. of programmes are made by outside programme makers and when there has been evidence of people being paid to do things that have not actually happened? There has been a tragic death as a result of a French television crew doing that.

Mr. Trimble: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's comments, and I shall add to what he said towards the end of his intervention.

I said that I would focus on a couple of examples of TV bias and sheer downright bad journalism. One example —it brings in the print media—comes from last weekend's *Sunday Times* and concerns Mr. Ronan Bennett, who was recently given almost an entire page in *The Guardian* in which he told us what great idealists the members of the IRA were. I believe that that article has caused some misgivings in that paper, and rightly so.

The article omitted to express Mr. Bennett's indebtedness to the single-judge Diplock courts in Northern Ireland. In the early 1970s, a single judge sitting in a Diplock court acquitted Mr. Bennett on a murder charge, displaying a lawyer's scrupulousness to the possibility of doubt in regard to the identification evidence of a witness. Many people doubt whether an ordinary person would have shared the same degree of doubt.

Last weekend, *The Sunday Times* told us that the BBC had commissioned two plays from Mr. Bennett. I wonder whether Mr. Bennett will use those plays to pay his debt to the Northern Ireland legal system. I suspect that he will use them instead to attack that system and to produce the usual propaganda in favour of republican terrorism.

Is that the sort of thing the BBC should be doing and the way in which it should be commissioning plays? But, then, it is in character. After all, it commissioned a play by Danny Morrison, one of whose jobs at the time was to act as press officer to Sinn Fein. Mr. Morrison's recent conviction for terrorist activities confirmed suspicions that another of his jobs was to be on the IRA's so-called army council, a suspicion that at the time was well known to everyone. It must have been known to the BBC.

But the main example on which I shall concentrate today is a programme that was broadcast by Channel 4 in October 1991 as part of the "Dispatches" series and entitled "The Committee". I raised the matter in a debate on Northern Ireland on 10 June and I make no apology for returning to it, partly because it was such a bad programme in sheer journalistic terms and partly because some of the matters that were raised clearly referred to my constituency, and there is a real concern in that respect.

Nearly all the background film used in the programme, especially in the crucial second half, was recognisably located in the north Armagh area. Northern Ireland is a small place, so people know the places being shown and quickly recognise them. There was also reference in the programme to terrorist incidents in my constituency, so it is appropriate that I should raise the matter now.

There were two aspects of the programme. The first dealt with a body that was established a few years ago in Northern Ireland calling itself the Ulster Independence Committee, generally referred to at home as the independence committee. The committee exists to promote what is in itself the perfectly legitimate idea that Northern Ireland, having been treated so badly by this House over the last two decades, should now seek independence.

The committee has advanced that view by entirely lawful means, notably when its chairman, the Rev. Hugh Ross, opposed me in the 1990 Upper Bann by-election. Needless to say, the Ulster Unionist party dealt effortlessly with the challenge. Even so, Hugh Ross exceeded the vote of the much publicised Conservative challenger by a margin of 50 per cent.

The second, and more sinister, part of the programme alleged that there existed a secret loyalist body, which was sometimes referred to as "the inner circle" but which the programme as a whole identified as "the committee". It was alleged that that secret body masterminded the planning of assassinations of republicans. We were told that the committee consisted of loyalist paramilitaries, politicians, professional men—various professions, including solicitors, were mentioned—and members of the RUC.

In subsequent media comment, the programme has been referred to as alleging collusion between loyalist paramilitaries and the RUC. Those comments and that description of the programme are profoundly objectionable. Even if everything said in the programme were true, which it was not, it would still not prove collusion between terrorists and the RUC. The phrase "the RUC" refers to the organisation as a whole. Does anybody think that the force officially colludes with terrorists? Would anyone suggest that Hugh Annesely goes to such meetings or sends his deputies to them? Even if the programme were true, it would only show that certain individual members of the force are behaving illegally and reprehensibly. It is a small

[Mr. Trimble]

but important point, because responsible media take care to get things right and not to give a false impression by the use of careless language.

My first range of objections to the programme concerns the juxtaposition of the two parts. The programme entitled "The Committee" referred to two committees, one of which I shall call "the independence committee" and the other—as I say, it is sometimes referred to as "the inner circle"—I shall call simply "the committee."

It was easy for the viewer to miss the distinction between the two bodies. There was a brief debate about the programme later in Channel 4's "Right to Reply" programme, and I raised the matter with a senior commissioning editor of Channel 4, Liz Forgan. She claimed that the two committees had been clearly separated in the programme; but I recall no statement which made that separation. Indeed, in addition to the confusion that would naturally be engendered by the juxtaposition, some of the graphics used for the "the committee" part of the programme had as its background the flag that has been promoted by the independence committee as the proposed flag for an independent Ulster. That clearly linked the two.

Indeed, the programme as a whole linked the two, and I have no doubt that anybody watching it would easily have confused the two. The question is whether that confusion was intended by the programme makers or was merely coincidental. Whichever it was, deliberate or negligent, it was the clearest error of judgment that could have had, and may yet have, potentially dangerous consequences.

The independence committee is an open body and there is no secret about its members. The "Dispatches" programme said that "the committee" included lawyers. As I say, Northern Ireland is a small community. It was immediately apparent to informed people in Northern Ireland that the lawyer on "the committee" could be only one of two people. Only one lawyer is on the independence committee. I know him; he is a former member of the Ulster Unionist party. Unfortunately, he left the party despairing for the future of the Union. I believe he is wrong, but he is a responsible person and not the type of man who would be involved in the sort of activities on which the Channel 4 programme was focusing. He contacted me the morning after the programme was broadcast and was very concerned about his personal security because of the way in which he had been implicitly identified.

The other prime candidate is a north Armagh solicitor who specialises in criminal work and is well known for his loyalist views. He is a former political activist, but he, too, is a responsible person who I know would not be involved with terrorism. He did not see the programme, but he told me that when he attended court the next day—because he had some cases running in the local courts—he wondered why people were staring at him with a strange expression. He was horrified to discover that all the people present thought that he had been unmasked the night before as the brains behind a murder gang. I am happy to say that he has commenced, or is about to commence, libel proceedings in the matter, and I earnestly hope that there will be a just result.

Those two people were not mentioned by name, unlike the chairman of the independence committee, the Rev. Hugh Ross, who was interviewed at length. None of those interviews or questions related to a possible involvement with terrorism, but he was outraged when he saw the programme and noted that he was being linked to a paramilitary committee involved in the planning of terrorism. He said afterwards that, had he had any idea of the accusations that would be made on the programme, he would have made clear to the interviewer the position of the independence committee with regard to terrorism.

On the "Right to Reply" programme, Liz Forgan tried to avoid the obvious charge that Channel 4 had engaged in character assassination by saying that the reason why the Rev. Hugh Ross should not be given the opportunity to deal with his views on terrorism was that the nature of the programme changed after the interview with him. She might believe that; I do not, and I have good reason for not believing it, as I shall say later, because the picture given to the court in the action of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Channel 4 and Box shows detailed control by Channel 4 and Box over all stages of the making of the programme. But, even if what she says is true, it is a terrible confession, showing a lack of basic journalistic ethics. To interview a person, change the nature of the programme and broadcast the interview in a totally different context from that originally undertaken for the interview is a quite disgraceful thing to do.

Matters get worse when we come to the other half of the programme dealing with "the committee". As evidence for the existence of that committee three things were brought forward. The evidence consisted of an interview with a gentleman known as Billy Wright who, if I remember correctly, did not actually refer to "the committee", but talked generally of the motives of loyalist paramilitaries. Although he did not acutally confess to personal involvement in any murders, the programme, and indeed Mr. Wright himself, left the impression that he was engaged in paramilitary activities.

I hold no brief for Mr. Wright. I am told that he is a gangster who tries to cloak his crimes with political motivation, and, to give colour to that motivation, occasionally gets involved in sectarian crimes about which he then boasts to journalists, giving interviews to them regularly. Whether he has committed all the offences of which he boasts I do not know, but I can hazard, a fair guess as to why he collaborated with "Dispatches" and gave credence to the accusation that some RUC officers collude with paramilitaries. The allegation, if true or if believed and acted upon, would have a disruptive effect on the police and reduce their effectiveness. He has a clear interest in harming the police force.

I note in passing that Lord Justice Woolf, in the legal action to which I referred, said himself that the immediate effect of the programme would be to undermine the confidence of the public, particularly in Northern Ireland, in the RUC. That was the effect, perhaps even the objective, of the programme. Incidentally, Mr. Wright was clearly named in the programme, which is why I have used his name. I am very conscious of the dangers of naming people in this context, and I do not intend to name other participants in the programme, although the names of some of them are very well known indeed and are on the record. But I do not think that it is desirable, and it is not necessary to do so.

The other evidence in the programme was an interview with a Northern Ireland journalist, a native of Northern Ireland, who, immediately after the programme, protested to the local media that the parts of the interview that were shown seriously misrepresented his views. Whether that gentleman's protests were ever broadcast in this part of the United Kingdom or given any publicity here is of course another matter.

Finally, the piece de resistance was an anonymous interview, with a figure seated in a room, silhouetted against a window. We were given the impression that that gentleman, who talked in detail about "the committee", was a member of a loyalist paramilitary organisation, perhaps a senior member of the Ulster Volunteer Force or the Ulster Freedom Fighters. "Dispatches" assured us that the information contained in the programme was genuine. The "Right to Reply" commissioning editor said that they had undertaken exhaustive report research and stood over the programme.

On 10 June, I said:

"What was produced on screen in the way uf evidence was singularly unconvincing.

After the programme, in an attempt to bolster their case, those involved in the production of 'Dispatches' supplied the RUC with names, some of whom they said were members of the inner circle. Some of the names were not even in the RUC, although those involved with 'Dispatches' said they were. I believe that the RUC is satisfied that none of those names was so involved"

in the way suggested by the programme. I went on to state:

"If the programme makers had consulted any reputable journalist operating in Ulster, they would have been told that the allegations were fantasies.

I suspect that the programme involved more than gullibility. The person who made it was no wide-eyed innocent coming to Ulster for the first time. He was a native of Ulster who in his student days was associated with extreme Republican politics."—[*Official Report*, 10 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. 406-07.]

The police acted on the matter, as we know. Their own inquiries satisfied them that there was no police involvement in the matter, and statements were issued by the Chief Constable to that effect. In order to obtain more information about the existence or possible existence of "the committee", steps were taken to require the disclosure of the sources. "Dispatches" refused, however, to do so, and we had legal actions which eventually culminated in the case of the DPP, Channel 4 and Box, and proceedings in which Channel 4 and Box were fined £75,000 for contempt of court, what some people might regard as a lenient result which indicates—indeed, the judgment indicates it—some sympathy for the dilemma of journalists in such situations.

After the contempt case, a researcher who worked with the programme was charged with perjury, the charge being that, because in the contempt case detailed statements were put in about the making of the programme, and of course such false statements would amount to perjury, charges were then brought. That action was characterised by some in the press as a demonstration of persecution of a programme or a hounding of the programme makers at the instance of the RUC. More recently, the charge of perjury was dropped. The dropping of those charges was interpreted by the researcher and by others as in some way a vindication of this programme and the allegations made on the programme, and there were then renewed calls for an inquiry.

Normally, I would dismiss calls for an inquiry in such a context because they come frequently and they are the usual next step undertaken by people who are intent on hindering the efforts of the security forces. But in this case I have come to the conclusion that there should be an inquiry—that an inquiry would be useful. An inquiry should look at the original allegations of collusion so as to put the matter beyond doubt. I am quite sure that it will not take long to dispel the smears on the RUC in the programme. The inquiry that I am calling for should focus on the making of the programme and on subsequent events in this rather sorry tale.

The inquiry should look in particular into whether it is normal practice for charges to be dropped before the forensic report on matters which are not just relevant to the charges but are central to the charges had been received. I am told that such action is rather unprecedented and that normally, when one asks for a forensic report relating to a charge, one waits until one gets the forensic report before evaluating the charge. I am told that in this case charges were dropped before the forensic report was available. The inquiry might look into the reason for that decision and inquire whether any influence was brought to bear in what was a rather unusual decision.

In the course of the perjury action, some notes and documents were obtained by the police that relate to the making of the programme. In those notes there is reference to a hitch-hiker. The inquiry that I am suggesting might look into an astonishing report that reached me a few days ago that the person in the notes referred to as the hitch-hiker was walking on a road outside Castledawson when a car stopped and out of the car got persons connected with the making of the programme "Dispatches". They spoke to him, and, in return for offers of money and other things, induced him to take part in an interview in which he sat in a darkened room and made various statements that had been supplied to him by the programme makers.

That is the person who in the programme was portrayed as loyalist paramilitary. The identity of that person is known and it is actually on the public record. I will not give it here because it would only cause more embarrassment to him if the matter were given wider circulation, but it is available in the papers relating to the programme.

That gentleman, of course, is not in either the UVF or the UFF. I am told that the police are satisfied that there is no suspicion of his involvement in terrorism. Indeed, the gentleman concerned is a member of the Romam Catholic religion and is consequently unlikely to be involved in loyalist paramilitary activity. He is not suspected of being involved in any other paramilitary activity. He might have thought at the time that participating in that charade at the time was a bit of a joke. Of course it is reprehensible to have done so, but his life, I understand, has now been disrupted as a result of it. I am told that he is presently in hiding.

My advice to him, if these words should reach him, is that he should come forward and tell the truth about the matter. He should let the matter fully come out into the open. I am not aware of the circumstances, but in the statements given to the court by the DPP and Box, a detailed picture began to emerge of the making and control of the programme. We are told that there was control by Channel 4 and by Box at every stage, to an unusual degree. It is very strange that such a degree of control could be imposed without the charade being detected.

[Mr. Trimble]

It may be that the charade was not as serious as first meets the eye. Perhaps there was a source A and that source was reluctant to appear before the television cameras in any form—and that the hitch-hiker was recruited to act as part of a dramatic reconstruction. That is the most favourable construction that I can put on the facts. If that was the case, it should have been said clearly. Incidentally, my information comes from sources that I consider to be reliable, but I would like a full inquiry to verify the matter—just in case I have been misled in any way. I have been assured by different sources that the police have in their possession statements from some of those involved in the programme's production, in which they admit that it was fabricated.

Earlier, I referred to the "Right to Reply" programme in which Channel 4's commissioning editor said that it stood by the programme and was certain of its veracity. Did they fully investigate and control the making of that programme? Have they subsequently, in the light of the legal proceedings, investigated matters—particularly with regard to the perjury fiasco, when I understand that certain matters in papers relating to that case should put people on notice about suspect aspects of the programme? Do Channel 4 still regard the programme as embodying the kind of quality journalism that it and any other television company should be involved in?

Channel 4 has invested financial and other capital in the programme. I recall seeing pictures of Sir Richard Attenborough and Michael Grade outside the law courts vowing to support the programme and if necessary go down with it. Did they know at the time that they were defending and supporting a fabrication? Do they know that now? If so, will they support an investigation?

Behind Channel 4 and Box lies the origin of the programme—the person who sold the concept to the programme makers. I refer not to the producer, but to the debate of 10 June. The person whom I suspect was the originator of the programme is a native of Northern Ireland. I understand that he now claims that his life is under threat. I cannot assess the validity of that claim, but I hope that it is as false as some of the others that he peddled through the programme. I understand that he is currently engaged in trying to sell another idea to programme makers in London. Will they be fooled again?

I repeat my request for a full investigation, and ask what steps the Minister proposes to take, to check against such manipulation of the media. Yesterday's issue of *The Irish Times* also contains a story with correspondence between Dublin and the central committee of the international department of the Communist party of the Soviet Union in which people invite financial support for an independent programme maker who was intended, among other things, to place programmes with the BBC and Channel 4. That illustrates the danger of manipulation to which my hon. Friend referred earlier, particularly in respect of outside broadcasters. What safeguards are there to be in that regard?

I began by mentioning broadcasting restrictions. Part of the justification for them is that broadcasting differs from the printed media and so requires special measures. I believe that is right, and that principle has relevance to the sorry tale that I have told today. There is a duty not only to make broadcasting restrictions more effective, but to consider how to prevent such abuse, which only plays into the hands of the enemies of society.

11.43 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Robert Key): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) for providing the opportunity to debate a most important issue and to set out the Government's position. I am delighted to see the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) in their places. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage, who of course understands well the gravity of the issues, is unable to join us for this debate, but he knows of it and will of course read it. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) is in his place. He will pursue any particularly important Northern Ireland points raised by the hon. Member for Upper Bann.

Media coverage of terrorism in Northern Ireland is an area about which many people feel very strongly. Any area of life which impinges on the question of the freedom of the individual quite rightly rouses passions across the community.

When I talk about the freedom of the individual, I mean not only such issues as the freedom of the press and the right of people to receive information but the right of ordinary people to live ordinary lives without the threat of appalling terrorist crimes, such as that in Oxford street only yesterday.

We cannot allow the terrorists to win the propaganda victory through their criminal activity. Broadcasters must always be sensitive to the danger they face when covering such issues. The media provide the opportunity for the public to see terrorists exposed for what they really are —criminals dedicated to attempting to ruin the lives of ordinary people going about their business, both in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Manipulation of a free press by terrorists, allowing them to spread fear and their pernicious doctrines to intimidate the public, is something the media need to guard against. The onus is on editors to find the balance between rightly informing the public and inadvertently being used by terrorist gangs. The Government and the security forces do not regard themselves as above press scrutiny, but they—and the public they serve—have a right to expect that the same standards of investigation, the same professional scepticism, be applied to information emanating from other sources, including those close to terrorists.

First, I will deal with the Channel 4 "Dispatches" programme to which the hon. Member for Upper Bann referred. The programme made a series of allegations concerning the existence of organised collusion between the security forces and loyalist paramilitaries through an inner circle. It alleged that Royal Ulster Constabulary officers fed information on targets that assisted the paramilitaries. The programme relied largely, however, on allegations from an unknown source who produced no hard evidence for the claims that he made.

The programme made serious allegations about the integrity of the security forces in Northern Ireland, which the RUC were clearly under a duty to investigate—even if that caused on this occasion a degree of conflict with the

broadcasters. The RUC appointed a senior detective to conduct a full investigation into the allegations. As part of the inquiry, it was concluded that it was necessary to seek to establish the identity of the individual who had made the allegations. The "Dispatches" programme failed to produce significant supporting evidence for the man's claims, so it is obviously difficult for the RUC to investigate further unless the man's identity is established.

Of course, we all have views on the way in which the media should act in matters such as these, but having views does not give the Government the automatic right to intervene in the programming policy of broadcasters, either.

During the period leading up to the issue of the notices on 19 October 1988, the broadcast coverage of events in Northern Ireland had included the appearance of representatives of paramilitary organisations and their political supporters, who used those opportunities as an attempt to justify criminal activities. Such appearances caused widespread offence to viewers and listeners throughout the United Kingdom, particularly after a terrorist crime had been committed.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann raised a number of particular cases where he claims that the broadcasters failed to follow the restrictions. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will follow through those particular cases.

There have from time to time been suggestions that the written press should be subject to restrictions in this area. I do not agree. As I said, it is vital that any restrictions, however narrow, should not restrict the public's right to information. We have no plans to widen the scope of the notices to include any restrictions on the written press.

As with so many matters of this sort, a careful balance must be struck between the need for the Government to secure the rights and freedoms of society as a whole and the rights of the individual. That is explicitly recognised in the universal declaration of human rights and the very narrow scope of the notices strikes that balance.

May I end with one final point. Terrorists attempt to place themselves above the law and to make themselves accountable to no one but themselves. The role of the media in scrutinising the activities of these criminals is as important as the scrutiny of those who seek to defeat them.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thank you for allowing me to raise this further point of order. Has any progress been made since we raised a point of order about an hour ago? Will a Minister or the Leader of the House come to the Chamber to make a public announcement about the disgraceful decision to allow eight hospitals in Scotland to have trust status?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I shall take one point of order at a time. I think that it was about 45 minutes ago that the hon. Lady rose on a point of order. Since that point was raised, I have received no communication from anybody.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You rightly said that this is a special day for Back Benchers and that the role of the Chair is to protect Back Benchers. I am a Back Bencher. I see on the front page of my local newspaper, Dundee's *The Courier and Advertiser*, that the Government are to award trust status to the national health service hospitals in Dundee. However, no Minister is here to inform me whether that story is accurate or inaccurate. Therefore, I have no means of defending my constituents in Dundee who depend upon the national health service there. How can the Chair protect the interests of Back Benchers against a Government who dismiss us so contemptuously by refusing even to say what their intentions are, when they know that Parliament is about to go into recess for three weeks?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a matter for the Chair. The Chair understood that the Opposition spokesman was to make inquiries about further negotiations until 2.30. Since it is only 11.50, perhaps we ought to wait a little longer.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We certainly do not want to disrupt the proceedings, because this is an important day for Back Benchers. However, am I not right in thinking that Madam Speaker and, before her, Mr. Speaker Weatherill deprecated the practice of Ministers making press statements but not statements to the House? I believe that I am also right in thinking that the Secretary of State for Health for England and Wales has always made a statement to the House about opt-outs.

The Secretary of State for Scotland is in some difficulty, since the Minister with responsibility for health is not a Member of this House but a Member of another place. I am sure that you will appreciate that feelings are running very high indeed today when we hear that a lot of hospitals are to opt out and when we hear, too, that a further announcement is to be made during the recess.

There is to be a press notice next week. In one case, the Royal hospital for sick children in Edinburgh, the public were fraudulently induced to give money to the national health service to help that hospital, for we now discover that that hospital is, in effect, to be turned into a private trust hospital. I hope that those who follow our proceedings, including those Back Benchers who have secured debates today, will understand that we have every right, as Members of Parliament, to ask that Ministers be held accountable in this place; otherwise, there is precious little point in having Parliament at all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I recognise that feelings are running high and I understand why they are running high. I confirm that Madam Speaker has made it clear that she deprecates any statement being made to outside bodies before it is made to the House. It is not for me to judge whether that has happened in this case, but that is the statement she has made.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): The Royal hospital for sick children, Yorkhill, is the jewel in the crown of the Greater Glasgow health board. Its service to the public over many decades has been peerless. It is famous throughout the world. Like the Royal hospital for sick children in Edinburgh, it receives large sums of charitably given money—money given in expectation that that hospital would remain a public hospital. I understand from the front page of the local newspaper of my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) that it is to be awarded trust status, thus overriding the wishes

[Mr. George Galloway]

of everyone who works there, of those who have ever used it and of those who have ever uttered a point of view on the matter.

We spent five hours yesterday in the House with Scottish Office Ministers, who must have known that that devastating news was to be released in this way. They did not have the courtesy, either to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the House as a whole or to Opposition Members, to give us an inkling that the announcement was to be made in this outrageous way. Can I ask you to make your view known to those who sit on the Treasury Bench: that they must bring the Minister to the House to answer these points, which are made in all sincerity? Otherwise I feel that we shall be letting our people down——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not being tempted down the threatening route. He knows full well that it is for the Government of the day to decide when and where a statement is to be made. Madam Speaker has made it clear that statements should preferably be made, in her opinion, on the Floor of the House before they are made elsewhere. However, it is not for Madam Speaker to direct the Government or the Opposition to do anything. We are here to try to provide a forum for considered debate. I am afraid that this morning's debate is not scheduled to be Scottish business, although I have now called about seven Scottish Members.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian) *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has come into the Chamber for the second round. He was not here for the first. I hope that the hon. Gentleman intends to raise a new point of order.

Mr. Home Robertson: Yes. May I draw your attention to the exchanges yesterday on the Floor of the House? It was put to Madam Speaker that the government of Scotland and of this House was being brought into disrepute in the eyes of the people of Scotland by the way that Scottish affairs are treated. Any number of Ministers and Conservative Members of Parliament were willing to come to the House to raise frivolous points about Monklands district council, yet when major decisions are being taken about the future of the national health service a Minister cannot be found. Who is running Scotland? Who is meant to be in control of them?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Certainly not Madam Speaker.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that we need to take this matter any further now. Hon. Gentlemen have made their views extremely clear this morning. I must now call the hon. Members——

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I heard the Opposition spokesman say that further efforts were being made to get hold of a Minister before 2.30. It is only just coming up to noon. I suggest that those negotiations continue so that we can get on with the debates and protect the interests of Back Benchers.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), and then it must be the turn of the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway).

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Further to my earlier point of order, I mentioned to you that our Chief Whip was negotiating with the usual channels. As yet, there has been no reply. I do not know whether that is an act of discourtesy or whether it means that negotiations are still going on. None the less, it means that we are still hopeful that someone will come to the Chamber to make a statement. I ask you to use your good offices to press those who are sitting on the Treasury Bench to make sure that we get that statement before the end of business today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Those who sit on the Treasury Bench will have heard that negotiations are taking place. I am firmly stuck in this Chair for the moment. Therefore, I call the hon. Member for Croydon, South.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall take no more points of order on this matter.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. McAllion *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already called the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. McAllion: I spy strangers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot spy strangers for a second time.

Mr. McAllion: This is the first occasion on which I have moved that I spy strangers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat when I am on my feet. May I also respectfully suggest that the hon. Gentleman has a look at "Erksine May"? *[Interruption.]* Order. I must ask the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) not to carry on an argument while I am talking.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian). I am sorry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am most grateful. It is a rule of the House that the House can spy strangers only once during a day's sitting. That motion was moved by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) and was negatived. Therefore, that particular route is now closed. I call the hon. Member for Croydon, South.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall take no more points of order.

Mr. McAllion: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I spy strangers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must refer the hon. Gentleman to page 172 of "Erskine May", which I took the precaution of reading while he was out having a coffee.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This must be the last point of order, then.

Mr. Hood: May I explain—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) wants to intervene and interrupt his hon. Friend. The hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) is, I hope, raising a new point of order.

Mr. Hood: Yes. I heard about the previous points of order while I was dealing with my constituency correspondence. I apologise for not having been here then, but that was the reason for my absence. While I was with my secretary dealing with my correspondence, I received two telephone calls asking me whether it was true that Stone House hospital and Law hospital will announce next week that they are to opt out. Fourteen hospitals are to optout.

I am not aware of what happened here earlier this morning, but I am concerned that, while I have been doing my work on the last day before the Christmas recess, my constituents have been panicking because of reports of hospital opt-outs—information that should have been provided first to Members of Parliament. I am in an embarrassing position, because I cannot give answers to my constituents. It is disgraceful. I want——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hear the hon. Gentleman. I understand and sympathise with him if he feels that he has been placed in an embarrassing position with his constituents. No hon. Member should be placed in that position. However, the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) is waiting to raise an important matter that affects his constituents. My job is to protect the interests of all Back Benchers, and the hon. Gentleman has gone to considerable trouble to ensure that he can voice the concerns of his constituents. I am sure that Scottish Members would not want to embarrass him with his constituents by preventing him from putting his case.

Given that, as I understand it, negotiations are continuing through the usual channels, and the fact that hon. Gentlemen have put their points with conviction and considerable persuasion, I hope that we can now move on to the next debate. I call the hon. Member for Croydon, South.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No; I have heard the points of order.

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Lady has not yet put a point of order to me. As she has been rising with some conviction, I shall hear her.

Mrs. Adams: You have been referring to "hon. Gentlemen," Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I apologise to the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Adams: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder what protection the House can offer me and, therefore, the constituents who elected me. They learned this morning, from a newspaper published 200 miles away, that our local hospital is to opt out of the national health service. What protection can the House give me against that announcement?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have to say to hon. Members —*[Interruption.]* Order. Hon. Members cannot get up when I am speaking.

The hon. Lady asked what protection was available for Back Benchers. She could have asked a private notice question this morning, but, to the best of my knowledge, none was submitted to Madam Speaker. The avenues in this House are legion. Hon. Members have been here a long time and they know that what they should not and cannot do is continually to challenge the Chair on a policy issue, which is an argument between the Opposition and the Government—*[Interruption.]* Order. I understand the strength of feeling and I am sure that Madam Speaker would also understand it. However, the House succeeds only if hon. Members respect the Chair.

Since hon. Members have now put their views twice and with considerable conviction, and having, I imagine, gained enormous media coverage, I hope that we can now move on to the scheduled debate. *[Interruption.]* Order. The subject of delays in the commercial courts is every bit as important as trust hospitals—*[Interruption.]* Order. I will take a last point of order from the Opposition Front Bench. My understanding is that negotiations are continuing through the usual channels—*[Interruption.]* Order. Hon. Members may disagree with their Front Bench, but my information is that negotiations are continuing.

Mrs. Fyfe: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thank you for your great courtesy and helpfulness this morning. However, we have just learnt that no Minister will come to the House to make a statement—[HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful."] As my hon. Friends say, it is disgraceful. Ministers have had ample opportunity to come to the House, but they have not done so. We can only register our utter contempt for such behaviour. The Government have shown contempt for the House, for the people of Scotland and for the people who use the national health service.

We will have to continue with our points outside the Chamber. We do not want to disrupt the time of other hon. Members who have debates today. We do not want to hurt their the feelings or damage the interests of their constituents. We have used this opportunity to put our points and it is a pity that no Minister has had the guts to come here to discuss the matter with us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. Perhaps we can now move on to the next debate.

Commercial Courts

12.4 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): When so many hon. Members turned up in the Chamber at 11.45 am, I thought for a glorious moment—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I appeal to hon. Members to recognise that what they are doing by standing before the Mace does not bring credit on any part of the United Kingdom. I have listened to a large number of points of order—*[Interruption.]* Order. I hope that those hon. Members who are trying to prevent democracy at work—*[Interruption.]* Order. Hon. Members are directly challenging the Chair—*[Interruption.]* Order. It is not a matter of politics any more—*[Interruption.]* Order. I suspend the sitting for five minutes.

12.5 pm

Sitting suspended.

12.13 pm

On resuming—

Madam Speaker: I ask hon. Members who are standing before the Mace to resume their seats.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): We do not in any way ignore your presence in the Chamber, Madam Speaker, nor did we intend to insult you or your deputies. We believe that we are entitled to a statement from the Leader of the House, who we know is in the building.

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members normally speak from their seats. I ask hon. Members to resume their seats. I will hear what the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) has to say if hon. Members will now resume their seats. I cannot hear while hon. Members are standing at the Mace.

Mr. Ross: I want to make it quite clear that we did not intend to challenge your presence through your deputy while Mr. Deputy Speaker was in the Chair.

My hon. Friends on the Front Bench and my Back-Bench colleagues have raised a succession of points of order in response to the outrageous decision of the Secretary of State for Scotland, who is in the building, who answered questions yesterday afternoon and was present during the five-hour debate on another piece of legislation.

We noticed that the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) had a written question on the Order Paper. We woke up this morning to excited telephone calls from our constituents who told us that hospitals in their areas were to be given trust status in a written announcement at 3.30 this afternoon. They demanded that we do something about that. That is why we are here. We could not answer their questions, so we are here to find out what is happening.

We are simply asking for a statement. If the Scottish Office Minister responsible is not present, we know that the Leader of the House is here as we have seen him. We want him to make a statement about the decision of the Secretary of State for Scotland to grant trust status to a number of hospitals in Scotland.

I am sure that Mr. Deputy Speaker reported to you everything that has happened this morning. It is not just today's announcement; it is much more worrying that an announcement is to be made next week while the House is in recess. That is even more insulting, given the rules that you, Madam Speaker, and your predecessor have made about Ministers making press statements or announcements by way of press statements instead of coming to the House.

Madam Speaker: I have been listening for most of the morning to the points of order, and the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) has made the position quite clear to me once more. I understand that negotiations are taking place outside to see whether a statement can be made before the House rises today. That being the case, hon. Members should allow the debate to take place, as we always do in this House.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Madam Speaker: Order. There can be no more points of order on this subject. We must now allow the debate to take place.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Madam Speaker: Order. I have heard all the points of order and I have been listening all morning. Hon. Members must now wait to see whether a statement by a Minister will be made later today. I believe that the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) has the Floor.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I heard the point of order from the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), who has made the matter quite clear on behalf of most of the hon. Members who are in the Chamber. I have been listening all morning and we must now proceed with our debate. I call Mr. Ottaway.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have heard all the points of order that are necessary. Freedom of speech is allowed for everyone in this House. I have heard points of order from hon. Members who have been raising them all morning. I take them very seriously, but the debate must now proceed. Back Benchers have a right to make themselves heard.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Madam Speaker: Order. I believe that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) is seeking to raise a point of order from the Opposition Front Bench. I will listen to that point of order, which will be the final point of order.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I thank you for your consideration, Madam Speaker. Can you clarify further what you said a moment ago when you said that you believed that negotiations were continuing? We understood just a few minutes ago that there was to be no ministerial statement. Is it your understanding that negotiations are still continuing?

Madam Speaker: I understood from the Annunciator that negotiations were taking place. Nobody has informed me other than that. Therefore, until I know, I think that the debate must be allowed to take place.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Madam Speaker: Order. I have heard enough points of order. I call Mr. Ottaway.

Mr. Home Robertson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has already raised a point of order. I have dealt with all the points of order that are necessary. We must wait until I, as Speaker, am told whether a statement is to be made. Hon. Members must do likewise.

Mr. Ottaway: In drawing attention to delays in the commercial courts, I shall initially declare an interest as a solicitor and a director of a company which from time to time has reason to use the commercial court.

Mr. Home Robertson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have to protect what is known as the Royal Assent and therefore I shall suspend the House until 3 o'clock.

12.20 pm

Sitting suspended.

3 pm

On resuming—

Royal Assent

Madam Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Consolidated Fund (No. 3) Act 1992
Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1992
Civil Service (Management Functions) Act 1992

Adjourned without Question put at one minute past Three o'clock, pursuant to the Resolutions [27 November and 14 December], till Monday 11 January.

House of Commons

Monday 11 January 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel

1. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail to discuss rail links between Wales, the west of England and the channel tunnel.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): The Secretary of State and the chairman of British Rail meet regularly and channel tunnel services from the regions, including Wales and the west of England, are often discussed.

Dr. Howells: Is the Minister aware that just before Christmas, Wales and the nation lost the Powell Duffryn wagon construction works in Cardiff and with it the expertise of a century's trading and the ability, among other things, to construct low-axle rail freight wagons which would have enabled areas such as south Wales and the west of England to trade directly with firms on the continent? Why does not the Minister recognise that the lack of orders from British Rail is doing incalculable damage to firms such as the one that used to operate in Cardiff? When will he do something to offer protection to the British rail industry?

Mr. Freeman: I regret the announcement by Powell Duffryn. I had the opportunity to visit its French subsidiary about two years ago and saw the value of its work. But under the rules for open procurement the responsibility rests with British Rail; its decision about the procurement of freight wagons and the special axles and wheels required for them has nothing to do with the alleged dearth of orders.

As for the future for rolling stock orders, I am pleased that progress has been made on the new leasing arrangement of £150 million for British Rail. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will shortly make a statement on that.

Mr. Adley: In wishing my hon. Friend and his colleagues—and you, Madam Speaker—a happy new year, may I ask whether my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend would prefer the chairman of British Rail to be a man who was willing, regardless of his own views, to accept whatever the Government produced by way of plans for the future of British Rail—in other words, a yes man—or would they prefer someone who gave, publicly if necessary, his honest appraisal of the Government's proposals and stated how he saw the future for Britain's railways under those proposals?

Mr. Freeman: I can confirm that the chairman of British Rail discharges his duty with distinction and enjoys the confidence of the Government. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wants a chairman of British Rail who will speak his mind, not someone who will meekly agree with any statement made by a Member on either side of the House. I can also confirm that the chairman of British Rail agrees with the broad objectives of the Government and I feel quite certain that he will help fully to implement them.

Mr. Wilson: Is not it becoming increasingly clear that these ill-thought-out and unworkable plans for privatisation are a blight on jobs, on safety and on the future of the railways in general? Has a route finally been advised to the Government for the rail link with the channel tunnel? If so, will the Minister undertake today to publish it in the near future as a basis for full public discussion?

Mr. Freeman: I can confirm that my right hon. Friend has received a report from British Rail on the route for the channel tunnel rail link from Folkestone to King's Cross. It will be for him to consider that report carefully; but I can give the House the assurance that I gave on 14 December—the last time we debated this—that the Government will move as quickly as possible to commence the procedure of public consultation.

Transport Supplementary Grant

2. **Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road schemes will be able to start as a result of the support he is giving to local authorities by means of the transport supplementary grant.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): As I explained in my statement to the House on 15 December 1992, 41 new major schemes due to start in 1993-94 were accepted for transport supplementary grant. These schemes are listed in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful for that encouraging reply, which will do much for the country's infrastructure and for providing jobs. Is my right hon. Friend aware, however, that my constituents in the village of Spofforth, which lies south of Harrogate on the main link road between the A1 and Harrogate, suffer from increasing volumes of traffic and share my considerable annoyance that the bypass, due to start in September this year, was delayed by North Yorkshire county council until January 1994? It is to be delayed again into the 1994-95 financial year. Will the Minister be kind enough to look into this personally to see whether the start date can be brought back to January 1994?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his opening comments. He is right that this is a major capital investment in the country's roads. It will be £1,047 million in the coming year, which is a record, in a difficult year. However, despite a good number of new schemes, as my hon. Friend knows there are always many more candidates than can be entertained. The problem about the Spofforth bypass scheme was that it was a doubtful starter in 1993-94. As my hon. Friend said, the forecast starting date

was put back to January 1994, but in our experience forecast start dates are often optimistic and I am afraid that there were better candidates. I cannot accept any more schemes for this year, but I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend said about next year.

Ms. Walley: Does not the right hon. Gentleman understand that there is a major problem about the way in which his Department is determining priorities? Is not it the case that the amount that local authorities can spend on local schemes rather than major schemes—on the sort of projects that local people want for environmental traffic calming measures—has been reduced from 7 to 5·7 per cent? When will he give local councils the real right to determine the priorities that they know are needed in their communities?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Lady is wrong. By and large, we follow the priorities advanced by local authorities for major schemes. As she will know, we have also increased substantially the amount available for local safety schemes, which often include traffic-calming measures, for this year and next year. The figures are up from £31 million to £50 million. I know that local authorities approve of those schemes; we are responding positively to their priorities.

Motorway Repairs

3. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about the speed with which motorway repairs are undertaken.

Mr. MacGregor: I receive a steady flow of representations about motorway repairs, mainly concerned with individual cases.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend believe that the public are satisfied that motorway repairs are undertaken in the minimum possible time? I appreciate that there has been an improvement in recent years, but has he any proposals to improve the situation further?

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that my hon. Friend will acknowledge that there have been substantial improvements, not least because the introduction of the lane rental scheme means that motorway repairs are completed faster here than anywhere else in the world. Our pioneering scheme has been copied around the world. I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that we shall be moving from a level of 50 per cent. of motorway repairs carried out through lane rental contracts to achieving our target next year of all schemes where lane rental is applicable being carried out in that way. We are also making fast progress in other directions.

A1 (Motorway Standard)

4. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many properties are to be demolished to allow the A1 to be improved to three-lane motorway from the Barnsdale Bar area to the Boot and Shoe interchange; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): On the basis of the present preliminary proposals, two residential properties and one commercial property would be demolished.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the Minister consider the properties that will be blighted by the proposals, especially Ferrybridge school, which lies in an area where a 16-lane motorway will pass through a conurbation? When will the Minister consider bypassing towns? When will he stop acting like a vandal and make sure that we have motorways which take traffic away from towns and villages and not through them?

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman will understand that we have gone through a thorough public consultation on this part of the A1 improvement. Almost 2,000 people visited the exhibition or wrote to us. About 60 per cent. of those people fully supported what we intend to do and only 16 per cent. opposed it. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the upgrading of the A1 to motorway standard from London to Newcastle will bypass many towns. We are also being especially careful to avoid areas of important countryside, such as sites of special scientific interest. Therefore, I strongly refute the hon. Gentleman's allegations.

Motorway Noise

5. **Mr. Willetts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further steps he will take to reduce the levels of noise from motorways.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We are proceeding on two fronts: ever-stricter noise limits on vehicles, together with the practical measures that are available when motorways are improved or constructed. These include noise screening by earthworks and barriers, quieter road surfaces and the provision of insulation.

Mr. Willetts: I welcome the steps that the Department is taking to reduce the level of noise from motorways. However, may I draw to my hon. Friend's attention the notorious roar produced by the experimental concrete surface on the A27 at Havant? Does not that make it a prime candidate for a new experiment, with a quiet noise-absorbent surface?

Mr. Carlisle: I well know the campaign for a quieter A27 that my hon. Friend has waged on behalf of his constituents. Unfortunately, when this road was built with concrete, it was over-textured. However, we are making some improvements to that road and we shall continue to do so.

I was pleased in the summer to announce a new policy on designing roads to ensure that they are less noisy. That entails providing porous asphalt where it will work and that will halve the level of noise. Before Christmas, I was delighted to be able to say that we are going ahead with porous asphalt on the A5 at Fazeley. Wherever possible in future, we shall meet the requirement for less noise. We shall look to better textures wherever we can.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that many homes are badly affected by motorway noise and that that is certainly the case with the M4 around Newport? Many people seem to be caught out by anomalies in the regulations. Will the Minister look into this to see whether the regulations can be relaxed a little?

Mr. Carlisle: I am happy to look at anything that we can do to improve the situation. As I said, noise is the one sector in which we must do better. I know that many

people are concerned about noise when new roads are built. We now have extensive powers for insulation and the Land Compensation Act 1973 provides for compensation to be paid where the value of property declines.

Speed Cameras

6. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that speed signs are placed beside camera signs in zoned areas for spy cameras; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steven Norris): Observation of speed limits has markedly improved where cameras, backed by warning signs, have been installed. This suggests that drivers are well aware of the speed limit in force and that signing arrangements are adequate.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that most, if not all, motorists are anxious to stick to speed limits, particularly where there are spy cameras? Will he assist them by eliminating small speed signs, which are often illegible, particularly where speed limits change rapidly? Will he also place visible speed signs alongside the spy cameras, further to assist motorists to stick to speed limits, as I am sure they are anxious to do?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend will know that the speed limit signage is in accordance with national criteria and where there are 40 mph or 50 mph speed limits in force, repeater signs are used. He raised a sensible question about why we cannot combine repeater speed limit signs and camera warning signs. There are two reasons for that. First, to display both items of information in one sign would require an impractically big sign. Secondly, camera signs are not intended to show exactly where the cameras are. Their purpose is merely to remind people of the need to observe speed limits over a wider area. For those two reasons, a conscious and deliberate decision has been made not to site the repeater speed limit sign and the camera sign on the same post.

Traffic Speed (London and Paris)

7. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about calculations of traffic speeds in London and in Paris.

Mr. Norris: The most reliable comparison is for day-time off-peak traffic speeds. These are about 31 kilometres per hour in London and 28 kilometres per hour in Paris.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend should note that that is one up for London. Given the positive joie de vivre with which his appointment as Minister responsible for London's transport was greeted, would he like to tell the *Evening Standard* what it can do with its criticisms of him? Will my hon. Friend do his best to accelerate the trend of people moving to trains and away from cars by introducing road pricing around London's perimeters?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend has asked an important question and I commend him on his perspicacity and thinking on the matter. There is a tremendous tendency to knock London. The great British disease is knocking our own achievements. My hon. Friend has elicited the fact that traffic in London is appreciably better than it is, for example, in Paris. Comparisons with many other, even leading, European cities are impossible because their authorities do not even attempt to record mean average speeds. I agree with my hon. Friend's observation that we must continue to encourage public transport. That is why expenditure on roads in London, as a result of the current public expenditure survey, is about a third of that on public transport. There is a substantial commitment to public transport.

Mr. Simon Hughes: In addition to the sensible suggestion of the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) for improving traffic in London, does the Minister accept that another good approach would be to authorise the completion of works on the Jubilee line extension? Given that the approval was announced in the autumn statement, are the works to be authorised this year, next year, some time or never?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman, who has always taken a keen interest in the project, knows well the answer to his question, which is that the Jubilee line extension has always been a partnership between the Government and private developers. Negotiations on concluding the agreement are well advanced. As far as I am aware, they are continuing and good progress is being made. The hon. Gentleman, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I will be extremely pleased when the project can commence, but that must depend on the signing of the agreement.

Mr. Simon Coombs: What progress has my hon. Friend made in reviewing the success of the red routes scheme in London? What plans does he have to discuss with his colleagues the possibility of providing similar schemes in other large towns and cities in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Norris: The red routes, including the pilot route, have been spectacularly successful. Accidents have been reduced by about 17 per cent., which is about three times the level that has been achieved in the boroughs through which the pilot route passes. Speeds have been improved, but fortunately not greatly so, for private cars. About 8,700 more passengers a week are using the No. 43 bus service on the pilot route. I look forward to our being able to replicate those improvements throughout the priority network.

I am interested that Lothian, a Labour-controlled county in Scotland, is introducing and implementing a concept which it calls green routes, but which in every way is exactly the same as the red routes concept in London, even down to the fact that red paint will be used. Silly politicking has surrounded the red routes debate over previous months, but we have the clearest possible vindication in the general recognition that it is an extremely valuable concept.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am all for a bit of knocking, but there is no need to engage in it when comparing parking in Paris and in London. Parking in central Paris makes parking in London seem positively orderly and restrained.

The Minister did not answer part of the question of the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) about road pricing. We understand that the Government will make an announcement about road pricing in London. Will the hon. Gentleman tell us when the announcement will be made?

Mr. Norris: I shall not comment on the hon. Gentleman's propensity for knocking in any circumstances, except to say that in terms of parking he is wrong again. He probably knows that one of the major contributory factors in achieving better road speeds in London is that parking is much better managed in London —this is a general recognition—than in Paris, where recently there has been——

Mr. Banks: That is what I said.

Mr. Norris: I am grateful. If I misunderstood the hon. Gentleman, I withdraw. Perhaps I was too busy knocking him. I entirely agree with him.

My right hon. Friend has already made it clear that we are undertaking a substantial study of road pricing in London. That is something which the hon. Gentleman may have missed. He will know, if he has read the appropriate answer, that the research is to continue and that it is likely to take at least another year before the information is available. Much of it involves extensive attitudinal and survey research. The Government consider that road pricing is an important component in dealing with urban congestion in future and I shall be happy to keep the hon. Gentleman appraised of progress.

Mr. Mans: On the question of traffic speeds, can my hon. Friend say when the regulations associated with the Traffic Calming Act 1992 are likely to come into force? The Act has been in existence for nine months and many local authorities want to get on with producing schemes based on it, but are prevented from doing so because the regulations have not yet been published.

Mr. Norris: I congratulate my hon. Friend on having been the inspiration behind that Act. He is to be commended for having put it on the statute book. I understand that its provisions will be enacted shortly. It will certainly make a worthwhile contribution to road safety.

British Rail (Redundancies)

8. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with the chairman of British Rail about the effect on performance of recent proposed redundancies.

Mr. Freeman: This is a commercial matter for the board. The redundancies concern staff positions where, judged by British Rail, loss is not expected to affect performance.

Mr. Janner: Does that answer mean that there were no consultations with the Minister? If not, why not? Surely matters of commercial interest and concern in public bodies such as British Rail should be considered by the Department. Do not they lead to great public expenditure in redundancy pay and other benefits? There should be consultation not only with the Minister concerned, but with the Secretary of State for Employment.

Mr. Freeman: Of course there were consultations between British Rail and the Department of Transport about the need to reduce the work force in line with falling demand. On Network SouthEast alone, during the 12 months to the autumn of 1992 patronage fell by about 8 per cent. Ministers were certainly aware that British Rail was discharging its functions correctly by planning to reduce services—and therefore employment—at the margin. The precise number involved and the timing of the announcement were rightly matters for British Rail. We do not believe in interfering in matters that are not our direct concern. Until our reforms are in place, the management of British Rail is a matter for its board.

Mr. Couchman: My hon. Friend has assured the House that the redundancies will not affect performance. Is he aware that several thousand of my constituents commute daily on the Kent coast and Kent link lines in filthy, awful and old rolling stock, with unreliable services and little hope of any improvement? Is he further aware that British Rail has proposed cutting the already unacceptably bad service from May and is offering my constituents no hope of any improvement? When will my hon. Friend offer them some hope of improvement for their almost £2,000-a-year season ticket?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend is absolutely right— *[Interruption.]* I usually concentrate on listening to the question rather than turning away from Madam Speaker.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on his very detailed support of the urgent need to improve rail services to his constituency. I repeat my earlier assurance that the 5,000 redundancies principally affect management and will not affect the safety of the railways.

My hon. Friend is aware of the £800 million programme of improvements now being made on the Kent link line, which serves part of Kent. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will turn his attention to the Kent coast service as soon as British Rail has completed improvements to the Kent link line.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Minister aware that already British Rail has removed all staff from a number of stations in my area? If that trend continues, many women will cease to travel by public transport because it will become even more dangerous and difficult for them. When does the hon. Gentleman intend to reconcile his supposed care for the safety of women passengers and the constant and increasing destaffing of British Rail stations?

Mr. Freeman: I share the hon. Lady's concern. However, that matter has nothing to do with the 5,000 redundancies announced by British Rail. The destaffing of stations has been taking place for some time. I firmly believe that with the introduction of franchising, which is a positive idea that will be welcomed by the House when we debate it tomorrow, there will be an improvement in the quality of services, including an improvement in the number of staff serving passengers both on platforms and on trains.

British Rail (Passenger Numbers)

9. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what targets he has set for the current year for the number of passengers using British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: The Government do not set targets for the number of passengers using British Rail, but we wish to see more travellers preferring rail to road for all types of travel, including commuting into London.

Mr. Burns: Is my hon. Friend aware that the thousands who commute from Chelmsford to Liverpool Street station each day simply want an efficient, well-run service, and does he believe that franchising will achieve that?

Mr. Freeman: I certainly do, and I am sure that the House looks forward to tomorrow's debate on that very subject. My hon. Friend has long been concerned in particular about resignalling on the Great Eastern line, as others of my hon. Friends have been in relation to resignalling on the London-Tilbury-Southend line. I confirm that, following a review of the interdepartmental financing round settlement for British Rail, resignalling work on both lines will immediately continue.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: Is the Minister aware that many of my constituents are eager to use the services provided by British Rail, but that they are consistently being made too expensive by constant fare rises—and that many services are not even accessible because of the continuing closure of railway stations? Far from pursuing privatisation, should not the Government take on board the concept that railways should provide a public service that is available to the majority of the public?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Lady will know that the Government, on behalf of the taxpayer, provide £1,000 million a year in subsidies to British Rail to run socially necessary services. If she believes that fare increases should be moderated or that fares should be reduced, that would mean the taxpayer having to provide more money for subsidies to British Rail and a bigger burden on the taxpayer. The difference between the Opposition and the Government is that we believe that railway passengers should meet as much of the cost of providing the service as possible and that socially necessary services should be subsidised rather than the passenger.

Lady Olga Maitland: Is my hon. Friend aware that thousands of southern commuters suffer unnecessarily when trains do not run—which I understand is due to cancellations resulting from drivers not turning up for work? Will my hon. Friend therefore look into the trade unions' restrictive practices?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend is right. Certain services are affected by drivers not turning up for work, but I pay tribute to British Rail—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) should be generous with his support where British Rail has made an effort to improve the quality of services. Under the passengers charter, there has been a real improvement this year on certain Network SouthEast lines. I hope that my hon. Friend will see continued improvement on her line.

Mr. Prescott: Is the Minister aware of the report published today by the Central Transport Consultative Committee, and of the Health and Safety Executive Commission's report on safety in a privatised railway, which make it clear that there will be serious cuts in passenger services and that they will be less safe due to the lack of adequate financial resources provided by the Government? No doubt that is due to the £3 billion that the Government have taken out of public support since 1983. Does not the Minister think that British Rail and the Secretary of State should switch their attention to that important issue rather than try to explain the confusion about whether the Government intend to privatise, semi-privatise, or commercialise—all of which are irrelevant to the needs of a good railway system?

Mr. Freeman: I will deal with the hon. Gentleman's two specific points; because we shall have an opportunity to debate the full issue tomorrow. As to public support for the railways, the hon. Gentleman is five years out of date. We increased the public service obligation grant in the past four straight years. The hon. Gentleman must get his facts right. He claimed that we removed support, whereas he should know that we have increased if in the past four years. As to safety, every time that there is an accident on the railways—and that happens infrequently—the hon. Gentleman immediately says that the Government and British Rail are skimping on safety. He should know that this year, British Rail is spending £200 million on safety —a significant improvement on previous years. Safety is the single most important factor for not only the Government but British Rail.

Networker Trains (Kent)

10. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the implementation of the new Networker trains on the north Kent suburban lines.

Mr. MacGregor: There has been a very positive response to the introduction of the new Networker trains.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Naturally, my constituents are delighted with the new trains, which are improving the service. As my right hon. Friend knows, however, the Dartford line—which goes through Erith and Crayford, my constituency—has a long way to go before it provides a good service. Can he give my constituents any hope that his plans for the future of the railways will improve the service for commuters to south-east London?

Mr. MacGregor: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. His question raised two points. The total route modernisation, plus improvements to track, infrastructure and stations, is costing about £800 million. It is the largest investment project to take place on Network SouthEast in recent years, and many of the benefits are still to flow through. For example, new Networker trains are now coming on to the line at the rate of one a week, and all 764 coaches will have been delivered by mid-1994. My hon. Friend can tell his constituents that the number of new trains will continue to increase week by week.

As for the second point, I am sure that franchising will lead to improved passenger services in 1994 and beyond.

Mr. Mackinlay: Who is to blame for the decay of the railway network in the south-east which has been mentioned by the hon. Members for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett), for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) and for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman)?

Mr. MacGregor: A number of factors are involved. The fact is, however, that a substantial capital investment is being made. That, combined with all the organisational changes made by British Rail—changes which were very necessary—will produce better services in the future. I also believe that our privatisation proposals, including the

proposal for the franchising of passenger services, will provide even more benefits than those produced by the management changes that have already taken place.

Mr. Dunn: Will my right hon. Friend accept my constituents' congratulations for his part in pushing British Rail to supply fresh rolling stock for the north Kent lines? Will he now turn his attention to the need for new signalling equipment, which would make the service not only of good quality but reliable in future? The need for such equipment is the last major impediment to the breakthrough that north Kent commuters require.

Mr. MacGregor I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I understand his point. Of the £800 million that I mentioned, £150 million will be spent on improving track, power and signalling equipment, as well as on extending platforms at 63 stations. My hon. Friend can be assured that work is going ahead on signalling.

Mr. Bayley: Will the Secretary of State pay tribute to the work force and management of ABB Transportation Ltd. in York, which built the magnificent modern Networker trains that are used on the north Kent line? Is he aware that the company has invested many millions of pounds in its factory in the expectation of orders from British Rail, but is now running at little more than two thirds of capacity? Further orders could be dealt with; commuters in the south-east need the trains, and people in York need the jobs.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman will know that in the autumn statement we announced a £150 million leasing programme in the run-up to privatisation. Indeed, only the prospect of privatisation enabled us to do that. It is now for British Rail to decide what use it makes of that programme. Late last week I had a discussion with the chairman and board members of British Rail, and I know that they are considering how they may take full advantage of it. It is for them to decide on the rolling stock to which the programme will be applied.

Trunk Roads (Dorset)

11. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the trunk road building programme for Dorset.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The national trunk road programme contains 12 schemes in Dorset, with a value of more than £90 million. The schemes most recently opened to traffic were dual carriageway improvements between Yellowham hill and Troytown, in December 1991, and between Mere and Wincanton—which serves north Dorset —in July 1992.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my hon. Friend for his answer, and for the enormous amount of investment that is going into Dorset—particularly that which benefits people trying to travel to and from London.

Dorset has already spent a good deal of money on the A37, but the last link, which goes to Yeovil, must go through Somerset, and therefore receives no investment. Will my hon. Friend consider making it a trunk road, thus greatly improving north-south communication for my constituency?

Mr. Carlisle: My hon. Friend is always fighting for better roads in south Dorset. I pay tribute to him for that. I remind him, however, that it is unnecessary for a road to be a trunk road if it is to be greatly improved. On the two north-south routes in Dorset, the A350 and the A354/A37, in recent years four schemes have been approved for transport supplementary grant worth £30 million or more in total. Investment in these routes will continue.

British Rail Maintenance Ltd.

12. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has decided on the future ownership of British Rail Maintenance Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We are still considering the options for BRML depots. We have made it clear that we see benefits in involving the private sector in the heavy repair work currently carried out by BRML.

Mr. Milligan: I am grateful to the Minister for his answer, but is he aware of the extreme anxiety among the 1,500 employees of BRML in my constituency, particularly after recent job losses? They fear that the change of ownership could mean further job losses. Could my hon. Friend be a little more precise about when he expects to make a decision? And when he makes it, will he bear in mind both the need to maintain employment in what is an extremely efficiently run works and the need to ensure proper competition so that the works at Eastleigh, and elsewhere, can compete fairly for work on the railways and for other business?

Mr. Freeman: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend. He and I have visited the Eastleigh depot. I know that my hon. Friend supports very much the work of that BRML depot. We shall seek to make an announcement as quickly as possible on the future of the four major depots. If the depot were transferred to the private sector, the intention is that it would compete fairly, on a level playing field, with other engineering companies in the private sector.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

National Audit Office

29. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what assessment he has made of the effect on the budgetary requirements of the National Audit Office of the introduction of citizens charters in Government Departments.

The Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission (Sir Peter Hordern): The National Audit Office's corporate plan for 1993-94 to 1997-98 confirms that the National Audit Office's strategy is to take account of and respond positively to the citizens charter initiative.

Mr. Bayley: Is the National Audit Office in a position to make a detatched and independent evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the citizens charter initiative? If not, who is?

Sir Peter Hordern: I very much hope so. The National Audit Office has been making reports about the quality of service for many years. Several reports were given to the Public Accounts Committee only last year. The NAO, is therefore, fully qualified to carry out this initiative.

Dr. Kim Howells: Does the Chairman also acknowledge that the Public Accounts Commission has been extremely worried about the lack of accountability of some, for want of a better term, quangos? There are grave worries that the next steps agencies could go down the same road and that this time next year we shall find ourselves expressing worries about the new agencies, just as we are expressing worries now about the existing ones.

Sir Peter Hordern: I am sure that those points will have been made to the Comptroller and Auditor General. If he is very concerned about it, as he may well be, he in his turn will come before the Commission and ask for help and extra resources. So far, however, the Comptroller and Auditor General has expressed himself fully satisfied with the resources that have been made available to him.

30. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what assessment he has made of the effect on the funding requirements of the National Audit Office of changes in the organisation of the national health service.

Sir Peter Hordern: The National Audit Office's corporate plan for 1993-94 to 1997-98 takes account of the need to examine known changes in the machinery of Government, which includes NHS reforms.

Mr. Michael: Can the Chairman assure us that the Commission is aware of the fact that, irrespective of changes of management, of trusts, or anything else, people still regard their local hospital as their hospital? That is certainly true of Llandough hospital in my constituency. My constituents want that hospital to get a fair crack of the whip in terms of finance and contracts. Can the Chairman assure us that there will be a mechanism in place, and the staff, to investigate the way in which all financial arrangements are made and to ensure that money is allocated and accounted for properly in this new climate of ever-increasing numbers of quangos and trusts?

Sir Peter Hordern: Of course it is important that the National Audit Office should have the power and the capacity to look at the reforms and how they are carried out. The NAO has carried out a number of reviews. Only last year there were eight, and seven the year before, which were brought before the Public Accounts Commission. I am sure that the Comptroller and Auditor General will read what the hon. Gentleman has said, for he has raised a very important point.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Can the right hon. Gentleman assure us that the Commission will look closely at National Audit Commission reports that refer to specific scandals in the national health service? It is becoming increasingly clear that the opportunities of the so-called internal market are being exploited, not for the good of patients, but for those who want to rip off the taxpayer, because it is seen as an easy mark.

Sir Peter Hordern: I cannot comment generally on what the hon. Lady says. However, I hope that she will put any specific examples to the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend point out to the National Audit Office that the internal market has led to an increase in the number of patients being treated and a reduction in waiting lists? The internal market is seen as good value for money for patients.

Sir Peter Hordern: I have no doubt that the Comptroller and Auditor General will report on this, as on any other matters.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Clocking On

31. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to his oral answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, columns 575-76, what further consideration has been given to removing clocking on and off procedures for all members of the staff in Parliament.

Mr. A. J. Beith *(on behalf of the House of Commons Commission):* I understand that the position in the Refreshment Department remains unchanged since my answer to the hon. Member on 29 June 1992 and that since that date no representations from trade unions that represent staff in the Refreshment Department have been received requesting abolition of the present time-recording system. Other Departments in the House continue to review the methods for recording the attendance of their staff.

Mr. Skinner: Does the right hon. Gentleman, who represents the Liberal Democrats, understand that it is nothing short of a disgrace that cleaners, cooks and bottle washers must clock on when Ministers, Members of Parliament, top civil servants and people in the press gallery do not need to clock on? Can the right hon. Gentleman and the rest of them not get rid of the upstairs downstairs mentality? Instead of waffling on about the classless society, they should do something about the upstairs downstairs mentality.

Madam Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman is answering on behalf of the House of Commons Commission.

Mr. Beith: Time recording is used mainly in those Departments—primarily the Refreshment Department—in which the overtime worked by staff is important to the calculation of the pay they receive. Presumably, that is one of the reasons why the trade unions have accepted that some form of time recording is appropriate.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Rather than wait for the trade unions to ask, would it not be a good idea to take a management initiative and consult representatives of the staff to see whether they would prefer to continue with the present system or change it?

Mr. Beith: The matter is under regular discussion between representatives of the staff and management.

Clerks (Judicial Inquiries)

32. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will make it his policy to permit the seconding of House of Commons Clerks to the secretariat of judicial inquiries.

Mr. Beith: No approach has been made to the House authorities requesting such secondments and the Commission, therefore, has no reason to consider the matter.

Mr. Dalyell: With the experience of having given one and a half hours of oral evidence to Lord Franks and his colleagues—who, by common consent, produced something of a whitewash—and in view of the fact that every knotty problem relating to arms to Iraq is landing in Lord Justice Scott's in-tray, would it not be better if his committee and the helpers that he must have were partly staff from the Clerks of the House, not only because of their acknowledged expertise, but because, unlike civil servants, they do not need to return to a Government machine which naturally determines their careers and futures? Can we have Clerks who are responsible to the House, rather than civil servants who are ultimately responsible to the Government?

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman makes a very interesting point. However, it is not for the Commission to pass judgment on the effectiveness of the support staff used by inquiries. If there is a wider feeling that such a change and such secondments would be appropriate, it would then be for the Commission to consider whether that could be accommodated within the work of the House. I think that the confidence which the hon. Gentleman shows in the independence and expertise of our Clerks will be widely shared in the House.

Children's Centre

33. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, when the Finance and Services Committee will consider proposals to establish space and provision for a children's centre in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Beith: The Finance and Services Committee was nominated on 11 December and has now held its first meeting. It may be for the convenience of the House if I respond to the hon. Lady's question, which was tabled prior to the Committee's nomination. Possible options are still being investigated by the authorities of the House and any suitable proposals will then be put to the relevant Committees. When their feasibility, cost and financial implications have been examined, a recommendation will be brought before the Finance and Services Committee, which will give advice to the Commission. However, I shall bring the hon. Lady's continuing interest to the attention of the Serjeant at Arms and the Establishments Office as an indication of the importance placed on the project by several hon. Members.

Mrs. Jackson: Does the hon. Gentleman agree—I think that he does—that 1992 was characterised by many parliamentary questions and answers on the matter being answered by "soon", "may be", "hope so", "when we find the money"and "when we find the space"? May I suggest that he recommends to the Finance and Services Committee that it makes a new year resolution that during 1993 space will be found for children in this large Palace in which we sit? Space should be found for well-equipped facilities for mothers with small babies and for the many children who visit the Palace. It is disgraceful that in the 1990s we have no such facilities for families and for visitors' and Members' children, grandchildren and so on. Will the Committee make that new year resolution?

Mr. Beith: The hon. Lady's supplementary question goes wider than the creche proposal which was, indeed, the subject of many questions during 1992. It extends to whether we could go beyond the present facilities of the Families Room. Those matters ought to be considered by the Accommodation and Works Committee and the Commission has asked the Committee to consider them.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sittings of the House

36. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has for the time of sittings of the House in the light of the legislative programme for the remainder of the parliamentary year.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Discussions are continuing through the usual channels to seek to identify an acceptable basis on which the House can take decisions on the report of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House, including decisions on the timing of implementation of any changes which may be agreed.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Lord President of the Council accept that the implication of the statement that he made last year when the report was produced was that the new regime would be in operation from the beginning of 1993 so that we could work some logical hours this year and change the system of decades for a better one? Have the Government not implemented the new proposals merely because small technical difficulties remain or do they not intend to introduce them until after they have allowed the House to play funny games as a punishment for rebels, as opposed to an advancement of democracy?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman's interpretation is wide of the mark. I assure him that no one has a greater vested interest—if I may put it that way—in making progress on the proposals than the Leader of the House, in view of the amount of time that he is expected to put in here.

Mr. Madel: On the progress of the Maastricht Bill, would it not help us all if we stuck to Tuesdays and Wednesdays until the proceedings are completed? That would make our lives reasonably reasonable.

Mr. Newton: As I said at business questions just before the recess when a similar point was put to me, I cannot give an immediate undertaking of that nature. However, I am conscious of the number of people who would find that arrangement convenient.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Lord President accept that while we are well aware that he has taken some small steps, which are most welcome on both sides of the House, towards adopting the recommendations made in the report, we are anxious to see further moves by agreement between all parties, particularly because it is undoubtedly the case that our present hours and circumstances of operation are likely to put off the many women whom we wish to see in the House in every party?

Mr. Newton: That, I know, was a point which was in the mind of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) and others who were involved in the report. I welcome what the hon. Lady has said. As she knows—I state this simply as a matter of

fact and not in any sense as a criticism—she is currently considering her response to a letter that I wrote after outlining some thoughts to her earlier.

Mr. Marlow: As the Maastricht treaty is dead until the Danes change their minds in another referendum, and as legal expertise takes the view that they do not have the legally binding opt-outs for which they asked, would it not be in everyone's interest to delay further strenuous consideration of the Maastricht Bill in the House until the Danes have said yes?

Mr. Newton: I know and understand my hon. Friend's views on the matter and I hope that he will not think me unduly aggressive if I simply say no.

Chamber (Layout)

37. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what assessment he has made of the physical layout of the Chamber of the House on the effectiveness of its procedures.

Mr. Newton: No such assessment has been made.

Mr. Banks: That is a pity because, given that Members of Parliament are getting reasonable office facilities, surely it is time that we examined the possibility of a new debating chamber in this House. The layout of this Chamber resembles that of a pokey, second division football ground, so it is not surprising that we have outbreaks of crowd disturbance from time to time. In the latter part of the 20th century, is not it time for us to have a proper Chamber, with allocated places, desks to work from, individual microphones and electronic voting, or is this place to remain a parliamentary museum?

Mr. Newton: I think that I may say on behalf of the House of Commons Commission with your assent, Madam Speaker and that of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), that the Commission has no proposals for rebuilding the Chamber. As for electronic voting, I should miss the hon. Gentleman's attendance in the House.

Question Time (London)

38. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has for a Question Time for London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have no proposals for a separate Question Time for London, but hon. Members can, of course, ask questions of relevance to London to any of the Departments of state.

Mr. Greenway: Would my right hon. Friend be kind enough to look to his sense of fairness on such matters within the United Kingdom, bearing in mind that Northern Ireland has 17 Members of Parliament and a whole Question Time, Wales has 36—or perhaps 32—and a whole Question Time and Scotland has 71 Members and one hour of questions? Is that not somewhat unfair to the people of London, who have 84 Members of Parliament and who are the heart and the father of this nation?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that the constitutional position of London can be equated quite with that of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. I am also mindful of the fact that my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary, in an unusual intervention in our affairs, asked, "What about East Anglia?"—a view with which I can sympathise. My hon. Friend's record in asking questions, not only in London but on Ealing, is second to none.

Guillotine

40. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has to change the operation of the guillotine.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to alter the arrangements for allocation of time motions governed by Standing Order No. 81. However, the Select Committee on Sittings of the House, in the report to which I referred earlier, recommended the routine timetabling of all Government Bills, except those taken through Committee on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Lord President of the Council tell us if and how he proposes to use the guillotine on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill? Would it not be appalling to use that on such an awful piece of legislation? In the longer term, should time-limited speeches not be available as a constitutional alternative?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will have his own views on such matters, but I am not sure that they will be shared in all parts of the House.

Points of Order (Reform)

41. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will bring forward proposals for the reform of the points of order procedure.

Mr. Newton: Points of order, by their very nature, do not arise in a regular or predictable way and I see little scope for a rigid, regulated procedure. It is for the Chair to determine whether points of order are genuine and to give rulings as appropriate.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the most often heard words in this House are, "This is not a matter for me"? Would it not be a blessing to Madam Speaker if the House took action to remove from her shoulders the burden of tedium caused by the most abused procedure in the House?

Mr. Newton: I note that my right hon. Friend the Chairman of the Procedure Committee is in his place and I congratulate him and my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) on becoming my right hon. Friends. He will have heard what my hon. Friend has said, but I am sure that the Procedure Committee would wish to respond were Madam Speaker to suggest that she saw a need for such consideration.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Leader of the House accept that interference with the right of Members of Parliament to raise issues on points of order—issues that are often substantial—and the removal of the Speaker's right to determine such issues, making them subject to political pressure, would be opposed by many hon. Members? Points of order are a time-honoured and useful way to raise important issues and they should not be interfered with.

Mr. Newton: Yes, despite my occasional or perhaps even more than occasional disagreement with the hon.

Gentleman, he makes some very good points. Everyone would agree that, although we recognise and deplore abuse when it clearly occurs, we should need to be careful before taking too many rights away from too many people.

Finance and Services Committee

43. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to be able to nominate the Finance and Services Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Finance and Services Committee was nominated on Friday 11 December and had its first meeting on Wednesday 16 December.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the efficiency of the House should be much improved with the formation of that Committee? Will he hasten its progress in bringing about those improvements?

Mr. Newton: The Committee, at its first meeting, considered a full programme of work in which improving the efficiency of the financial control over affairs in the House was very much a key element.

MV Braer (Oil Pollution)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, Madam Speaker, I would like to make a statement. MV Braer, a fully loaded Liberian registered tanker, drifted on to rocks at Garths Ness in Quendale bay, south Shetland, and was confirmed aground at 11.19 am on Tuesday 5 January.

Prompt action by the rescue services enabled the captain and crew, 34 persons in all, to be rescued before the ship grounded. I would like to pay tribute to the skill and courage of the helicopter crews and the professionalism of our coastguards in preventing loss of life, despite the violent storm conditions. Those who risked their lives in an attempt to get a line aboard when the drift of the ship unexpectedly provided extra time deserve particular praise.

Very sadly, it did not prove possible to avert a major oil pollution incident in this ecologically sensitive area. This is one of the biggest spills we have experienced in this country and the consequences for the people of Shetland and their livelihoods, and for the islands' marine life and birds and their habitats, are potentially very serious. I am sure that the whole House will be deeply concerned at this accident, and will sympathise greatly with the people of the Shetland Islands who are being affected by it.

A great deal of oil has escaped from the wreck. I had hoped to say that much is still retained in the tanks, but I regret to say that, in the past few minutes, I have heard that, owing to today's extreme weather conditions, very large additional quantities of oil are now escaping from the ship; it is too early to say how much or to assess its implications. The oil concerned is a light crude, a quarter or more of which will evaporate as it is released.

Rapid deployment of my Department's marine pollution control unit aircraft enabled dispersant to be sprayed throughout daylight hours on 6 January covering most of the oil on the sea surface. The continuing strong winds and big waves have aided dispersion and made spraying unnecessary on a number of days, while keeping the bulk of the spill near the ship. Nevertheless, the extent of the pollution so far, until the latest information, which I have just given the House, was available, though serious, is less than might have been feared and this will make, or would have made, the clean-up operations more manageable.

The Shetland Islands council and the marine pollution control unit have established a joint response centre to co-ordinate clean-up action in accordance with the national contingency plan. I saw this for myself on Friday, and I would like to congratulate all those concerned on the magnificent way in which they have risen to the occasion, particularly the local people and the voluntary organisations who have given unstintingly of their time, expertise and energy.

Inevitably, important questions arise about the events leading up to the accident. I announced that a full investigation by the marine accident investigation branch was being started immediately. I will, of course, publish the chief inspector's report to me in full. The investigation is covering the causes of the accident, the action taken to prevent it, the action taken after the event, the seaworthiness of the vessel, the competence of the crew and the safety of navigation. A parallel investigation is being carried out by the Liberian authorities. At the same time, I announced that I would be considering, following my visit, whether further inquiry action was necessary. This accident raises wider questions about tanker movements around our coasts, as well as many other issues. I have therefore decided to commission an additional inquiry with the following terms of reference:

"To advise on whether any further measures are appropriate and feasible to protect the UK coastline from pollution from merchant shipping. Due consideration should be given to the international and economic implications of any new measures."

The inquiry will be held in public except to the extent that the chairman feels any matters need to be heard in private. I am delighted to say that Lord Donaldson agreed to be chairman of the inquiry.

Clearly, dealing with the incident will be costly and there will be economic loss to individuals as well. The Government strongly uphold the polluter-pays principle. The United Kingdom is party to international conventions that provide for compensation following oil pollution incidents.

Under the 1969 civil liability convention, the shipowner is strictly liable for damage caused following an oil spill. In the case of the Braer, some £50 million will be available from the insurer and the international oil pollution compensation fund.

Compensation under the conventions is paid for costs incurred, including clean-up costs and the costs of reasonable restoration. Compensation is also available for economic loss. It can thus cover loss of income by local businesses affected by the consequences of the spill. I announced in Shetland on Friday the decision of the ship's protection and indemnity club and the international oil pollution compensation fund to establish a claims office in Lerwick to advise on and receive compensation claims arising from the incident. The Government are discussing with the director of the international fund ways of securing the earliest possible payment of compensation, particularly in cases of economic hardship.

This is a very serious pollution incident. Dealing with the consequences will not be quick or easy. I repeat that I am sure that the whole House will share my concern about this accident and will want to join me in expressing great sympathy with the people of the Shetland Islands who are being affected by it. I will keep the House informed of developments.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): May I thank the Secretary of State for his statement on this terrible maritime environmental disaster and express the sympathy and concern that is felt by all Members of the House for those affected by the sinking of the Braer. We are thankful that, despite the devastating effect on the environment and the appalling consequences for wildlife, miraculously no one was killed.

May I place on record our admiration for the courage and skill shown by those involved in the salvage and rescue operations, especially those helicopter pilots who braved extremely hazardous weather conditions to winch the Braer's crew to safety. The lives of many seafarers are owed to the courage and tenacity of those helicopter pilots.

I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement of the widening of the inquiry into the Braer disaster and its separation into two parts. The House will welcome the fact, albeit with some suspicion, that Liberia has at least promised to hold an inquiry. But under what

[Mr. John Prescott]

circumstances will that inquiry be held? Has the Secretary of State requested that it be held in Britain under a British judge, as has occurred on a number of other occasions? Does he agree that it would be unacceptable for Britain to be left to face the consequences of this major pollution tragedy and for Britain alone to carry the heavy burden of the necessary inquiry costs, which will run into many millions of pounds, without any charge on the Liberian Government?

Does the Secretary of State accept that the practice of some countries of prostituting their flags for a few pieces of silver, allowing shipowners to put out to sea second-rate vessels with second-rate crews, has contributed to a loss rate three or four times greater than that of traditional maritime countries and the death of 300 seafarers with the loss of 24 tankers in the past few years? Those deaths have attracted far less publicity than the images of oil slicks on beaches, no doubt because blood washes away quicker than oil.

In recognising the principle that the polluter should pay, will the Secretary of State now insist that those countries that sell their flags for short-term gain should bear the long-term costs of their irresponsibility? Does he now accept that the loss of more than 1,000 ships from the British flag—many to flags of convenience countries and many of them tankers—has meant the loss of experienced British crews and the deterioration of vessel standards and has contributed to these terrible tragedies? Year after year we have warned the Secretary of State of such tragedies, and how they will result in the loss of the British maritime fleet. Does the Secretary of State agree that the merchant navy of an island nation such as Britain should be able to restore its fleet and not have to witness its own elimination?

Does the Secretary of State accept that the full public inquiry must concede the public's right to know and to contribute to the debate that is necessary to force changes to reduce the possibility of such tragedies happening off our coasts in future? Does he accept that all who wish to give evidence to the inquiry must be allowed to do so?

Will the Secretary of State tell the House whether all contingency plans for such tragedies were subjected to an environmental impact assessment of the effects on the environment—human and wildlife—and particularly on the food chain? Will the inquiry consider the role of the International Maritime Organisation and its conventions in securing the necessary measures to guarantee the standard of vessels, competency of crews and safety of routes? Will the Government consider a separate European convention—which I discussed with the European Commissioner 10 months ago—laying down standards and enforcing them in respect of all vessels entering British waters and ports?

Will the inquiry consider the delays that have occurred between the onset of danger and the notification of the emergency services due to pressures on captains to inform the shipowners first? As that has been the case in other tragedies around the British coast, why have the Government failed to sign the IMO salvage operations convention of 1989?

We should not delay action on any such issues until the result of the inquiry is known or the European legislation is enacted. Therefore, will the Secretary of State make it abundantly clear to all oil companies and carriers of hazardous materials that it is totally unacceptable for them to take dangerous routes that may be cheaper and quicker in commercial terms, but more dangerous and damaging to the community? Such policies are totally unacceptable to the House.

Is it not time that Britain recognised the inadequacy of relying on quick improvements through IMO, which is dominated by the flags of convenience countries that are reluctant to agree to good international practices? Will the inquiry consider the possibility of establishing a European convention on the carriage of hazardous cargoes and protection against marine pollution—possibly under the present international maritime conventions—that will unilaterally impose all the necessary policies to reduce the likelihood of such tragedies occurring in future?

Does the Secretary of State accept that the main burden of such incidents is usually carried by the polluted, not the polluter? Does he know that the owners of the Braer will receive more compensation for the ship than it is worth on the open market? Does he know that those who use flags of convenience will continue to pocket their immoral earnings, while communities such as those in the Shetlands will have their lives disrupted, their environment destroyed and their fishing industry paralysed and will face greater uncertainties about the compensation available? The rest of Britain will be affected by the pollution once it works its way through the food chain. The British taxpayer will have to pay for someone else's cynical irresponsibility, which is unacceptable. It is time for change.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) for his support for the two inquiries that I have set up, and I am glad that he agrees that they should be separate. I felt that it was right to announce immediately the marine accident investigation branch inquiry, which is a highly professional technical inquiry and should proceed in the normal way. It was important that it should start its work and interview the crews immediately. I think that the hon. Gentleman recognised that important point.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the Liberian inquiry. As is proper in such circumstances, that inquiry is being held in parallel, and is currently taking place in the Shetland Islands. The inspector for the Liberian inquiry has been working with the inspectors of the marine accident investigation branch and interviewing the crews since Wednesday in the Shetland Islands.

I have one important point to make in relation to what the hon. Gentleman said about Liberia. Given that the hon. Gentleman referred to higher losses among ships registered in such areas, it is important to stress that the Liberian loss ratio is only half the world average. It is also important to establish that the Liberian authorities carry out thorough inquiries in cases of this sort.

It is not possible at this stage to make any allegations or accusations about the vessel or crew—I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would agree—because they must be a matter for the MAIB inquiry.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the implications of flagging out. He will know that, whatever has happened to the United Kingdom fleet, enormous numbers of vessels from other countries are travelling in international waters all the time; hence the importance of looking at these matters at the IMO level.

The hon. Gentleman asked me whether the full public inquiry will lead to changes. It will be for the chairman of that inquiry to decide what recommendations to make, and I will be happy, if either he or the MAIB inquiry feels it necessary to make interim or urgent recommendations, to have them followed up.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether all who wished to give evidence would be allowed to do so. They certainly will. As I have said, we intend the inquiry to be held in public except when the chairman comes to the view that there are good reasons for not doing so. He will then explain those reasons.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East asked about contingency planning for dealing with clearing up. During my visit on Friday I asked all concerned whether they felt that any more could be done and whether they had any suggestions to make to me. They told me that co-operation was excellent, that the contingency plans for clearing up had been implemented quickly, and that everything possible was being done in that respect. The fact that we got the unit in quickly, as well as the Dakotas and all the other equipment, shows that the planning worked. Clearly the inquiry will look into this aspect as well.

The hon. Gentleman referred to separate discussions in the European Community. As the House knows, during our presidency of the last six months of last year we took up and pushed through a proposal for a new directive on ships carrying dangerous goods and on reporting procedures which had been under discussion already for about three years. We gave priority to getting the directive through, and I am glad to say that we got it through. It affects oil tankers.

We are one of the member states taking the lead in all these matters. We also gave strong support to encouraging the Commission to produce proposals for maritime safety in general. The hon. Gentleman knows that we have been pressing at both IMO and European Community level on ferry safety matters. Although that is not strictly relevant, it does show the extent to which we are trying to drive forward higher standards in the IMO and the Community. We expect the Commission's communication on maritime safety within the next few weeks. I believe that the Community has a real role to play in ensuring that international standards are applied and enforced in a determined and consistent way. We have urged, and will continue to urge, other Governments to participate wholeheartedly in these efforts. I believe that our efforts during our presidency to push these matters have already borne some fruit, and we shall go on pressing.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the inquiry would look at some of the delays. I do not want to comment on that today because it is clearly a matter for the inquiry itself, but it will be for the MAIB inquiry, in the first instance, to examine the matter because it encompasses the causes and all other aspects of the accident. I will certainly make arrangements to ensure that anything that the MAIB inquiry reveals is made available to the chairman of the wider inquiry.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the salvage operations convention. We hope to be able to ratify it as soon as we can find a legislative opportunity; it requires primary legislation.

Mr. Prescott: That is terrible.

Mr. MacGregor: The salvage operations convention was only recently agreed. We are looking for an early opportunity to implement it, but a number of other countries must also ratify it so that there are sufficient numbers before it comes into force. *[Interruption.]* I have already stressed that we are looking for an early opportunity to implement it and I note that the hon. Gentleman will support that.

The second and relevant point is that the salvage operations convention is already being applied commercially in practice in this case. I have looked into that thoroughly, and I assure the hon. Gentleman that we do not need the convention to take all the appropriate measures relevant to this accident.

Mr. Prescott: That is terrible.

Mr. MacGregor: It is not terrible. The convention is already being properly applied. The hon. Gentleman is beginning to show that he has slightly lost his sense of perspective. If the convention is being applied, as I am assured it is, we can at least be satisfied that anything that could have happened under the convention will happen. We shall certainly endeavour to legislate at an early opportunity.

My next point in relation to the International Maritime Organisation is important. As I am sure the hon. Gentleman recognises, many of these issues have to be negotiated at international level if they are to be effective. That is why it is important in so many cases to try to reach agreement in the IMO. I as much as the hon. Gentleman regret the occasional delays, but the measures will be effective in practice. I suspect, although I do not wish to prejudge the matter, that some of the recommendations of the wider inquiry will require pursuit at IMO level.

At the weekend the hon. Gentleman complained that the Government had not taken action similar to that taken in the United States. He said that he regretted that we had not acted along the lines of the Oil Pollution Act introduced in the United States following the Exxon Valdez disaster. That Act was passed by Congress against the wishes of the American Administration, and I believe that it has considerable defects. I am certain that nothing that occurred in this accident would have been affected or improved in any way by the provisions of the Oil Pollution Act of the United States. That demonstrates the importance of trying to reach agreement at IMO level. As I have said, we shall actively pursue any issues arising from the two inquiries that I have announced.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): In unreservedly welcoming my right hon. Friend's action, may I ask whether he agrees that it is tragic that it takes a tragedy before he can set up the inquiries that he has announced? Is he aware that in March 1979 the Committee considering the Merchant Shipping Bill accepted a new clause of mine that would have placed liability for pollution of the sort that is occurring in the Shetlands on the cargo owner rather than on the carrier? The thinking behind the new clause was to prevent oil companies from chartering rotten ships with cheap crews.

Can that matter be looked at by the inquiry? The new clause was a victim of the demise of the then Callaghan Government and the noble Lord Callaghan of Cardiff told me that he was under enormous pressure from the oil companies to remove it. Will my right hon. Friend stand

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firm against pressure from the oil interests, and will he ask the inquiry to look into the links between oil companies and detergent manufacturers?

Mr. MacGregor: It will be for the chairman of the inquiry to look at any aspect he wishes. My hon. Friend will have noticed that the inquiry's terms have been widely drawn and that it will be open to anyone to give evidence or to make recommendations.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): My hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) regrets that he is not yet able to be here. The first flight from Shetland left at 10.50 this morning. I spoke to him when he was at Edinburgh airport and he told me that he hoped to be in the House by 4.30. Hon. Members are aware of the weather in the Shetlands and will, I hope, understand the reason for his delay.

On behalf of my colleagues, may I join the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) in paying tribute to all those who have successfully worked to save lives and who continue to work to mitigate the damage to the islands and their communities? I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland. As I saw when I was in Shetland on Friday, he has been working round the clock in his constituency to support his constituents at this hour of their greatest need.

Can the Secretary of State give the House the assurance that the inquiry will be, as legally defined, a proper public inquiry, entirely independent of the Department of Transport, so that the terms of reference, in addition to those announced, can include other matters of concern to the communities affected if they so wish and, above all, so that the reason why warnings given in years gone by were not heeded? The warnings included those from my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland about the need for surveillance and surveillance mechanisms and for different routing arrangements. A truly independent inquiry will ensure that there will be no doubt that, after this most public of disasters, the communities of Shetland, which are among the most economically important communities in the kingdom, will know that, just as the damage has been public, so the inquiry and its conclusions will be public and that nothing will be private except with the consent of their elected representatives.

Mr. MacGregor: I pay tribute to the work of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and I fully understand why he is not able to be present. I also met him on Friday and I know that he has been assisduous in pursuing all aspects. I am sure that he will agree that the Department and the marine pollution control unit have been working closely with the Shetland Islands council and doing everything possible in this tragic situation.

As the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Southwark (Mr. Hughes) will know, the marine accident investigation branch inquiry is independent and I have made it clear that its findings will be made public and that its report to me will be published in full.

As to the wider inquiry, what is taken in public and what is taken in private will be a matter for the chairman of the inquiry. Because he is out of the country, in the time available, I have not yet been able to discuss all the details with the chairman, and that includes matters such as assessors, which he will want to have. I hope to be doing that shortly. However, I have already made it clear that it is the intention that the inquiry will be held in public except where the chairman—not the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland—feels that it should be taken in private and then he will give reasons for that. I think that this is the right way to approach the matter and the best way to consider issues such as surveillance mechanisms and whether they would have had any effect in this case.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the announcement of the inquiry by Lord Donaldson will be widely welcomed not only in the maritime community but beyond it? Will he confirm that one of the issues that the chairman will consider is the permanent provision around our shores of dedicated, ocean-going salvage tugs of sufficient size? Similar arrangements are made in countries such as France and South Africa.

Mr. MacGregor: That would be a matter at which the chairman of the inquiry could look within the terms of reference and given the conditions laid down in relation to economic and international impacts, obligations and interests.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Let me begin by expressing my concern about what has happpened and my appreciation of everything that has been done since the accident.

I welcome unreservedly the Secretary of State's decision to set up two separate inquiries, and especially the undertaking that, if anything comes up quickly, action will be taken. However, there may be conflict between his inquiry and the Liberian inquiry. If they come to different conclusions, will not this affect the question of how quickly compensation can be paid? Would it not be much better if the Government took on themselves the capacity to pay compensation now and for them to argue with the insurers after the event as the amount of compensation might not match what was necessary?

Can the right hon. Gentleman allay one fear—that the dispersants used are poisonous to people? What can he tell us about that?

Mr. MacGregor: I have made it clear that we strongly believe in the polluter-pays principle. I have outlined the steps that we are taking, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will shortly have something further to say on that matter. It was decided after consideration that the inquiries should take place separately but that the two should co-operate with each other.

I know that there has been a great deal of interest in, and concern about, dispersants. I assure the House and the hon. Gentleman that the Department uses only dispersants that have been carefully tested to ensure that the toxicity of the dispersant when combined with oil is no greater than the toxicity of the original oil. The decisions to spray the dispersant were taken in conjunction with a considerable number of people, who were consulted and who gave their agreement.

The chief executive of the Shetland Islands council reassured the people of the Shetlands in a public notice that he put out on 10 January that

"The composition of the dispersants used has been made known to the medical authorities and it is considered that, if used by correct methods, then risk to the general public is so low as not to be measurable."

He added:

"In fact, what people have been suffering from is the effects of oil in the air and the use of dispersants would reduce the problem."

I know that there are arguments on both sides in relation to dispersants. That is why they are used only when on balance they have advantage in dispersing the oil. That is why dispersant has been used on only certain occasions in this instance. I think that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland was able to observe on Saturday the way in which the Dakotas were carrying out dispersal work. I believe that every effort has been made to keep the dispersant on the sea. I can assure the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) about the effect of it in the way in which I have just sought to do.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Is my right hon. Friend aware that a tragedy on a similar scale might have happened off the south Devon coast shortly before Christmas, when a Chinese oil tanker was being towed across the channel by a Russian tug? In the gale the oil tanker broke loose and hit the rocks on the Devon coast. As the tanks were not full, only engine oil went on to the rocks. It has since been dispersed.

Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the possibility of ship traffic control, like air traffic control for aeroplanes, is considered? Such a system would enable there to be a round-Britain network. It would be possible to know the position of all ships by the use of computer screens.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that local authorities will not be charged a penny piece when accidents of this type take place, and that local taxpayers will not be expected to foot the Bill?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend's point about local authorities and taxpayers is a matter not for me but for my right hon. Friends who are involved with local authorities.

We have much tighter control over ships that are coming into our ports than over those that are operating on the basis of international rights of passage under international law. One of the effects of the steps that we took recently within the European Community, to which I have referred, is that we shall be able to have much greater knowledge and information about dangerous goods that are being transported, where they are on ships and what they contain. Wider considerations of what might be done are a matter for the inquiry.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Will the Secretary of State confirm that over the years his Department has received numerous warnings from Scottish local authorities and from hon. Members of the possibility of just such a disaster on the north-west coast of Scotland? Why was a study such as that to be made by Lord Donaldson not commissioned a long time ago, which possibly could have prevented the disaster?

Mr. MacGregor: Steps have been taken through the International Maritime Organisation. A large part of the seas around Shetland, including the area where the tanker was eventually beached, was declared in 1991 to be an "area to be avoided" as a result of British efforts in the IMO's assembly. There is no evidence—this is a matter for the MAIB inquiry—that the tanker was in the area to be avoided before its engines failed. The tragedy is that following engine failure it moved into that area.

Many steps have been taken over the years, but I believe it right in a case such as this to ascertain what further steps we can take. The House should be under no illusions about some of the difficulties. As I have said, there is the view that the American oil pollution legislation, following the Exxon Valdez disaster, will not prove to be very effective in practice. It might have been better to operate through the IMO, as the American Administration itself wished to do. That is always the inevitable constraint. It is right to consider thoroughly the wider circumstances surrounding the accident to determine whether we, together with other nations that have similarly suffered, can bring further pressures to bear through the IMO.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I represent a constituency that suffered badly from the Torrey Canyon disaster many years ago—a not dissimilar accident. I welcome the wider inquiry announced by my right hon. Friend and I extend my sympathy to the Shetland islanders.

If I understand my right hon. Friend correctly, the wider inquiry will cover pollution risks in the United Kingdom as a whole, not just the results of the disaster in Shetland. May I press my right hon. Friend to widen the inquiry even further to consider the whole question of safety at sea? I am president of the sea safety group, which is concerned about collisions at sea, especially those between large merchant vessels and fishing vessels. Would not it be timely to widen the inquiry in that way?

Mr. MacGregor: I understand my hon. Friend's concern. The inquiry will cover a wide area, so I should be reluctant to widen it much more as that might mean further delay. I think that it is right to focus on pollution from merchant shipping, which is the result of the accident. However, I share my hon. Friend's interest and concern. We are looking forward to the European Commission's proposals on maritime safety, which I hope will be published shortly. We can then decide how to follow up those proposals.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The right hon. Gentleman will recognise that as the neighbouring Member of Parliament to my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), whose constituency has been so adversely affected, and as my constituency is surrounded on three sides by coastal waters and is in peril of suffering a similar accident, I have a particular interest in the matter. Does he accept that his decision to lean heavily against the American solution will dismay a number of people, who feel that the American legislature showed greater wisdom than did the outgoing President in this matter? Although it is necessary to have acceptable international solutions operated through the IMO where that is possible, if it is not possible we must operate higher standards in the waters around our coasts —not only United Kingdom waters, but the routes to, from and by the United Kingdom.

Mr. MacGregor: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern. I mentioned the doubts about the American legislation simply to show that I have heard reservations and criticisms of it and that it is as yet untested in practice. I was simply showing that there are no easy solutions to

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the problem. I do not wish to go further than that because such issues are matters for the inquiry, its chairman and all those who wish to give evidence.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): I warmly welcome the inquiry under Lord Donaldson. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the inquiry should bear in mind the fact that, in all the marine losses in 1991, 82 per cent. of the vessels were more than 15 years old? The Aegean Sea, which went aground on the Spanish coast in November, was 19 years old; the Braer was 17 years old. Is not it obvious that there is a link between age and safety? Is it not high time that we considered an age limit on ships that wish to trade on an international or global basis?

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that my hon. Friend will understand if I am somewhat circumspect today because we do not know whether the condition of the Braer was a material factor. It would be right for the MAIB inquiry to consider that point thoroughly and then to reach conclusions. It is clear that the wider inquiry will wish to consider the general issue raised by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): I have 14 years' experience of the oil industry at Milford Haven. Many people in that town have said about the Braer and many other such incidents that they are disasters waiting to happen. During that 14 years, I have seen ships coming into Milford Haven that have been poorly maintained, poorly crewed and with poor officers.

I refer to a telephone call that I received from a constituent whose son is a master mariner, who left the company chaired by Lord Sterling because he was sick and tired of having to give his crew members written instructions that had to be checked against a dictionary so that the orders could be translated. That is the kind of thing that is happening on the high seas.

I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman is not prepared to take unilateral action, as the United States appears to be doing, particularly in relation to double-skinned hulls. At least that would make those who charter vessels realise that something must be done and shipowners appreciate that a real investment must be made in their large tankers. The only answer will be unilateral action. We require proper regulations that are properly enforced.

Mr. MacGregor: I have not ruled out unilateral action. I was pointing to the fact that, given the nature of international shipping and the huge number of ships from other countries that move through international waters, the more that agreement can be reached at international level the better. I was simply making the case that some unilateral actions may not be fully effective and may occasionally be unproductive. Those are aspects that the inquiry will have to weigh up.

The hon. Gentleman may know that the IMO has already agreed new rules for double hulls, that double hulls for all new ships will be introduced in 1995, and that there will be an insistence on double hulls for older ships over a progressive period. The IMO has taken steps on that front.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): I add my voice to those who share in the tragedy that has affected the Shetlands and islanders there. I welcome the extension of the inquiry to the whole United Kingdom coastline and the proposed new investment in extending coastguard surveillance to my constituency, on the Fairlight cliffs. Will the inquiry consider the special problems and hazards of shipping in the English channel?

Mr. MacGregor: I have made it clear that the inquiry will be concerned with the United Kingdom coastline, which clearly means the whole United Kingdom coastline.

Mr. Brian Donohoe (Cunninghame, South): Why is it that in the past week I received a letter from the Royal National Institute for the Blind and from other voluntary organisations asking for money and why, in this instance, have the Government not given an undertaking that all the costs of those voluntary organisations will be met by the Government? After all, after the fire at Windsor castle, the Government were quick enough to state that all the costs of that disaster would be met. Why have they not done the same on this occasion?

Mr. MacGregor: I did not refer to that because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be doing so in his statement.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Will my right hon. Friend instruct the United Kingdom representative at the International Maritime Organisation to press for the raising of standards of training for masters and crew and of the standards of maintenance of vessels up to those expected of British masters and crew and shipowners? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in the event of serious maritime accidents anywhere in the world, an inquiry should be conducted by an inspector appointed by the IMO itself and not by the Government of the country under whose flag the ship sails?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall have to reflect on my hon. Friend's final point, but I thought that it was right to establish an inquiry straightaway so that we could get on with the matter and come to a United Kingdom view. As to my hon. Friend's first point on training, the Government have been pressing that matter in the IMO.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): The Secretary of State continually referred to the incident as an accident and used the word "disaster" only in relation to the Exxon Valdez. Is it the Government's view that it was only an accident? I am sure that Scotland, the whole of the United Kingdom, and the rest of the world regard it as a disaster. Miners know historically that legislation sometimes results from disasters; but the price paid by the people and the environment is too high. It may be that we should look to our laurels and see whether we can offset the effects of such accidents or disasters. Is the Braer incident a disaster in the Government's eyes?

Mr. MacGregor: On Friday, when I visited the area, I described the incident as a disaster and a tragedy, as I have done on a number of occasions. It was also an accident. It is clearly a major issue about which we should all be very concerned; that, too, I have made clear on several occasions.

On the other hand, I emphasise all the effort that is being made to deal with the incident, to ensure that the clean-up takes place as quickly as possible and to ensure that all the potential further effects are avoided. I know that the Shetland islanders feel that that is very much in

their interests. I should also emphasise all the work that is being done to restore the coastline, and every other aspect of the Shetlands, as quickly as possible.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on setting up the Donaldson inquiry. Does he accept that few people in these islands, wherever they live and whatever areas they represent—and many Members come from coastal areas—do not regret the decline of the British merchant fleet and the concurrent increase in flags of convenience shipping? Will he assure us that Lord Donaldson will be able to examine all aspects of the operation of flag of convenience ships?

Mr. MacGregor: That will certainly be an aspect of the inquiry, and Lord Donaldson will be able to make whatever recommendations he wishes to make. As I have said, the terms of reference are

"To advise on whether any further measures are appropriate and feasible to protect the UK coastline from pollution from merchant shipping."

Consideration must, of course, take into account the international and economic implications of any new measures. But that will be a matter for Lord Donaldson to consider, and for us to consider subsequently.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I return to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald)? Given the current appalling weather conditions, why can tankers still go through the closed waters of the Minch? Why has nothing been done about that, even now?

May I also return to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger)? Can it possibly be true that the wireless operator on the Braer had an imperfect command of the English language?

Mr. MacGregor: As I have said, steps were taken in relation to those waters. The arrangements, however, were agreed under the United Nations convention on the law of the seas, and we must abide by them and seek changes by the same means. That is the most effective way of securing change.

As for the question of the wireless operator, I do not think that it would be right for me to comment on press reports and similar matters. The issue is one of many that the marine accident investigation branch is now considering.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): We are now part of the world's largest single market, with which every country in the world wishes to trade. Is not the European Community the best forum in which to dictate the terms on which we will allow goods to be carried into and out of the Community? Should we not seek a European package providing, for instance, MOT tests for ships and the use of a single language on board ships? Should not that be done as soon as possible?

Mr. MacGregor: We all have obligations under the IMO and the law of the seas convention, which includes some 136 countries at present—the number fluctuates. Given the international nature of shipping, that is the arena in which many such matters must, if possible, be decided.

I have endeavoured to bring about further action in the European Community on a number of shipping fronts. I am happy to say that we recently managed to agree one aspect of dangerous goods at sea, as I said at the last Council meeting. I know how difficult it can be to reach agreement in a Community of 12. I hope that we shall be able to make progress in the Community when we have the Commission's report on maritime safety. A wider debate on shipping is also going on in the Community.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): The hon. Members for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) and for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) both raised the question of the Minch. Surely the Secretary of State recognises the massive local and national concern about the continuing dangers posed to the Western Isles and the west coast of Scotland—especially the highlands—by the passage of large tankers carrying crude oil through those waters.

The route west of the Hebrides is not mandatory; it is only advisory. While this welcome inquiry is under way, cannot the Government at least take interim steps to require oil-carrying tankers to have proper pilotage if they are using the route through the Minch, until Lord Donaldson is able to report and recommend?

Mr. MacGregor: In this instance we are talking about ships going through British waters according to international law. If we are to get those laws into a form whereby they can be compulsorily applied, it is important to reach agreement through the International Maritime Organisation. That is what we should endeavour to do. It will of course be for Lord Donaldson, if he wishes to do so, to make interim recommendations, which we could then consider.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Is there anything to stop the Secretary of State for Transport immediately ordering tankers to sail at least 50 miles to the west of the Hebrides? The argument has always been that there would be international repercussions. The argument has never been that it is not open to the Government to do that. Will the Secretary of State therefore clarify his answer?

Will the right hon. Gentleman also confirm the answer that he appeared to give, that the inquiry under Lord Donaldson will be able to take account of all aspects of flags of convenience shipping and of the effect on the environment, as well as of the disastrous rundown of our merchant navy that has taken place under this Government? Will he immediately act upon the House of Lords Select Committee's report and increase the number of inspectors so that more than one in four of foreign flag ships visiting British ports are inspected and do not just go on their merry way? Will he take action immediately, without waiting for any report? If he does not do so, the Government's culpability in allowing the flag of convenience scandal to fester in this country during the last 13 years will be compounded.

Mr. MacGregor: On the last point, there is no need for me to take further action, because we are already taking it. On the hon. Gentleman's point about one in four ships visiting our ports being inspected, that is the international target, but we are more than exceeding that target. We are meeting our own target of 30 per cent. Therefore, 30 per cent. of ships are being inspected under our own port state control. I am pleased to see that the hon. Gentleman acknowledges that that is a positive response.

As for the hon. Member's second point, I do not think that it would be for the inquiry to go wider into questions

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of the British fleet as such. However, issues such as flags of convenience, in so far as the chairman regards them as relevant to any further measures

"appropriate and feasible to protect the UK coastline from pollution from merchant shipping",

would be relevant. They could involve, if he so wished, crewing.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point, if we are to abide by our international obligations, we cannot take unilateral action of that kind 50 miles from our coastline. I am advised that the Oil Pollution Act would not have enabled the American Administration to take the action for which the hon. Gentleman asks in relation to their tragic accident. We cannot do so, either.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Does not the Secretary of State agree that we should regard this recent disaster as a nail in the coffin of the farce of flags of convenience? Should we not ask ourselves who these flags are convenient for? They are surely not convenient for the Shetland islanders. Are they designed only to protect well-heeled shipowners and oil companies that wish to exploit cheap labour, thus ignoring the needs of our environment? Is it not time for the Government to take a lead in the International Maritime Organisation and to end this farce once and for all?

Mr. MacGregor: The Government have taken a lead in the IMO in relation to a number of matters, including, as I have already said, crewing. It would be wise to await the outcome of the inquiry and to establish whether in this case crewing was or was not a factor. I certainly do not have any evidence either way on that point at the moment, and it is a matter that I have asked the MAIB inquiry to consider.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Is there any truth in the allegations made in the *Observer* at the weekend that the Government have repeatedly resisted attempts to keep ships carrying oil and other dangerous cargoes away from our shores? If that is so, the Government stand condemned.

Mr. MacGregor: I did not see that report; and I am not absolutely clear what the hon. Gentleman is getting at.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I welcome the fact that there will be an inquiry into the shipping routes of large crude oil carriers. The Minister should turn his attention to the Government's response to the effects of the spill. Long after the headlines have gone and long after the clean-up, people will have moved away from the Shetlands.

I think that I am right in saying that there has not been a spill on such a scale of this sort of crude oil in such weather conditions. That has led to the oil dispersing in the water column, being ingested by marine animals and, therefore, being transmitted through the whole ecology of the Shetlands. It affects fishing. Perhaps the Minister could say whether any research is being undertaken into the matter.

Mr. MacGregor: I understand the importance of the matter raised by the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley). I can assure him that this is not a case of simply waiting for the immediate impact and effect to be over. We shall be closely monitoring the impact and effect all the way through. Certainly the inquiry will examine all the aspects. The particular point that the hon. Gentleman raised will be covered in the statement which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is about to make.

Shetlands (MV Braer Incident)

4.25 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): With permission, Madam Speaker, I, too, would like to make a statement about the Shetland tanker incident, covering those aspects of the matter that fall within my departmental responsibility: in particular, the areas of health, agriculture, fisheries and the environment.

The Government have been especially concerned to ensure that the local community's health is protected. The Director of Public Health in Shetland, in conjunction with the Islands council, has given local guidance on the steps which should be taken to avoid exposure to the oil, and advice has been made available to general practitioners about how they might best respond to patients who present with symptoms or who have worked in areas of high exposure.

I arranged for the Director of the Environmental Health (Scotland) Unit to travel to Shetland on 7 January. The unit has considerable expertise on environmental health issues, and the director has been working closely with the health board and the Islands council. Expert advice has also been made available on toxicological aspects. Regular environmental monitoring of total hydrocarbons in the atmosphere is being carried out, and the levels observed so far do not indicate any long-term hazard to health, although there have been some cases of eye, nose or throat irritation and feeling of nausea, particularly involving people working outside in close proximity to the incident. But, clearly, the situation will be carefully monitored over the coming months. A health survey has already been announced, involving the islanders living in the affected area.

I visited Shetland on Saturday, accompanied by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. During the course of the visit we had useful discussions with representatives from the agriculture, crofting, fishing and fish-farming industries, in addition to a range of environmental interests. We also met members and officials of the Shetland Islands council. The efficiency which they have demonstrated in this incident has been considerable, and I pay tribute to the way in which their staff have risen to the challenge in difficult circumstances.

My officials and the local environmental health officers have been particularly concerned to avoid any risk of oil contamination to food. Action has been taken to condemn crops of vegetables in the south of the island, and independent monitoring arrangements have been established, with the co-operation of the farmers and fishermen, to ensure that there is no contamination of milk supplies or of fish entering the market.

We are also concerned about the health and welfare of farmed animals. Cattle in the affected areas are being housed inside with supplies of clean water and feed. Local vets are monitoring the impact on sheep which have been grazing on areas affected by oil spray. Officials of the marine laboratory are monitoring the impact on the fish farms that have been affected by oil in the water. Farmers have also been asked not to send sheep for slaughter for the time being.

The fishing and fish-farming industries are of fundamental importance to the economy of Shetland, and it is clearly essential that we do everything that is necessary to safeguard and protect their long-term futures.

The key immediate issue is that of confidence in the industry's products. My Department has, therefore, already instituted arrangements for the sampling and testing of sea fish landed in Shetland. We also announced on Friday an exclusion zone under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 within which the taking of fish is, in the meantime, prohibited.

The spillage is causing serious damage to wildlife and their habitats. It also threatens to despoil coastal landscapes as well as some inland areas which are under threat from windblown oil. Quendale bay is already heavily polluted. There are a further nine sites of special scientific interest currently at risk. Further sites could be reached by oil within days if the present trend continues.

Staff of Scottish Natural Heritage are advising on the natural heritage implications of the clean-up operation as part of the joint response committee, and are also playing a key role in co-ordinating voluntary effort and liaising with local groups.

It is too early to predict what the final impact on wildlife and their habitats will be. However, I fear that we can expect over time several thousand mortalities, in total, of different species. The operations staff and volunteers are doing all that they can to minimise that total.

The adverse ecological consequences are cause for widespread concern. I have therefore instructed my departments to establish an ecological steering group with membership which will include representatives of the Shetland isles, environmental specialists drawn from Scottish Natural Heritage and elsewhere, and those involved operationally in handling the oil spillage. Its immediate task will be to develop urgently the best strategies, both in the short term and in the longer term, for dealing with the implications of the spillage for the natural environment of the Shetland isles.

We should also draw more general lessons for the future from what has happened. Accordingly, I have agreed with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that the group should also initiate and oversee a special study of the ecological effects of the incident and how best to handle them should a similar event occur at some time in the future. It will report back to Government on this wider consideration in due course. The membership of and remit of the steering group will also reflect the wider consideration and appropriate support will be made available to it. The study will build on the foundations of the extensive Government-funded investigations of fish and birds that are already carried out in the area.

As regards the cost of all the work now being undertaken and the costs incurred by islanders and local businesses, my right hon. Friend has made it clear that the Government strongly uphold the polluter-pays principle.

There is every reason to believe that the resources available for compensation from the international fund will be sufficient to meet all eligible claims. As my right hon. Friend has said, the Government are pressing the international oil pollution compensation fund to facilitate early possible payments, particularly in cases of economic hardship. I welcome the immediate payment on account made by the insurers to Shetland Islands council in this regard. There is, however, understandable concern in Shetland about the cash flow problems which may face businesses, particularly the farming, fishing and fish-farming industries, in the period before claims are settled in full. In view of the significance of these industries to the

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Shetland economy, my Department is proposing to make resources available through a special bridging fund to help them with particular economic hardship pending the settlement of compensation claims.

Arrangements for administering the bridging fund will be announced as soon as possible following urgent consultations already in hand between my Department, the Shetland Islands council and other interested parties.

Once the extent of the damage is more fully known, Shetland Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise will work with Shetland Islands council to assess the impact on the island's economy. I shall consider carefully any recommendations made to me as a result of this assessment.

I am also following up welcome offers of help from the European Commission and will make further details available as soon as they are agreed.

Damaging and distressing though the circumstances of this serious environmental accident are, the response of the people of Shetland and of the wider community, nationally and internationally, has been impressive. I am satisfied that all the organisations, voluntary bodies and individuals involved in the efforts to limit and repair the damage are working well together, with a shared commitment to succeed.

My hon. Friend the Scottish Minister responsible for the environment was prevented today by bad weather from paying his second visit to Shetland since the incident, but he hopes to get there tomorrow and he and I will pay further visits as and when it is helpful to do so. It is our purpose to ensure that we do all that we can to help Shetland and the people of Shetland to restore quickly and effectively their beautiful environment and their way of life.

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): While I welcome the suggestion made today that we shall have a wider inquiry rather than a narrow departmental one, and while I welcome the Secretary of State's assurances about health aspects and about reviving the Shetland economy, Opposition Members remain concerned about the complacency and confusion which have surrounded initial responses from the Government. That is reflected in the anxieties that have been expressed to several Opposition Members.

May I also take this opportunity to praise, as the Secretary of State has done, the efforts which have been made by all involved—statutory services, local council people and the voluntary sector—to tackle the devastating crisis which now faces the Shetland Islands.

As I said, it is difficult to extend the same praise to Scottish Office Ministers—*[Interruption.]* That is an important matter which has to be mentioned on the Floor of the House because concerns have been expressed to us.

In the brief time available I must mention three issues on which the Secretary of State commented. I am afraid that his comments on the extent of compensation were equivocal. The people of Shetland will be disappointed that the Secretary of State has not stated clearly that no person on Shetland will be at a disadvantage in the immediate future because of the consequences of the tanker spillage. Compensation is crucial, not only to the well-being of many islanders, but to reassure them that the Government are with them and to build confidence during a difficult time for the community in the north of Scotland. We agree that the polluter should pay, which is equally important, but surely to goodness, even with the set-up that the Secretary of State mentioned in his statement, islanders will be worried that the amount of money to be made available will not cover the tremendous costs involved as the story unfolds during the months and years ahead.

I note that the Secretary of State said that there is every reason "to believe" that the resources available will meet all eligible claims, but Shetland islanders want something more specific. I want the Secretary of State to tell the House this afternoon that no Shetland islander whose economic well-being is affected will be worse off. It would be appalling if we had to wait until the due processes of law had taken place to know the terms of any compensation.

The saga has been a cruel irony in that the Shetland isles and the islanders are a model of the way in which an authority should handle complex oil-related issues. Through no fault of their own a tanker has gone down, in astonishing circumstances, and they are being left to foot the bill. My plea is that this afternoon the Secretary of State will assure them that they will not be out of pocket.

The second issue that has been mentioned by a number of my hon. Friends concerns the routing of tankers and the Secretary of State for Scotland must have a role to play in that. Concerns have been expressed about the Minch. There are valuable and sensitive environmental areas around the entire British coastline. While I accept that the International Maritime Organisation and the European Community should review tanker routes, would it not be appropriate and in the interests of Scotland for the Secretary of State to remove tankers from sensitive areas at this stage, pending the outcome of the review?

We have talked about the economic well-being of the Shetlanders and the damage to wildlife, the ecology and environmentally sensitive habitats, but there is also growing concern about the possible impact on health of hydrocarbons in the air and I welcome the Secretary of State's statement about monitoring that impact. I sincerely hope that, during his visits and those of his hon. Friends, they will do everything possible to minimise the impact. The community is particularly fearful of the impact on children and, as parliamentarians, we must talk seriously about that issue.

Finally, we must deal with the question of spraying. I welcome the Secretary of State's comments about the possibility of further damage being done to the environment by adding toxicity to the problems created by hydrocarbons spewing from the tanker, but I want his reassurance that that toxicity is being monitored. There has been speculation in the press about the damage being done by spraying. I hope that he and his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will deal with that issue.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): Why was the hon. Gentleman not here to listen to the Secretary of State for Transport?

Mr. McLeish: I was about to apologise for my absence. No discourtesy was intended to the Secretary of State for Transport or to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston

upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). Unfortunately, because Glasgow was snowbound, I could not get here to listen to the first 20 minutes of the exchanges.

Finally, the statement went far enough on certain issues, but we must have reassurances on compensation, routing, the use of toxic chemicals and health. The people of Shetland are demanding those reassurances and it is incumbent on the Secretary of State to provide them.

Mr. Lang: I fear that the hon. Gentleman's opening remarks about complacency and confusion fall below the actual record of events. I suggest that perhaps he, too, should visit Shetland where he will see that all those involved, including the Scottish Office, which has sent more than 20 officials, other Departments' officials, voluntary bodies, local government and other organisations are working together efficiently and with complete dedication to repair the damage that has been caused in Shetland and to minimise the risk. The hon. Gentleman's opening remarks were completely misplaced.

On the question of the immediate disadvantages faced by the people of Shetland, it was precisely with the interests of those people in mind and the difficulties that can arise as a result of economic hardship and cashflow problems in the short term—before people are able to secure settlement of insurance claims—that I decided to establish the bridging fund that I announced today. An office has already been established in Shetland to manage that compensation fund and the insurers have already advanced £200,000 to the Shetland Islands council to meet immediate, interim and short-term problems on account. The Shetlands Islands council has also made funds available to the agricultural sector. The European Community, through Commissioner Paleokrassas, has already made emergency aid available and it is having discussions with my Department about possible further aid. When one takes into account all those factors, one can see that resources are being brought to bear as needed and that procedures for clearing up this damaging environmental incident will not be in any way inhibited by lack of funds.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport dealt with the routing of tankers in his statement. I understand why the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) was delayed by travel problems and was unable to get to the Chamber in time to hear that statement.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that health is an immensely important aspect of the incident. I underline the importance that we attach to the careful monitoring that is now taking place. That monitoring involves a number of individuals with considerable expertise and access to high-quality advice on toxicological matters. That monitoring will continue for some considerable time and clear advice will be given to the people of Shetland as to how to respond to events.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport also dealt with dispersants. It is worth repeating that today's statement from the director of the Shetland Islands council environmental services, the director of marine pollution control, the director of the Scottish environmental health unit and the director of public health for Shetland indicated that the dispersant, if used according to correct methods, meant that the risk to the public is

"so low as not to be measurable".

That helps to put the issue into perspective.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, vital though it is, it is not just with the immediate devastation that the Government must concern themselves? Will he give the House the commitment that long after the television crews have gone, he and his Department will still be working with the Shetland islanders and their leaders to ensure the return to the quality of life to which those people are accustomed and which they deserve?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to give my hon. Friend that assurance. He is right to say that long-term issues, as well as the short-term immediate problems, will be of considerable importance. We will not lose sight of them and the ecological study group that I announced today will be concerned to monitor matters for some considerable time.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I preface my remarks by apologising to the House for not being here earlier. Perhaps I should explain that the weather conditions were atrocious and that I got here as early as I could.

I thank the Secretary of State for Transport for his statement, but I should like to address my remarks to the statement made by the Secretary of State for Scotland. I understand that he has announced a bridging fund, which seems to be along the lines of that which we discussed on Saturday. Obviously, if he is able to provide any further detail on that fund today that would be welcome. He will be aware of the immediate need faced by a number of salmon farmers who would have undertaken a scheduled harvesting of their salmon this week. Substantial cashflow problems could arise. If the fund is not sufficient to meet those needs, will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider it so that the response from Government is adequate to ensure people's livelihoods?

Will the right hon. Gentleman also confirm to the House that the response that he saw on Saturday from the farmers and particularly from the seafood industries, which were ahead of the Government in announcing a voluntary ban, shows their determination to ensure that Shetland will maintain its reputation for the high quality of the produce that it puts on the market? That will be extremely important in the long term.

Mr. Lang: I understand, as does the rest of the House, why the hon. Gentleman was unable to be here earlier. I am happy to pay tribute to the commitment that he has shown to the interests of his constituents in all aspects of this matter.

As I said earlier, we are involved in urgent consultations with Shetland Islands council and others over the precise details of the bridging fund. I will make further details available as soon as I possibly can, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that it is not possible at the moment to spell out in more detail the way in which it will operate.

I am happy to endorse what the hon. Gentleman said about the actions of the Shetland Fishermen's Association and others in relation to the need to maintain confidence in the quality of the island's produce. I imposed an exclusion order on the area most affected around Sumburgh last week to maintain confidence in their produce, particularly fish and farmed fish. I welcome the

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support of the Shetland Fishermen's Association, which took an extremely responsible posture in supporting me. I hope that confidence in its products will be quickly restored.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Those of us who represent seats at the other end of the United Kingdom from Shetland and whose constituents rely on farming, fishing and tourism for their livelihood feel for the constituents of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and for the damage that they have suffered. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who has been on the Shetland Islands this weekend and who also represents Kent, would share that view.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Gale: As chairman of the all-party animal welfare group, may I say how much we appreciate the voluntary work that has been done to help to mitigate this disaster, in particular the work done by the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and others. I echo the request made by my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) that my right hon. Friend should try to ensure that those voluntary bodies, which have spent considerable sums of their funds in assisting in the clean-up operation, are able to seek recompense from those liable—not in order that they may make a profit, but so that they may continue to help with the long-term work of restitution that will be necessary.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his earlier comments. I also join him in congratulating and complimenting the voluntary organisations on the dedicated work that they are doing and on the way in which they are working together.

My hon. Friend may like to know that a number of voluntary groups working on the islands, including the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Shetland Bird Club, the RSPB, the Scottish Wildlife Trust and the SSPCA, are getting together to form the Shetland Conservation Consortium. Funding has been provided immediately by the Scottish Office under the special grants environmental programme and by Scottish National Heritage to help that new organisation. SNH is also empowered to give further funding to voluntary bodies as needed.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): The Secretary of State will be aware that I am parliamentary consultant to the National and Local Government Officers Association and in that context I thank him for his kind remarks about the prompt and efficient action taken by local government officers on Shetland. Can he give an assurance that those officials and in particular the environmental health officer will receive the fullest possible support from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, or whichever officials of his Department are appropriate, to deal with this situation and to give the best possible advice and support to the community of Shetland?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks. I repeat that the officials and the councillors of Shetland Islands council, both groups of whom I met on Saturday, are working very effectively to deal with this difficult incident. They are getting as much co-operation and assistance as is possible from officials in my Department, in particular the director of the environmental health unit, Dr. Forbes, has been to the islands, as has the chief scientist of SNH. Contacts are continuing at all levels between those groups. Some 20 or more officials from my Department are on the islands fulfilling various tasks and I intend to ensure that that co-operation is maintained for as long as is necessary.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Is the Secretary of State aware of the widespread concern felt at the lack of priority and lack of urgency shown by the Government in their response to this catastrophe? For example, why did it take more than four days for the Secretary of State to visit the scene of the disaster? Why has he made only a qualified statement about compensation? Why does not the Secretary of State copy Holland's example, where the Government pay victims compensation immediately and then sue the polluter to recover the money?

Mr. Lang: On the lack of urgency, the hon. Gentleman seems to overlook the fact that the Scottish Office Minister responsible for the environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), went to Shetland the day after the incident, as did the Minister for Aviation and Shipping from the Department of Transport. Since then, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and my right and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I have visited Shetland and spent a considerable time talking to a wide range of interest groups involved. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment would have been in Shetland again today for his second visit but for the weather. So there is no lack of urgency or commitment on the part of the Government, as is reflected in the statements by my right hon. Friend and I today.

On compensation, I hope that the hon. Gentleman upholds the fundamental principle that the polluter pays. In the meantime, to deal with short-term economic hardship, I have announced the setting up of a bridging fund to help to meet the anxieties that he identified.

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): May I welcome the positive aspects of the Secretary of State's announcement and endorse the praise for the Shetland islanders and their response to the disaster. My hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) was right about the crucial nature of the compensation to Shetland islanders in the meantime. Is the Secretary of State aware of the pathetic sight that he presents to the House, compared with the Secretary of State for National Heritage, who guaranteed millions of pounds for the repair of Windsor castle? The Secretary of State for Scotland had come forward with £200,000 for the Scottish people. What support will he give the Shetland islanders in pursuing their legal claims against the polluter? What guarantee can he give that, while that legal operation is taking place, no Shetland islander will go bankrupt or out of business because of the disaster?

Mr. Lang: The incident with which the hon. Gentleman compares the circumstances of the Shetland Islands is not comparable. Windsor castle is a Crown property for which the Government have administrative responsibility and

my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage made that position clear at once. We are concerned about the longer term compensation, legal liability and consequential loss that affect a large number of people following this serious incident. I have tried to identify how the Government can best help to meet areas that are not immediately covered by compensation aspects, in that they will take some time to come through. That is why we have set up a bridging fund to deal with the short-term problems and economic hardship that can arise.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon):The Secretary of State will recognise that the disaster is not simply a local problem for the Shetlands but is of considerable importance to the whole of Scotland because of the importance of tourism and the quality of our food and maritime products. That is one of the reasons why a speedy response is necessary. We must ensure that, wherever possible, money does not constrain protective measures that can prevent extensive pollution, nor does it encourage anybody to break an embargo that is essential to ensure that the quality of products is re-established.

Will the Secretary of State take up the point made by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), that the Government must make it clear that nobody will be denied cash when they need it and that, in the long run, full compensation will be paid?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will realise that the purpose of the bridging fund that I have announced, the emergency help offered by the European Community, the fund operated by the Shetland Islands council, and the advance payment made by the insurers is to ensure that such short-term difficulties do not arise.

On the quality of food, I agree that it is important to restore confidence in the quality of Shetland's produce. That is one of the reasons why I imposed the exclusion zone and why fish landed is being tested daily and will continue to be monitored in the long term. It is important to restore confidence in the quality of Shetland's produce as quickly as possible.

Mr. Brian H. Donohoe (Cunninghame, South): Why have I received an appealing letter in the past week from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds on the disaster in the Shetland islands if what the Secretary of State says about compensation being made available to the voluntary organisations is right? Why does not he give a commitment to the House, as the Secretary of State for National Heritage did on Windsor castle, and say that he will underwrite all costs involved in the disaster?

Mr. Lang: I urge the hon. Gentleman to read what I have said today. He will then understand that I am meeting the area of need that has been identified to help people in the short term until they can secure full compensation, as I anticipate they will be able to do, from the insurers.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I apologise for being late. I am sure that the Secretary of State understands that transport difficulties in Scotland are pronounced today.

Is there a limit to the bridging fund proposed by the Secretary of State? Does he understand Opposition Members' concern that no one should be in cash flow difficulties? No one disputes the principle that the polluter should pay. None the less, we are concerned that no one in the Shetland Islands conducting a business should find himself in straitened circumstances because of delays in compensation. We have very much in mind the fact that the Amoco Cadiz disaster took 14 years to settle.

Does the Scottish Office have a view on rights of passage? In the light of this disaster and bearing in mind the fact that only 20 per cent. of tankers are following the recommended route to the west of the Western Isles, does the Scottish Office agree that there must be a firm new look at rights of passage? Does the Scottish Office intend to have an input to provide some security for the sea passageways?

Mr. Lang: As I explained in my statement, the details of the bridging fund are still the subject of consultation and will be announced as soon as possible. The navigational matters were largely covered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, but I wish to ensure that all Scottish interests are fully reflected in the outcome of any consideration of those matters.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Like the Secretary of State for the Environment who is sitting next to him, the Secretary of State for Scotland had a fruitful visit to the royal botanical gardens in Edinburgh recently. Will he therefore take into account the view of the director, Dr. David Ingram, that there is not only a short-term problem on which great attention and expertise is being deployed, but a long-term—probably 10 to 20 years—problem of maritime algae and marine photosynthesis? It so happens that the deputy director is one of the world's leading experts on such matters. Could a fund be set up urgently or Government money be devoted to a long-term project, which this unique tragedy requires? A long-term scientific study must be funded from somewhere.

Mr. Lang: We must wait until the details of the ecological steering group's remit is fully set up before we can be precise about the specific long-term matters that it will undertake. It may develop long-term strategies, including overseeing appropriate research studies to monitor the impact on and subsequent recovery of the environment and it will report to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and me. On funding, we shall ensure that measures on which we embark subsequent to that report or in the light of advice from the steering group will be adequately funded.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Will the Secretary of State respond to the suggestion by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) that tankers be required to be piloted through the Minch straits? The Secretary of State for Transport has already said that the Government do not have powers to ban traffic entirely. Will he clarify whether they have powers to require that tankers be piloted? Will he investigate that possibility as an interim measure?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman knows that that matter does not fall within my responsibility but I am glad to say that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is sitting beside me and has heard the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): The Secretary of State will realise that the Opposition echo his compliments

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to the Shetland Islands council. I hope that he also understands that we applaud it for its work outside times of crisis because he has attempted to cut its budgets and staffing over a long period. There is therefore much cynicism about the vagueness with which he has answered questions on funding and compensation. The only sum that has been mentioned so far is £200,000 for the bridging fund. He has spoken of compensation and support for the voluntary organisations.

How much money is there in the fund? How much money will be made available? Will he let us know later on paper, or even state today, the level of compensation that will be given to the people of the islands? Will they be given complete compensation if money is not supplied by the international fund? What level of reinstatement can be expected? Will the fund ultimately turn out to be something to take the heat out of the issue, not enough to deal with the real problem of recompensing the people and reinstating their lifestyle?

Mr. Lang: The issue of reinstatement is not for the bridging fund, but for the insurers. It relates to the compensation that individuals will seek under the polluter-pays principle. The bridging fund is designed to help, in the short term, people suffering the sort of hardship that could arise from a delay in the settlement of their claims. The £200,000 to which the hon. Gentleman refers is the advance payment made by the insurers to help immediate claims to be met in the short term. I cannot yet put a firm figure on the bridging fund, but anticipate that, if there is a need for several million pounds, we shall seek to meet it.

Points of Order

5 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You have been more than generous to me this afternoon and I am a little shy about raising a point of order. However, I was wondering whether, in view of the alleged Iraqi incursion into Kuwait, the statements from Baghdad about the need for a dialogue among America, Britain, France and Iraq—which some of us strongly support—and as the operation is not conducted under the umbrella of the United Nations—Dr. Boutros Ghali has made it clear that it has nothing to do——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have been enormously generous this afternoon to all hon. Members, especially the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), and if he will be good enough to come to his point of order, I shall deal with it immediately.

Mr. Dalyell: My point of order is simply whether you, Madam Speaker, have received a request from the Government to make a statement on those grave and urgent matters.

Madam Speaker: I have had no approach from the Government for a statement today.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As you will recall, on the day before the Christmas recess our proceedings were interrupted by a demonstration. I make absolutely no criticism of the action that you found it necessary to take on that occasion when you adjourned the sitting. However, is not it a fact that our hard-won democratic freedoms are threatened when hon. Members use the power of numbers to bring proceedings to a halt and your authority in the House is ignored?

Madam Speaker: As the House knows, during the Christmas Adjournment debate, a number of hon. Members, with extreme selfishness, set about preventing the discussion of several important matters on the ground that a subject of their own choosing was not to be raised. I trust that I shall have the active support of hon. Members in all quarters of the House in my determination that such an outrage—which is what I considered it to be—against the long tradition of freedom of speech in the House should never be repeated. The hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) was one of the hon. Members who lost their Adjournment debates that day. Those hon. Members were successful in the ballot and I shall see to it that they will soon have the chance to raise their Adjournment debates on days other than Thursday, on which I usually grant such debates. I have written to all the hon. Members involved about the matter.

Orders of the Day

Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

5.2 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Bill is clearly a major piece of legislation and the amendment paper lists a large number of new clauses and amendments. You have kindly selected five new clauses, including Government new clause 6, and nine groups of amendments, including Government amendments. It is now 5.3 pm and clearly it is open to hon. Members to oppose the business motion at 10 pm—indeed, it is expected that the debate may run to midnight.

In view of the serious nature of the Bill and the widespread controversy that it has aroused, especially in relation to clauses 9 and 10—about 1,000 black and Asian people are today lobbying the House to protest against the provisions—if progress is not expeditious, to avoid a vote against the business motion would you, Madam Speaker, be prepared to consider encouraging the Government to halt the business at 10 pm? The Government could return with the remainder of the business at a later date. Will you consider whether we could terminate today's business at 10 pm? Could you encourage the Government to complete the proceedings another day? In view of the serious nature of the Bill and the time already taken up this afternoon on extremely serious matters—about which I make no complaint—will you consider whether it would be proper for us to consider the Bill on Report and complete Third Reading today?

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, as Speaker, I have to strike a balance between how long a statement should take and the remainder of the business on the Order Paper. What the hon. Gentleman has said is a matter for the House to consider, not a matter for me at this stage.

New Clause 6

PROTECTION OF CLAIMANTS FROM DEPORTATION, ETC.

' . During the period beginning when a person makes a claim for asylum and ending when the Secretary of State gives him notice of the decision on the claim, he may not be removed from, or required to leave, the United Kingdom.'
—[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]

Brought up, and read the First time.

5.3 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time, and trust, in response to the plea of the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) that I shall be able to do so expeditiously.

I am very pleased to introduce the clause, which follows an undertaking given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State in Standing Committee. The new clause provides that a person who has made a claim for asylum may not be removed from, or required to leave, this country until he has been notified of the decision on that claim. It complements the provisions already contained in schedule 2 of the Bill, which affords the same protection during the period when an asylum appeal is pending. The new clause does not represent any change of policy or practice on our part; but in response to hon. Members who spoke in Committee, may I say that it puts into statutory form the practice which exists. I can assure the House that nobody who claims asylum will be removed from this country until a decision has been taken on his or her claim.

I am pleased to be able to move the new clause because it emphasises that the Bill does not in any way weaken the Government's commitment to meeting their international obligations towards the protection of genuine refugees. We accept our obligations under the Geneva convention and intend to honour them in full. The purpose of the Bill is to enable us to discharge those obligations as efficiently and speedily as possible, first, in order to ensure that genuine refugees are not returned to countries where they may face persecution and, secondly, to curb misuse of the asylum process by people who are not genuine refugees.

Our aim is to establish a system that works in everyone's interests. When applications are made, the key element will continue to be the full and fair examination of individual applications, arriving quickly and efficiently at the right solution for each of the cases we consider. It is not our intention to bundle applicants out of the country before they have had a proper opportunity to make their case. New clause 6 makes that unequivocally clear.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am sure that everybody would be deeply upset if people were bundled out of the country, but when dealing with manifestly bogus asylum seekers, particularly those who make trouble while they are seeking asylum—like the wretched individual who made bogus claims about my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer—will my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary ensure that they are kicked out of the country with utmost speed?

Mr. Clarke: The Bill is introducing new procedures to deal with such cases, which are normally described in legal terms as manifestly unfounded claims for asylum. We shall discuss that matter under later new clauses and amendments. It is extremely important——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: No—the hon. Gentleman must let me deal with one intervention at a time.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) said, it is extremely important that bogus claimants are turned round speedily and sent back, first, because they are not entitled to be here and, secondly, because they get in the way of the full hearing of genuine applications which new clause 6 is partly designed to ensure.

I cannot go into the case that my hon. Friend has mentioned except to say that, although it has received a great deal of publicity, I assure him that it was being dealt with in the ordinary way well before the recent newspaper allegations. The gentleman in question had been told in August last year that he had no right to remain in this country and he had been asked to take steps to leave. This will continue to be dealt with as an ordinary case regardless of the man's involvement in matters of public controversy concerning my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. He will be dealt with on the same basis as

[Mr. Clarke]

everyone else: allowed to stay, if there are compelling reasons why he should be, or removed if he has no reason to be here and has abused the immigration process.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman take this opportunity to confirm that when a person arrives at an air or sea port in this country and wishes to seek political asylum he will not be prevented or restrained in any way from leaving the aircraft or ship in order to approach an immigration officer, and that no airline will be allowed—because of the way the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 operates—to prevent such people from approaching immigration officers while in transit at any airport in the country?

Furthermore, will the Secretary of State investigate past cases when it has been alleged that people have been prevented from leaving aircraft at Heathrow because they were likely to seek political asylum here?

Mr. Clarke: I know that the hon. Gentleman has sought to raise this matter before. I think that I am right in saying that a later new clause or amendment will enable us to discuss the matter again. I assure the hon. Gentleman that anyone who has set foot on these shores and who makes a claim for asylum will have the application considered in the way in which the Bill envisages the process. As far as I am aware, there is no evidence that any immigration officer has ever been involved in removing someone without the application first being properly considered. This new clause ensures that no one will be removed until his application has been determined.

I know that there have been allegations about airline staff and others and one such case at least is still under investigation. The Government have made it absolutely clear that if someone reaches these shores and applies for asylum the application will be properly considered. No one will be removed without his case having been properly determined in the light of the rules.

It is important to have proper methods of dealing with these matters because of the pressure that we are under with the number of new asylum applications in modern circumstances, following the sudden and dramatic increase in popularity of asylum applications a few years ago. We now know that the total number of new asylum applications received in 1992 was 24,500. That means that the previous year's total was nearly halved, largely, we think, as a result of new screening arrangements introduced in November 1991 to detect and deter multiple applications.

We took 35,000 decisions in 1992—six times the number we were able to take in 1991. Leaving aside applications that were refused because of failure to attend interviews or to provide information, just over 5 per cent. of the decisions actually recognised refugee status and granted political asylum. We have not changed the criteria; we continue to apply the same criteria as always in deciding these cases: the criteria of the 1951 United Nations convention.

The simple fact is that very few of the applications that we now receive are from refugees as the international community has always defined them. Nineteen out of 20 of those who apply for refugee status turn out on investigation not to come within the terms of the Geneva convention. That is why we need a system that deals properly and quickly with these applications.

Mr. Marlow: So 5 per cent. of these claims are valid claims, and the other 95 per cent., by definition, are not. What proportion of those 95 per cent. have been removed from the country or are in the process of being removed?

Mr. Clarke: Comparatively few at the moment, as my hon. Friend knows and fears. That is another underlying purpose of the Bill, since 19 out of 20 applications eventually prove not to be well founded under the 1951 convention. Many such applications have been made by people arriving in this country as a means of getting around other immigration controls. We must have a good and expeditious system of removing clearly unfounded cases so that we can deal more promptly with genuine ones. Delays in dealing with such cases lead to many people eventually being given leave to remain even though they have no right to be here when they first entered the country. That is why we must press on with the Bill.

We still have a backlog of more than 49,000 undecided applications and new applications continue to arrive at five times the rate they did just over four years ago—another reason why we need this Bill.

5.15 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Will the Secretary of State concede that one reason why the number of applications being dealt with has increased is that the Department has finally taken the advice offered by the Labour party two years ago and employed adequate numbers of staff to deal with the applications received? The right hon. and learned Gentleman is being somewhat disingenous when he quotes figures from four years ago. Comparing last year's backlog with the current year's backlog shows that the latter has not only stopped growing but is diminishing. In other words, the two reasons why the Secretary of State's predecessor introduced the Bill have now been eliminated.

Mr. Clarke: We have increased the number of staff because there has been a dramatic increase in the number of people applying for asylum. It is the hon. Gentleman who is being disingenuous by claiming that this is entirely the result of the Labour party's advice. The fact that the Labour party agrees with the Government that it is right to increase the number of staff is a happy event. We should not have this backlog and it is important to get down to ensuring that we can deal quickly with the large number of unfounded applications so that we can then deal expeditiously with the rest. It is not right that people who turn out eventually to have no claim to be here should be able to rely on the process being spun out for several years so that they can make claims for leave to remain because of circumstances that have arisen since they landed.

The need remains for a system that is resilient, responsive and fair, concentrating efforts and resources on the issues that really matter. I am convinced that the Bill provides the framework for such a system. It contains time limits and safeguards to prevent abuse—I am sure that we will discuss them later—which are part of a balanced package to ensure that the significant new rights and benefits that we are giving asylum seekers are not exploited be people who are not bona fide applicants. I hope that the Bill's improvements to the position of genuine asylum

seekers will be properly recognised in our debates today. The Government have tabled a number of amendments to clarify the Bill's intentions and to respond to some—usually misplaced but understandable—concerns expressed in Committee. New clause 6 is the first of those Government amendments and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): The new clause was tabled by the Government because of matters raised by Opposition Members in Committee and we welcome it. I shall deal briefly with it before moving on to some of the broader issues that the Secretary of State mentioned in what seemed at times a short rerun of the Second Reading debate.

New clause 6 affords protection to applicants for the time between a claim being made and notice of a decision, so that they cannot be removed once they have made a claim until notice of decision is given. The prohibition on removal of an applicant does not apply only for the time between the making of the application and the decision; it also applies pending an appeal—I should be grateful for confirmation of that.

Some people have asked whether the protection pending appeal applies also to the period between notice of the decision being given and an appeal being lodged. In other words, there may be a period when an appeal has not yet been lodged but notice of decision has been given. I should be grateful if the right hon. and learned Gentleman would confirm that the prohibition on removal applies also to this period. The issue has recently come up in certain cases before the courts.

Of course no one supports bogus applications, but the issue between us has concerned the method of determining whether a bogus application has been made and whether that method is fair. Because of the serious consequences that can arise, it is essential that the procedures for determining bogus applications are fair. Many people who arrive here are in appalling personal circumstances and are fleeing from tremendous distress and civil war. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that the procedure for deciding whether they are entitled to stay here is fair and gives proper and adequate access to people to make their case.

The Secretary of State implies that there are two types of claims—those that are obviously well founded and those that are bogus. The term bogus does not merely cover claims that are made in bad faith, which is what the word often suggests, but claims which, technically, may not comply with the terms of the United Nations convention. It is critical to realise that that convention gives refugee status only to those who personally fear persecution. Someone fleeing from civil war or from a zone in which there is great risk may be in danger, but he is not being personally persecuted. The UN convention covers the first case but not the second. It does not cover the broader definition of refugee, which is used by many countries to denote the circumstances of a person who is in danger but is not being personally persecuted by the regime in his country.

Before claims are judged to be groundless it is important carefully to examine the basis upon which the judgment is made. It is clear from reading the debates in Committee that the real dispute between us is over the process of determination. The Opposition believe that at many points in that process the appeal procedure is too quick and the ability of people to make a case is foreshortened. That may give rise to injustice against those who have genuine claims for asylum.

It is false to regard all claims that do not fall within the terms of the United Nations convention as claims in bad faith, because they are not. Many such claims are made in good faith but do not fit strictly into the United Nations convention. In such cases it is especially important that the determination and the appeals procedure are fair. We oppose the Bill not just because the removal of the right of appeal in immigration cases is wholly wrong and unfair, but because the Bill will not apply in the way that it should the rules of natural justice, which must be applied to such cases.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I can give the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) affirmative answers to all his questions. The Bill provides that someone should not be removed from this country pending the determination of an appeal. As I have explained, the new clause makes statutory our policy that no one will be required to be removed from this country until his application is determined. The combined effect will be to cover the period between a decision being taken and a possible appeal being filed. The time limit for appeals will be allowed to run before anyone is required to leave this country.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his acknowledgement that those who do not have a well-founded claim for asylum should be removed. It is difficult to understand how the Opposition can reconcile their assertion that people who do not have a well-founded claim should be removed with their amendments, some of which would make it extremely difficult to remove anybody or to defend ourselves against ill-founded claims. The key matter upon which the House must agree is a procedure which, with reasonable expedition and complete fairness, can determine whether someone falls within the terms of the convention or should be required to leave the country.

I agree with some of the issues raised by the hon. Gentleman. Matters are not always in black and white: not all political refugees are obviously political; not all bogus refugees are obviously bogus. Many people have no sensible claim at all and have to be removed quickly. Some are plainly political refugees because they have been political activists in the country from which they are fleeing an unpleasant regime. In between there is a large grey area for which it is necessary to have a proper system to determine whether people fall within the terms of the convention.

We must not conjure up a vision of all refugees in harrowing and distressing circumstances. Many people who flee from imminent persecution arrive distressed and destitute and sometimes in unusual circumstances. However, most applications are from people who have travelled on international airliners and arrive at main airports. Others have been here for some time and, having exhausted all other arguments to establish a right to reside, decide to apply for political asylum because they suddenly recall that if they were returned to their country of origin they might face persecution. No doubt some hon. Members will conjure up visions of all asylum applicants being distressed and arriving hurriedly, fleeing from

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

persecution. Many applications are made in perfectly ordinary circumstances and our procedures are fair and give everybody a proper chance to put his arguments.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Home Secretary agree that the grey area that he mentioned also applies to the many asylum applicants who in the past were not able to establish their rights under the convention but whom the Home Office thought it unconscionable to return? Consequently those people were given indefinite leave to remain. It does not automatically follow that someone who fails in his formal application will be bundled out of the country.

Mr. Clarke: We are reasonably generous in giving exceptional leave to remain. Sometimes we grant it to people who do not qualify, simply because in the two, three or four years over which the case has been spun out people have acquired children, wives or other settled obligations and in all conscience we have allowed them to stay. There will always be people who, although they do not satisfy the convention, should be given exceptional leave to remain because, although they would not face personal persecution if returned, they would face demonstrable hardship. That is the most difficult area and the hon. Member for Sedgefield touched upon it.

The Geneva convention covers those who run a personal risk of persecution because of their political or religious beliefs. In the public mind that becomes tangled with the cases of people who flee here from famine or civil war. We accept our humanitarian obligation to accept some of those people. That is why we are in the process of taking about 4,000 people from Bosnia who have been referred to us by the United Nations. We shall look at individual cases from wherever they come.

There is no point in having an asylum that does not allow the return of anybody in any circumstances to a country in which there is civil war, poverty, famine or whatever. The entire population of some countries could qualify for asylum or refuge here if that definition were applied. That is why we have to look at each case and why exceptional leave to remain must be exceptional. It is a discretion of last resort.

Mr. Blair: It is right for the Secretary of State to concede that there is a grey area between UN-defined refugees and bogus applicants, because that gives a different colour to the debate. However, his remarks about those coming here were callous. He spoke of them coming here on international airlines in a way that implied that they were part of the international jet set. I have never suggested that all those who make asylum claims are in circumstances of acute distress, but many are and many Labour Members have experience of working with such people. He must justify applying the procedures to all cases, whether or not they involve people who are in a good position to make their claim quickly. We measure our system of justice by how we deal with those who are worst off, not by how to deal with those who are best off.

5.30 pm

Mr. Clarke: I accept that some arrive in considerable distress and I am satisfied that the way in which we deal with those cases is fair—indeed, our system goes to considerable lengths to be fair. However, it is wrong, for the purposes of debate, to conjure up a vision of most of those arriving doing so in great distress. Most of those who arrive do so calmly and in comfortable circumstances. Many have been in this country for some time before suddenly realising that they face persecution at home and deciding to make an application for asylum. For that reason, while we have procedures that ensure justice in the case of those in the most distressed and difficult circumstances, we must not be naive in the rules that we apply to everyone else. We shall debate other subjects later—for example, there is an Opposition amendment that would make it easier for people to apply from third countries before they have even got here. Like that proposal, many of the Opposition's suggestions would negate any serious attempts to remove promptly those who can demonstrably and rapidly be seen to have no claim at all.

Some of the arguments against the Opposition's ideas are not just technicalities, as has been suggested. Claims are often manifestly unfounded. I gave an example on Second Reading of a Sri Lankan who has been living in the United States for the past couple of years who would be returned because he has arrived from a safe third country. He cannot get asylum by saying that he would be persecuted if he went to Sri Lanka because he has not come from Sri Lanka and faces no difficulty in the country from which he has come. Many safe third country claims can now be rapidly turned round.

Mr. Marlow: Obviously, the difference between the Government and the Opposition is that we are concerned with the interests, wishes and desires of the people of this country, whereas the Opposition are concerned about foreigners. My right hon. and learned Friend has said that in the past people have used the device of extension to put down roots in the United Kingdom. Inevitably, in certain circumstances, they have been given leave to remain. Would not it be helpful if my right hon. Friend said from the Dispatch Box today that if, in future, people use such devices, it would be most unlikely that leave to remain would be granted?

Mr. Clarke: Those who are not able to demonstrate a well-founded claim will find that the British system of justice comes to a reasonably expeditious decision or a more expeditious decision than has been the custom. No system could be described as just if it takes years to reach finality, particularly with the weaker claims. We should be able to reach a fair decision reasonably quickly, which means that people will not have had a chance to put down roots. When we give exceptional leave to remain, the word "exceptional" is important and we shall deal with foreigners extremely well and fairly, I hope.

This is a civilised country and we shall allow people from overseas to settle here if there is a compelling reason to allow them to do so even when they do not comply with the rules. However, it must be compelling. With the best will in the world, we cannot open our doors to all those who think that they would have a better quality of life here than in the distressed country from which they come.

Mr. Blair: I understand that the debate has taken on a slightly different character, but I want to make one point to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. He knows perfectly well—that is what is so deplorable about the way in which the Government play this issue—that when he makes his claim about open-door policy, it is reported

outside as if the Opposition say that anyone who wants to come here can do so, while the Government say that that should not be the policy. Nobody is suggesting that.

When the Home Secretary uses the example of a Sri Lankan who has lived in the United States as the basis for the Bill, that is debate by caricature rather than debate by principle. He fools nobody if he thinks that he can retain any credentials as a humane Home Secretary by engaging in such debate. As he has already agreed with me, we shall judge the Bill on how it affects those who are most distressed. If we can make out our claim, as I believe we can, that it treats them poorly, it is the Home Secretary, rather than us, who has the explaining to do.

Mr. Clarke: I do not think for one moment that the Opposition can make out a case that the system treats people poorly. The delays and the difficulty in removing anyone who makes any kind of claim give rise to the circumstances that so annoy my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and many others. The present system gets in the way of our dealing fairly and promptly with the genuine applicants for political asylum whom we want to help.

The hon. Gentleman may think that I am not being fair to his policies, but, as the debate unfolds, we shall listen to what he says. Had we followed the advice of the Opposition throughout the passage of the Bill, we should have made no worthwhile changes or improvements in the present system. The way in which it operates leads to protracted stays in the country of people who turn out never to have had a genuine claim to be here. We have an immigration control system that is fair and effective and we need to extend it to ensure that it covers asylum properly as well.

New clause 6 is part of that. It honours an undertaking given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary in Committee that in no circumstances would we remove people from the country until their applications have properly been determined. On that basis, I trust that this new clause, at least, is non-controversial and I again commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 2

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS TO APPLY FOR ASYLUM OVERSEAS

'Where it appears to the Secretary of State that conditions in a country outside the United Kingdom render it impracticable for a person to seek leave to enter the United Kingdom or otherwise to travel to the United Kingdom then the Secretary of State shall make arrangements in that country or in an adjoining country for persons to be able to claim asylum in the United Kingdom in a like manner to persons arriving in the United Kingdom.'.—*[Mr. Allen.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Allen: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 1, in page 1, line 11, after 'removed', insert

'or refused leave to enter, or refused entry clearance'.

No. 2 , in page 1, line 11 after 'from', insert 'or to'.

Mr. Allen: I like it when I hear Conservatives using the word "bogus" because, as hon Members who served on the Committee will know, nothing was more bogus than their arguments about how much they cared about political asylum-seekers. In Committee, the debate made it obvious that the Bill was designed to make it harder for people to seek political asylum, rather than easier. This talk about bogus needs to be put back in the kennel where it belongs, with the Conservative claim about being caring.

The only bogus part of our debates in Committee was the Conservatives' attempt to paint every individual who seeks refuge and succour in our land as some sort of social security scrounger. They argued by taking a case and extrapolating from it the thousands of people seeking refuge here, perhaps from Bosnia. They tainted such people with the claim that they are trying to twist and turn and manipulate the system and put in multiple applications for social security. That is what bogus conjures up in my mind and that of my colleagues who fought the Bill, line by line, in Committee.

The other interesting argument that we are now getting from the Home Secretary is the almost intellectual point about the grey area between bogus applicants—that is, those with no claim whatsoever—and people who are genuinely seeking asylum here. We need to have a genuine intellectual debate on that point, which is why the argument is so appealing to Labour Members. Sadly, the House of Commons and its Committees are not structured so that we can have that debate properly, but there is a genuine debate about how we define categories of people who do not immediately, technically, fall into the political asylum seekers sector—for example, those who are fleeing from famine or civil war. That is a debate that did not take place in Committee. The issue was not debated on Second Reading and nor will it be debated this evening. It is a debate that will have to take place in a forum that takes itself rather more seriously than, sadly, the Committee did on several occasions.

We contrast the vision that is being offered by the Home Secretary of a genuine discussion on how we categorise those people who are in the middle, as it were, with the practice of the Conservative Government. I do not have the sheaf of press cuttings from which I quoted on Second Reading, but it was possible for me to close my eyes and pick any headline from about 20 from *The Sun*, the *Star* and other newspapers. They were headlines such as "Don't let them in" and "Keep them out". That was the sort of nonsense that was pumped out by the Home Secretary's predecessor. There is now a slightly more intellectual feel about the arguments. I am sure that my hon. Friends will make it clear that much of the Bill owes its origins more to the pending leadership contest within the Conservative party than to a genuine effort to try to help those who are seeking political asylum in our country.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the question of who is genuine can often mean life or death to those who are actually involved? Surely it is important that the organisation that used to be the refugee unit of the United Kingdom immigrants advisory service, and which is now the refugee legal centre —perhaps not all Conservative Members will agree with this but I am sure that it will find the agreement of most hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber—is recognised as one that does a good job. Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be unfortunate if, given the

[Mr. David Winnick]

short time that is allowed for appeals and other factors, the refugee legal centre found that it was not in a position to carry out a thorough investigation into whether an individual claim was genuine?

Mr. Allen: My hon. Friend speaks with great experience of these matters and Ministers would do well to heed his advice. The organisations that have been involved, especially the UKIAS, have suffered from a degree of internal dissension which has not been helpful. I hope that those days are passed and that every support will be given by the Government to the refugee legal centre and other bodies. I hope, too, that they are given adequate resources and time to pursue individual cases in the way that my hon. Friend would wish.

Long after this measure has been repealed people will remember 1992 in immigration and asylum terms, not for an ill-fated Bill but for the shameful way in which the Government responded to the crisis in Bosnia. It is laughable that only 150 people were initially allowed into the United Kingdom so as to escape from that conflict. It is barely more credible that now just 1,000 people are to be allowed into the country. Of course, the Government have the support of those who are seeking to bump up the numbers to a monumental 4,000. Even the Government admit that the crisis in Bosnia has produced 3 million displaced persons. It defies belief that our country can assist its European partners to the extent of taking in only 4,000 people, or 1,000 and their dependants, when other nations have done so much more. I find it especially shameful that the Austrian Government had to bail out the British Conservative Government when they refused to allow the 173 people who were trapped on the border to be assisted by Leeds Alert. They were taken into Austria to be looked after. That is one of the reasons that caused us to table the clause.

The clause seeks to extend the possibilities for those who are seeking political asylum to pursue that course legally. I am greatly surprised that the Government have said that they will oppose the clause as it is written or as it could be amended if they are dissatisfied with its present wording.

Mr. Madden: My hon. Friend has referred to Bosnian nationals being received in the United Kingdom. I have received a reply today from the Under-Secretary of State to the effect that so far only 79 former detainees from Bosnia have been received in this country. Apparently they arrived on 17 December. There is no sign of when the remaining 1,000 are to arrive. It could be months or possibly years before we see their arrival. Will my hon. Friend confirm that another reply to a question indicates that 29 former Yugoslav nationals were refused leave to enter and were removed from the United Kingdom? They applied to come here as visitors. The Minister does not know to where they have been returned. Surely that must be a matter of considerable concern.

5.45 pm

Mr. Allen: My hon. Friend was tireless in his efforts in Committee and on the Floor of the House to highlight the difficulties faced by those who are suffering persecution in Bosnia. I commend his work to the House, and am glad to put that on the record.

It is pathetic—it would be laughable if it were not so tragic—that a mere 79 people from Bosnia have been allowed into our country to escape the evils of the regimes that are persecuting them directly and personally. I understand from my own sources that the 1,000 political asylum seekers that the Government have now agreed to take into the country may not arrive in the United Kingdom before the end of the summer. Only 1,000 people will be rescued from the conflict and the persecution that they face in the next seven or eight months following the imposition of the visa regime. That is deplorable. We need the new clause, or something like it, so that there is a legal means by which individual claims can be assessed in extreme, urgent and difficult circumstances in the country of origin.

That is not something that would have to be done in every instance. I find it difficult to contemplate examples other than those that replicate actual instances in Bosnia. It would have been fortunate—it would have been the only fortunate feature of the conflict—if we had had three or four officials from the immigration department of the Home Office on the border in Bosnia to process claims. That did not happen and the Minister was not prepared to travel to Bosnia. The Government were not prepared to send a small contingent of Home Office officials to Bosnia. All that demonstrates to the entire world how seriously the Government were taking the plight of people in Bosnia.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Allen: I am happy to give way to an hon. Member who is one of the closest in the House, in terms of his constituency, to our continental partners. I have no doubt that he will have something to say about the cross-border controls that still apply at the port of Dover.

Mr. Brazier: I take a particular interest in another conflict about which comparatively little is published, and that is in the Lebanon. When we consider what is going on in the Lebanon, in Nagorno Karabakh, in Cambodia and in Afghanistan, the only difference between those events and those in Bosnia is that the conflict in Bosnia appears on our television screens. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, however well meaning the clause is, the scale of the applications that would ensue would be unbelievably high? Does he expect the terms of the clause to appear in a future Labour party manifesto?

Mr. Allen: If the hon. Gentleman reads the clause, he may be assisted. He might then understand what we are talking about. It begins:

"Where it appears to the Secretary of State"

that it is impractical for certain things to happen. In other words, the clause, if it were accepted, would not apply in all circumstances. It would probably not be appropriate in the circumstances that apply in the Lebanon.

In Bosnia, as I attempted to explain earlier—I shall have another go and take it more slowly—we saw a situation in which it was physically possible to have a small team of Home Office officials somewhere near the border of Bosnia. That would be an emergency response, and it would be made only if the Home Secretary considered it to be appropriate. It would not be a regular response. It would avoid, however, a situation which the Government precipitated in the context of the Leeds Alert episode. A

number of people on the border wanted to make a claim for political asylum, but there was nowhere in Bosnia to register it.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): Of course there was.

Mr. Allen: That is true—but to do so those people would have had to fight their way back through the lines of the advancing Serbian infantry. They would have had to go back to Sarajevo or Belgrade, risking life and limb. They were emaciated, they had come out of camps and many had medical conditions. What sort of Government would put people through that, especially given the suffering that they had already endured?

In fact, those people were quite fortunate because Leeds Alert was to hand. It drove to Vienna to get the necessary application forms and it then drove back to Bosnia so that they could be filled out. It then drove trans-Europe to London because that was the only place where the forms would be accepted. They were lodged with the Home Office, which kept Alert on a string for several days. Finally, it refused 169 and accepted just four applications.

Had the Government really wanted to help in that emergency they would not have delayed the decisions. Then, even if the eventual outcome was the same, at least those individuals whose applications were not accepted would have been put out of their misery at a much earlier stage. That would have demonstrated a caring approach and shown that the Government were serious about wanting to help the asylum seekers. Instead, the Government had Mr. Beasley, Mr. Lamb and others dodging around, jumping through hoops and over obstacles, just to delay the decision on the political asylum applications.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I do not want to distract the hon. Gentleman too much, but I had hoped that he would respond fully to the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier). The hon. Gentleman said that he hoped that my hon. Friend would comment on the frontier controls still being enforced at the port of Dover. My hon. Friend's constituency has no sea frontier, but I have the adjacent seat which does have a channel coast port. Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that we should abandon our frontier controls?

Mr. Allen: I apologise to the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier). I met his former agent on the first cross-channel ferry into Britain on 1 January and I obviously confused my facts. It was an entertaining evening. For the benefit of the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), I shall say that the reason that I was on that ferry was that the need to show a passport was abolished on that day. Sadly, Herr Bangemann—and perhaps I should say head Bangemann—the Home Secretary strongly disagreed on removing the requirement to show passports at borders. The embarrassing incident of the arrest of the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman on immigration and asylum was avoided by the deft footwork of some Customs officers, who waved through the coach on which a number of Conservative colleagues from the European Parliament and myself were travelling. I had expected at least to be asked to show my passport, but the officers could not get the coach off the ferry and through Customs quickly enough. I am still not sure about the position of those who travel abroad and return through Dover. Until the Home Secretary can answer that question, it is not for me to bail him out.

Mr. Brazier: What are the hon. Gentleman's views?

Mr. Allen: It is my view that it would assist those seeking political asylum in this country if, in an emergency such as that in Bosnia, there was a facility in the relevant country where people could discuss their applications and their needs. That would prevent the sort of nonsense that happened with Leeds Alert.

I am not saying that the wording of the new clause is perfect. If the Minister gives me the nod, I am sure that my hon. Friends would agree to withdraw it so that it could be worded appropriately. The problem is that for those wanting political asylum in the United Kingdom, the Government are virtually insisting that they break the law. At the very least, someone, somewhere, has to be deceived. It is not possible to obtain political asylum abroad and bring it into the United Kingdom. An asylum seeker has to get to the United Kingdom by some means before he can make a claim. Therefore, by definition, he would have arrived here by a route that probably was not an honest route. For example, such a person would have to pretend to be a visitor or something else before he could land and say, "I claim political asylum."

The new clause would legitimise individuals who go through due process, not necessarily at the port of entry but in extreme circumstances—such as those in Bosnia—in their own countries. I can only repeat that such an arrangement would be extraordinary rather than the norm. It appears that with the Bosnian problem the Government have—perhaps in pursuit of their privatisation policy—subcontracted to the United Nations and the Red Cross the decision on those who may be allowed in to this country. They have been given their tender contract—1,000 people over the next six to nine months. If that time scale is inaccurate, perhaps the Minister would correct me.

It is possible that those two organisations, which are under great pressure in other areas, may nominate people who the Home Office may not regard as satisfactory and who may not meet the criteria. Perhaps they have not been in a camp for long enough, perhaps they have not lost sufficient numbers of relatives, or perhaps they have not suffered sufficient deprivation to qualify for the magical figure of 1,000 out of the 3 million people who have been displaced. In many ways, that is a failure of the European dimension as operated by the Government throughout their presidency. They did not make an adequate response to the Bosnian problem. Grey-suited men waited for photocalls in various European capitals, unable to make any impact on the Bosnian crisis. There was no genuine burden sharing, either in terms of the numbers of refugees coming out of those strife-torn areas or in making a proper financial settlement for those countries that took a greater share of the burden.

Mr. Madden: My hon. Friend referred to visa applications from former Yugoslav nationals. In a reply today, the Foreign Office Minister said that

"we are monitoring the effect of the visa regime on former Yugoslav nationals on the visa sections at Belgrade, Vienna, Zagreb, Budapest, Sofia, Rome, Milan, Florence, Naples,

[Mr. Madden]

Dusseldorf and Paris. At these posts 1,715 applications were received from former Yugoslav nationals—1,251 were granted, 238 were refused and 203 have a decision pending." Can my hon. Friend confirm that, if clause 9 is passed, the 238 who have been refused will have no right of appeal—like the thousands of others who, in the coming months, undoubtedly will also be refused—against those arbitrary decisions?

Mr. Allen: I have to tell my hon. Friend that I cannot confirm that because I do not know. I listened very carefully, as did my hon. Friend, to the Minister's remarks in Committee—but the more that I re-read *Hansard*, the more confused I became, and I imagine the more confused will be individuals who want to exercise a right of appeal, if they are allowed to do such a thing. I would like the Minister to answer my hon. Friend's question because I believe that clause 9 and the rest of the Bill will not allow such people to appeal.

6 pm

The Bill's failure to make provision for people from abroad to apply in emergency circumstances will make life harder for those seeking political asylum. If it appears that people are reaching our country, the Bill introduces other, administrative obstacles. If those obstacles are overcome, the Bill imposes a visa regime. Where a visa regime is imposed, the Bill makes it difficult for it to be implemented by forcing people to go across Europe to obtain and to complete forms.

We want to ensure justice for those people who, in Bosnia-type situations, have suffered, been abused, held captive, and deprived of the basics of human life. New clause 2—modest as it is and however imperfectly it may be worded—would give a sign. Rather than the sign that, the Government usually put up to people seeking our help and aid, it would give a sign that where circumstances permitted, it would be appropriate to send one or two people from the Home Office to vet claims and to allow applicants either to enter our country for political asylum or to tell them, "We are sorry, but you do not qualify."

The fact that, as we understand it, the Government are not prepared to entertain new clause 2 in any form indicates the truth about their concern for those seeking political asylum—it just does not exist.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Clearly, new clause 2 is prompted by the political situation in the former Yugoslavia and the difficulties experienced by many people from that country in seeking political asylum in Britain. The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), who also led for Labour in Committee, spoke for many when he pointed out the unconscionable embarrassment that Britain has faced because of the small part that it played in dealing with the consequences of the fighting in the former Yugoslavia and in Bosnia in particular.

I believe that the hon. Gentleman also thinks that it is unnecessary to amend the Bill to achieve his purposes because, as new clause 2 proposes, it would be possible for facilities to be made available in Vienna, other border towns of Austria or southern Germany, or in neighbouring countries, to evaluate applications and to determine whether Britain is prepared to play its part in providing a haven for those displaced.

New clause 2 attempts to tackle both the problem of asylum and that alluded to in the earlier debate, to which the Home Secretary made some reply—those people who do not strictly fall within the provisions of the convention but whom it would be reasonable for Britain to seek to offer a home.

The clear sense of making such a provision close to the ground—close to Bosnia—is emphasied by the experiences we have witnessed at the border and the Leeds Alert case. It seems unlikely that many people in the countries in question will look to the United Kingdom for relief, given our record of dealing with such applications over the past year.

Figures made available to me by the Library's research department show that between January and November this country received a mere 4,830 applications for asylum from the former Yugoslavia, refused 110,000, and granted asylum to none. That suggests a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Home Office for tackling the problem directly, and the belief that if we show ourselves to be tardy in dealing with applications, they will simply disappear.

It is not good enough for Britain, as a member of the European Community, to land the problem in the lap of countries neighbouring the strife—for that is the practical consequence of Home Office policy and why tens of thousands are leaving the former Yugoslavia and arriving in countries such as Germany, which is hard pressed by the adherence of the eastern zone to the republic, and Austria, which is a very small country.

The policy pursued by the British Government is positively dangerous not only for those countries which are receiving refugees but to the whole of Europe. It has undoubtedly strengthened the fear of foreign influx, where that influx has been large. If we look at the totality of the picture during the period to which I referred, the number granted asylum in this country from all over the world was a mere 1,040. That compares with 17,270 refused applications.

Britain is not a country to which refugees would look for a haven in the times in which we live. It is striking, particularly if one considers the state of African countries languishing under dictatorships and tyrannies, how in many cases we have simply turned away all applications. It is open to question whether, if more were known, those applicants would be eligible for asylum status. On the face of it, one must take the view that it is the Government's policy strongly to discourage applications for asylum from abroad.

Although the Government will undoubtedly refuse to accept new clause 2, saying that it is not strictly necessary—and, in a purely legal sense, it is not—I hope that they will indicate how they propose to share the burden, particularly with other European countries, of offering relief to those from the former Yugoslavia who are able to enter the other countries of the European Community. I hope that the Government will also tell us whether they are prepared to reconsider the exiguous numbers to whom they have undertaken to offer room and the criteria on which they will determine which cases to accept.

Many people in this country believe that what is being done in their name to tackle the problem is wholly inadequate. They believe that it is stoking up trouble and making more likely disturbance and civil strife in other, at present more peaceful, parts of Europe. This is a matter of great urgency and in tabling new clause 2 the Labour party

has given the Government an opportunity to demonstrate that their views have advanced somewhat since the Christmas recess.

Mr. Charles Wardle: As I listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), I found it hard to repress a wave of nostalgia for the time that we spent in Committee. There he was, rambling up hill and down dale without touching too frequently on the subject in hand.

When he discussed asylum applications, the hon. Gentleman forgot to mention the fact that some 75 per cent. of asylum-seekers apply after they have entered this country. I hope that he is not suggesting that the great majority of those applicants arrive as bogus visitors; many arrive as genuine visitors and then apply for asylum.

The hon. Gentleman talked of his adventures on new year's eve and new year's day. He forgot to tell the House that, at Dover, an inspector—an immigration officer—boarded his coach, asked whether everyone on board was an EC citizen and then got off the coach. Immigration controls were clearly in place.

Mr. Allen: It is true that a gentleman boarded the coach; but he asked whether everyone was having a good time.

Mr. Wardle: I do not wish to malign the hon. Gentleman, but it is possible that he was having such a good time that he did not hear the rest of the sentence which, I am sure, was pronounced by the immigration officer.

As the House will of course be aware, on 1 January there were no changes in controls at ports of entry in any EC country. If the hon. Gentleman had taken himself to Rome, Brussels or anywhere else in the Community that day, he would have found that that was the case.

Mr. Madden: If any members of the party on the coach had admitted that they were not EC nationals, what would the immigration officer have done?

Mr. Wardle: He would have wanted to ascertain their identity. Having done so, he would have exercised the appropriate controls. Had any such person proved to be a genuine non-EC national, the controls would have followed the pattern that they follow at every port of entry in regard to non-EC nationals—a pattern that will continue.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North also referred to our record in the former Yugoslavia. He mentioned the 79 arrivals—helped by an intervention by the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). It should be borne in mind that we rely on the UNHCR and the International Red Cross to pick out the cases that come to this country; the UNHCR selected the 79 and their dependants and will continue to send us further groups in the months to come.

The passion of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) can never be doubted, but his logic sometimes defies belief. He referred to the role played by this country in Yugoslavia. I hope that he did not mean to slight the efforts of our soldiers, medical teams and technicians to deal with the terrible conflict in that country. He seemed to suggest, however, that the Germans, the Austrians and others had made a political decision to take the large numbers that had arrived, and that simply is not true. Perhaps 600,000 people have arrived in Germany as a result of that terrible conflict, but that was not the consequence of a political decision: they just turned up there.

6.15 pm

Both new clause 2 and amendments Nos. 1 and 2 seek to broaden the United Kingdom's current international obligations to asylum seekers by including references to entry clearance procedures. The 1951 convention imposes obligations on signatory states in relation to refugees on their territory or at their borders. There is no obligation to allow refugees a free hand to choose where in the world they would like to live. New clause 2 seeks to put asylum seekers who are not in the United Kingdom—and thus have not engaged our obligations to afford protection—on the same footing as those who have arrived here. That would distort the concept of asylum, as understood within the terms of the Geneva convention, into just another category of immigration.

Mr. Maclennan: The Minister mentioned logic earlier. What is the logic of his argument about whether or not the German Government sought to give asylum to 600,000 people? Is not it a fact that those people are there and that our country is a fellow member of the European Community? The Minister is simply not addressing our duty to deal with the problem.

Mr. Wardle: It is the hon. Gentleman's logic that is faulty. Is he suggesting that because 600,000 people have arrived, without the express invitation of the German Government, to add to the large Yugoslav community in that country, every other country should take the same action? If so, he is ignoring agreements reached within the international community, and recommendations made by the UNHCR and the International Red Cross.

The hon. Gentleman said that the applications of the nearly 5,000 former Yugoslavs who applied for asylum in this country last year had not been resolved. Perhaps, in that context, he will understand the purpose of the Bill.

Amendment No. 1 seeks to achieve a similar result to that of new clause 2 by including an entry clearance application in the definition of an asylum claim. It also seeks to include the ground that a refusal of leave to enter would breach our convention obligations. That is an unnecessary addition; removal following a refusal of leave to enter is the action that could breach our convention obligations and that is already provided for adequately in the wording of clause 1.

Mr. Allen: The Minister seems to find no difficulty in meeting our international partners through the ad hoc group of Immigration Ministers, the Trevi group, and the Schengen group—although we are not a member of that group, we receive information from it. He has no problem in negotiating arrangements such as harmonised visa and border controls. Why can he not, in the same fora, meet our European colleagues and negotiate a proper settlement for people who seek political asylum—either by sharing the burden of the numbers that we accept, or by sharing the financial contribution?

Mr. Wardle: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are playing a part in the international community. As was said many times in Committee, we are also turning to the experts—that is, the UNHCR—for precisely that purpose. We do not want, however, to see movement on a scale that would give way to the evil goal of ethnic cleansing.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham) *rose*——

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) will understand that I wish to make progress. He will then, no doubt, want to listen to the reply of his hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North.

Mr. Grant: Will the Minister give way on this point?

Mr. Wardle: How can I resist the hon. Gentleman's entreaties?

Mr. Grant: I thank the Minister for being so kind as to give way on this matter. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees will be referred to constantly in the Minister's speeches, so can he settle this matter once and for all? Does he agree that the UNHCR is not an independent body, as he claims, but that it comes under the United Nations and is accountable to the Security Council, of which Britain, France and the United States are permanent members? When the Minister refers to the UNHCR, therefore, he is talking about an organisation that is the servant of the United Nations and a lackey of the British Government.

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman has skilfully introduced a point that he made frequently in Committee —his views about the United Nations generally and of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in particular. He is right that the UNHCR is an arm of the United Nations. We, and the international community generally, regard the UNHCR as the experts on the ground who can make the decisions that really matter for the Bosnians.

The simple fact is that we must inevitably take a different approach to asylum seekers in this country from those who have found safety in other countries and from those who might at some point have a claim to refugee status but who have not yet left their own countries. The United Kingdom cannot be the guarantor of every individual around the world who might fear persecution. We cannot undertake to evacuate everyone who claims to be in danger and to bring them here.

The Geneva convention was very sensible and practical in its limitation of the definition of refugees to those who are already outside their own country. That does not mean that the international community has no interest in what happens to people in their own country. Major humanitarian efforts have often been made to assist the internally displaced, such as those in Bosnia, in those circumstances, but to hold out the prospect of emigration as a refugee, with no need to move or interrupt one's normal life while the application is considered, seems, in the real world of migratory pressures and strict immigration controls, to encourage unfounded applications and misuse.

At present, we consider outside the normal immigration rules all applications that we receive for entry clearance to come here to claim asylum. The criteria that we apply are that the person is prima facie a refugee within the terms of the 1951 convention and that the United Kingdom is a more appropriate country of refuge than where the person is. I am sure that this is the right approach. It enables us to respond to cases where links with this country clearly make it right that the person should come here, but it does not open up a formal channel that would be open to misuse. No other European country adopts an approach that is significantly different from ours. The proposed amendments would be likely to add substantially to the number of applications that we receive.

The particular example of refugees from the former Yugoslavia has already been debated extensively. The availability of procedures of the sort proposed in new clause 2 would make it more rather than less difficult to deal with that matter in a coherent way. It is not practicable for everyone who might be at risk, or who might claim to be at risk, in the former Yugoslavia, or anywhere else, to come to this country, but in making our contribution to the international response to that terrible conflict we are working with the UNHCR to identify those humanitarian cases that it would make sense to bring to this country. As the House knows, I announced on 30 November that we were prepared to receive up to 1,000 ex-detainees and their dependants, which will amount to about 4,000 people.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): I noted with interest what the Minister said about the close working relationship that the Government have with the UNHCR. If that relationship is so good, why did the Minister resist the pleas of the Opposition for the UNHCR handbook to be incorporated in the Bill?

Mr. Wardle: Because there is no need for it to be incorporated in the Bill. That does not mean that the handbook is disregarded, as I reminded the hon. Lady in Committee and seek to do now.

We are ready to consider in the normal way any applications for entry clearance that we receive from individuals, as well as those put forward by UNHCR. I repeat that the Government remain ready to consider applications from abroad to come to the United Kingdom to seek asylum. I am convinced, however, that we should not create a new immigration channel for that purpose, as new clause 2 seeks to do. Instead, we should continue to deal with those applications on a discretionary basis, outside the normal immigration rules. That, together with a readiness to work with the international organisations to find solutions to refugee-producing situations, seems to me to be the proper and practical approach and the one that is most likely to produce a helpful outcome. For those reasons, I urge the House to reject new clause 2.

Mr. Allen: By leave of the House, may I say in reply that by tabling new clause 2 we have attempted to open up the debate and to allow the Government to show whether they really want to assist genuine political refugees who are in absolutely appalling circumstances. There is an almost unique set of circumstances in Bosnia. Had we been able to send people to Bosnia to assist them in making their applications—and to reject, where necessary, their applications—we should have been in a position to do some good. By tabling the new clause and probing the Government to find out whether they were prepared to seek a solution to the problem of political asylum seekers, we were hoping for a good response. Sadly, we have received the response that we expected. The Government have rejected our overtures to find better ways to help asylum seekers.

The same applies to the grey area between those who are so obviously political asylum seekers and those who are so obviously not—the victims of civil war, famine and so on. It is apparent that that grey area needs to be looked at by a new Government. As the Conservative

Government have refused even to consider the possibility of helping genuine political refugees, we intend to press the new clause to a Division.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 213, Noes 295.

Division No. 105] **[6.27 pm**

AYES

Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and
Mr. Alan Meale.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain

Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 3

EXAMINATION: OFFENCES

'.—(1) A person shall be guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction by a fine of not more than level 5 on the standard scale or by imprisonment for not more than six months, or by both, in any of the following cases:—

(a) he either by himself or in conjunction with any other person prevents any asylum seeker who has arrived or attempted to arrive in the territory of the United Kingdom from being lawfully examined by an immigration officer;

(b) he either by himself or in conjunction with any other person or persons hinders or delays the asylum seeker who has arrived or attempted to arrive in the territory of the United Kingdom from being lawfully examined by an immigration officer;

(c) if being an immigration officer he conducts the examination either without authority or in such a manner as to render that examination unlawful;

(d) if as owner or agent of a ship or aircraft he procures, assists or permits any employee, servant or agent or any other person to commit an offence under subsection (a) or (b) above;

(2) Subsection (1) above applies to matters both within and outside the territory of the United Kingdom.'.—*[Mr. Fraser.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

One welcome aspect of the Bill is that, for the first time, applicants for political asylum who arrive at a port in the United Kingdom will have a statutory right of appeal. About three quarters of those who are already here and apply for political asylum already have that right, but it is generally agreed that those who flee from another country and arrive at a port probably have the most pressing need to claim refuge.

There are many unwelcome aspects of the Bill, but the one that I have mentioned is a welcome one. However, it is tarnished and corroded by two main elements in the Bill: first, the removal of the right of appeal for visitors, with

which I shall deal later; and, secondly, the legislative barbed wire barrier which the Bill flings out. The barbed wire barrier is designed to prevent people from ever availing themselves of the right to claim political asylum in the United Kingdom in the first place.

The underlying principle of the Bill is getting one's foot in the door. Unless the applicant gets his or her foot in the door, it is impossible to exercise the right to claim asylum and a right of appeal. The Government have a hidden and rather sinister strategy to ensure that as few people as possible get that foot in the door. If people do not get their foot in the door, the Government do not have to say yes or no or provide any right of appeal.

There are two particular barbs on the legal barbed wire barrier to refugees. The first is the practice of requiring visas to be granted to people from countries from which people are likely to flee and to seek political asylum. The rule is easily forecast. If Kurds want to come from Turkey to claim political asylum, impose a visa regime on Turkey. If Tamils want to come from Sri Lanka to claim political asylum because of undoubted problems in that country, impose a visa. If people want to come from former Yugoslavia to claim political asylum in Britain, impose a visa to prevent them from getting a foot in the door to make that application. That is the first barb in the legal barbed wire barrier that has been put around the country.

6.45 pm

The second barb is the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987. If people who know that they need a visa to come to the United Kingdom are foolish enough to apply in an overseas country for a visa to visit the United Kingdom and disclose, as did the Bosnian refugees, that they are likely to claim persecution, it follows as night follows day that the application will be refused. Therefore, people have no possibility of making an application for asylum which is subject to an appeal. That brings into play the carriers' liability Act.

If an applicant boards an aircraft or ship without a visa, arrives in the United Kingdom and claims political asylum —that is to say, if that person gets a foot in the door—the carrier of the applicant for political asylum will be fined £2,000 without any right of appeal. The Act puts a £2,000 premium on the carrier. It physically prevents people from making an application to an immigration officer in the United Kingdom.

United Kingdom law will perhaps not apply for the whole of the journey. It depends on the carrier and the ship. The system which the Government have put together to prevent people from arriving here almost encourages bounty hunters who will pick out prospective applicants whose presence in the United Kingdom could otherwise cost the carrier £2,000 per person. We know that the fines imposed on carriers amount to many millions of pounds.

I understand that there have been examples of people being physically prevented from reaching an immigration officer in the United Kingdom. The new clause would make that a criminal offence.

The new clause also deals with the rarer circumstances —I do not suggest that they arise often—in which an immigration officer might interview an applicant for admission to the United Kingdom but not admit of the fact that an application for political asylum was made and then return that person to a third country. That is what happens to people who arrive in the United Kingdom and claim admission. If they come from a visa country and do not make an application for political asylum, they can be removed almost within hours and sent back to a third country. The new clause would equally make a refusal under those circumstances a criminal offence.

The carriers' liability Act puts a £2,000 price on the head of every visaless refugee who comes to Britain. The new clause would at least be a discouragement to claiming that price. The evil with which the new clause proposes to deal is not imagined. There have been several examples in which a price has been claimed. It is possible that the increase in the fine on carriers from £1,000 to £2,000, together with events in various parts of the world, will make the process of claiming a price on the head of prospective applicants more attractive than ever to carriers and disreputable people.

If the Government are making it a criminal offence for applicants for political asylum not to give their fingerprints, surely they should make it a criminal offence for anyone to prevent such people from reaching an immigration officer to have even the opportunity to have their fingerprints taken.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I want to ask the Minister a question which arises from subsection (1)(c) of the new clause. Unless I am seriously misguided, I hope that the Government will not accept the new clause because of the massive problems that paragraph (c) could create for immigration officers.

Most of the debates today, in Committee and elsewhere have been based on the false premise that the British Parliament and Government control immigration policy and the right of people to come to this country. As we well know, significant changes have been imposed on us by our membership of the European Community. First, every citizen of a European Community country is entitled to come here. Secondly, we will shortly face the problem of citizens of some overseas colonies who will have the automatic right of admission. The citizens of a small Portuguese colony, not far from Hong Kong, will shortly be fully entitled to come to this country, as the Government are well aware, which could create problems if people from Hong Kong go to that colony.

I have a high regard for the Under-Secretary of State and have never doubted his integrity. I hope that he will give us some guidance on the position of the Government and of immigration officers in the event of a case being taken to the European Court, as is likely, to decide whether a person coming to an EC country from a third-world country will have the automatic right of admission to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Allen: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would help me to understand his argument. Is he criticising the fact that most immigration decisions are made by meetings of European Community Ministers? Is he criticising the fact that none of the decisions comes before the European Commission or the European Parliament? If that happened, would it not give us a better chance to scrutinise what goes on in the Trevi group and the ad hoc group of Immigration Ministers?

Sir Teddy Taylor: If the hon. Gentleman believes that argument, he should consider the matter more carefully. As he well knows, there is no way that the European Parliament, or any other such body, could consider such matters. It would be different if we were to start all over again and have a European Government and a European

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

Parliament, but the hon. Gentleman is living in cloud cuckoo land. As he is well aware, the decisions will be taken by the European Court—a political court, which is not controlled by any democratic body. Irrespective of whether one considers that that is a good or a bad thing, the basic issue is important.

The Government will be well aware that the Home Secretary has had long discussions with Commissioner Bangemann because it was assumed that article 7 might allow any person from a third-world country who was entitled to come to any part of the European Community to come to the United Kingdom. It was assumed that a bona fide visitor to Greece, Portugal or Italy would have an automatic right of entry here, despite our laws. The Home Secretary has had long discussions with Mr. Bangemann and it seems that a decision has been delayed for a year or more. However, as the Minister knows well, that agreement does not prevent anyone from a third-world country from going to the European Court to claim that, because of article 7, he or she should have right of admission into the United Kingdom. Although we cannot prejudge such matters, the signs are that the European Court would find in favour of such an application and in those circumstances we could face considerable problems. Italy is virtually an open house country, to which it is easy to gain admission, and Greece poses a problem because, although Athens is tightly controlled, it is easy to gain entry to the rest of the country.

I do not wish simply to peddle an EC argument; I wish to point out the dangers if we do not have effective controls. I think that all hon. Members have been horrified at recent events in Germany, which have happened not because the Germans are nasty people but because they gained the impression—rightly or wrongly—that there was no effective control over people coming to their country from the eastern bloc. For that reason, some horrible things happened, horrible deeds were done and horrible things were said.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House who are anxious to preserve good race relations in this country are also anxious to prevent a situation in which we will have limited control over the admission of people from third-world countries to this country. We are well aware that there is a huge demand from people in third-world countries to come here because of economic considerations, although those are not as vital during a time of great depression, and because of the bonds between the United Kingdom and parts of the third world. Every hon. Member knows of the numbers of people from Bangladesh and Pakistan who want to come to this country because of our historic links and the successes of fellow citizens who have settled here. The Minister knows that if we did not have effective immigration controls the good relations that many people—including some Ministers in the Department—fight hard to maintain could be undermined.

Can the Government give us any indication of the advice that they will give to immigration officers if such a case should be taken to the European Court? We know that court decisions take about one year and all kinds of problems could arise during the deliberations. If, after one year, the decision went against the Government, what on earth would be the position of immigration officers and Department officials who had refused entry to people in the meantime? Considerable damage could result. Considerable difficulties can arise in law if one deprives someone of something to which he is later found to be legally entitled. Can the Minister tell us what advice he will give to immigration officers if we were to lose such a case?

I have sat in this House for far too long not to appreciate that he and other Ministers must get fed up with people asking hypothetical questions. However, the Minister and officials at the Department are well aware that this is in no sense a hypothetical issue. The problem will arise, either because someone takes a case to the European Court, or because of the eventual agreement between the Government and Mr. Bangemann because of what is contained in article 7.

I hope that the Minister will give us some guidance about what he thinks will be the legal position of immigration officers while a court decision is being taken, and what Government policy will be if the decision goes against them, which I fear will be the case. That will pose a serious problem and I am sure that it worries Members on both sides of the House. We cannot run away from it.

Knowing the Minister as I do, I hope that he will make a statement now, rather than causing panic if such a case came to the European Court. How much better it would be for the Government to face up to the decision and to make an early statement about what they intend to do.

Knowing the Minister as I do and knowing of his integrity, as I said before—something that I have said of only one other Minister—I hope that the Minister will take the matter seriously, will face up to it and will tell us, on behalf of the Government, about their approach to the issue.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) is a man of considerable charm, but I am not used to his laying it on with a trowel in the fashion that he has just done. He is inviting me to speculate on a hypothetical situation—a case that he has dreamt up. I shall respond, as best I can, by saying where we are now, and I shall let him draw his conclusions and take what he will to the debates on Maastricht later this week and in following weeks. The Government will strongly resist any such case. On the back of expert legal advice, we are confident that we would be successful.

I shall make three points which may help my hon. Friend, although I appreciate that he is an expert on the Maastricht treaty. The House will be aware that only two immigration issues come within treaty competence: a common visa list will be established for member countries, as well as a standard visa format. Everything else to do with immigration which is sometimes debated in this House and elsewhere will come under the pillar of co-operation, with Immigration Ministers of the different countries meeting on a regular basis and seeking to harmonise their policies, but not seeking to establish a standard set of policies.

7 pm

Mr. Fraser: Are we not being a little misled? Is there not a provision in the Maastricht treaty to the effect that a majority, which could exclude the United Kingdom, could impose a visa restriction when, in the words of that treaty, there is a threat to entry to the Community?

Mr. Wardle: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is right about that, but, in terms of the practical arrangements for our normal day-to-day immigration controls, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would agree that the two features I have outlined will come within treaty competence. However, I accept the advice that the hon. Gentleman has offered to the House.

I should like to raise two more points in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East and then I shall consider the points raised by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser).

Undoubtedly the Commission has a different interpretation of these matters and we dispute its interpretation of article 8A. We are absolutely clear that it does not apply to third-country nationals—people from non-EC countries—who were at the crux of the hypothetical situation which my hon. Friend described. We shall continue to maintain the check on the identity of all passengers coming into the United Kingdom to establish whether they are third-country nationals or not.

As the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) frequently reminded us in Committee, we are not a member of the Schengen group. However, we applaud the efforts made by the nine EC countries which are members of it to improve their frontier controls. As my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East rightly said, those countries face huge problems with their long land-locked borders and controls are difficult. That is another reason why we shall continue to hold to our interpretation of article 8A and maintain our checks on non-EC nationals.

The hon. Member for Norwood spoke of allegations that some asylum applicants have been physically prevented from gaining access to an immigration officer to make their application. The whole House shares the hon. Gentleman's concern that people who come to this country wishing to claim asylum should have an unfettered opportunity to do so.

I am aware that it has been alleged that, in some cases, passengers have been prevented from disembarking or from approaching immigration control. I assure the House, as I assured the Committee on the same subject, that the Government would not condone such behaviour. Immigration officers have clear instructions that a person who claims asylum while on United Kingdom soil must have his or her application referred to the asylum division of the Home Office.

I am pleased to say that there is no evidence that immigration officers have been involved in unauthorised removals, which would be contrary to their instructions. Having said that, I very much doubt that the creation of the new criminal offence, as proposed in the new clause, would be an appropriate response to that issue.

It is equally unacceptable that airlines should seek physically to prevent a passenger from approaching immigration control. Once the passenger has arrived in the United Kingdom, it is too late for the airline to ask itself whether it should have carried that passenger.

I must take issue with subsection (2) of the new clause, which says that an offence would be committed even if the act in question took place outside the United Kingdom. That would be an extraordinary extension of extra-territorial jurisdiction and, in any case, it would not be enforceable. I assume that it is intended to render the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 unworkable, because airlines would argue that they were prevented from denying boarding to undocumented passengers.

I have already made clear, as did my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State earlier today, that we shall abide by our obligations under the 1951 convention in relation to people who have arrived in this country and who seek our protection. There is no obligation upon us, however, to facilitate the passage of that person to the United Kingdom. Moreover, as the hon. Member for Norwood allowed, it is frequently the pattern these days that passengers do not embark for the United Kingdom directly from the country of alleged persecution; they first find their way to a country of transit.

The new clause would effectively render the 1987 Act unworkable, and for that reason I urge the House to reject it.

Question put and negatived.

New Clause 4

PERIOD OF NOTICE AFTER NOTICE OF DECISION TO APPEAL

'.—(1) No rule made by virtue of Schedule 2 of this Act shall provide for a notice of appeal against an asylum decision to be given, unless it provides for a period of ten days after receiving notice of the decision to give notice of appeal.

(2) Asylum decision in this section means a decision to refuse leave to enter the United Kingdom or to remove a person from the United Kingdom or to refuse to vary the leave of a person in the United Kingdom, or to make a decision to deport, or to refuse to revoke a deportation order, or to refuse entry clearance to the United Kingdom where the grounds of appeal are that the decision is contrary to the United Kingdom's obligations under the Convention.

(3) Where the Secretary of State has given a certificate under paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 to this Act the period of ten days shall be read as a period of five days.'.—*[Mr. Blair.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Blair: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 24, in page 13, line 28, at end insert—

'(4)(A)(1) The time limit for giving notice of any appeal shall be no less than 10 days unless the Secretary of State has certified that in his opinion the person's asylum claim is without foundation.

(2) In the event that he shall so certify, the time limit shall be 2 days provided that the person is in detention and has submitted a claim for asylum on arrival to an immigration officer.'.

No. 25, in page 13, line 33, leave out from 'he' to 'refer' and insert 'shall'.

Mr. Blair: The new clause and the amendments raise two issues: first, when the accelerated procedure for lodging appeals arises under the legislation—in other words, the 48-hour rule—and, secondly, whether that time limit is sufficient for those with appeals to be able to lodge them properly.

In respect of the first issue, the category of cases to which the 48-hour rule applies, the intention of the Government was put on the record in Committee when the Minister made it clear that the accelerated procedure—the fast-track procedure—for hearing appeals should apply only to port entry cases where the person was in detention and the Secretary of State had certified the claim as groundless. It was made clear that those two preconditions should apply. That is somewhat at odds with the explanation of the legislation given by the Secretary of State on Second Reading, but we will let that pass.

[Mr. Blair]

The problem is that the interpretation and intention of the Government is by no means clear from the legislation and the rules themselves. Rule 5(2) of the draft appeal rules states:

"The time limit for giving notice of appeal shall be two days in a case where the appeal is made under section 7(1) of this Bill."

Clause 7(1) applies in any case where there has been personal service on the appellant of the notice of decision. On the face of it, the combination of the rules plus clause 7 means that this accelerated procedure applies in any circumstance when notice of the decision is served personally. As I understand the Government's answer to that is that, as a matter of practice, it will apply only to those in detention and, again as a matter of practice, the only people detained will be those whose claims are deemed groundless. Therefore, the Government say that the practical effect of their procedure is that the accelerated procedure will apply only to those with groundless claims who are in detention.

I should be grateful if the Minister would address the following two points. First, the limitation on the plain meaning of the rules and the clause is not stipulated anywhere in the rules. Secondly, it does not appear to accord with practice. I am advised, and I have checked with a number of those operating in this area, that some people are detained even though their claims are not groundless, while some are served notices personally even though they have neither been detained nor are their claims groundless. The notion that this applies in practical circumstances—that personal service is effected only on those in detention whose claims have been certified as groundless—does not appear to be the case. Some notices are served personally even though that applicant is neither in detention nor is his claim groundless.

If the Government's intention is clear and not in dispute, the simple solution would be to alter the rules to ensure that the stated intention accords with the precise letter of the rules. Since it is now three months since this matter was first raised on Second Reading, I should have thought that the Minister would be able to give us an undertaking about the rules and their nature.

The other issue on which I seek clarification is the time limit. I do not want to go back over the territory that we explored in relation to clause 6, but it has become increasingly clear from debates in Committee and in the House that when we talk about an accelerated procedure weeding out bogus claims, in reality the term "bogus" is a misdescription and a particularly pejorative one. Claims will be made in good faith but will concern the category of people who, although not strictly refugees under the United Nations convention, are in fear of their lives because they are fleeing from civil distress, civil war or some other calamity.

The two days for the accelerated procedure has been criticised by many of those who operate in that area. It has also been criticised by the Law Society, the Bar Council, churches, and experts on and representatives of refugee groups. As there is a procedure for that time limit to be extended, our amendment extending the two-day period to five days is not unreasonable.

I draw the Minister's attention to the strong case that was made in the other place, when the matter was debated before the general election. Lord Ackner said that if the appeal procedures are truncated and there is insufficient time for people to prepare and launch an appeal satisfactorily, the only danger that we face is an increase in the number of applications for judicial review. That is a much more protracted and costly process and would slow down the procedure for determination. If there were a possibility of that happening as result of shortening the appeal period, it would not be in the interests of applicants, the Government or those with a view of the public interest.

Will the Minister respond, first, to the time limit, which we believe is too short to allow proper preparation of the case, and, secondly, ensure that the draft appeal rules are brought into accordance with the Government's stated intentions so that there can be no mistake about people's rights or to whom the accelerated procedure will apply?

Mr. Charles Wardle: First, I give the assurance which the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) seeks. I confirm that the draft rules will be amended in accordance with the undertakings that I gave in Committee. If those who are detained are refused but it is deemed that their case is not groundless, the accelerated timetable will not apply, so there will be a longer period. I hope that that clarifies another point which the hon. Gentleman raised.

New clause 4 and amendment No. 24 deal with time limits for bringing appeals and the accelerated procedure for certain unfounded cases. Although the hon. Member for Sedgefield said that he was reluctant to go back over that ground, I hope that he will be patient with me if I cover a little of it rapidly with the aim of clarification.

Paragraph 4 of schedule 2 sets up a special procedure for appeals against refusal of entry, refusal to revoke a deportation order or directions for removal as an illegal entry where the Secretary of State certifies the asylum claim to be without foundation. Where a special adjudicator agrees with that view, there is no further appeal to the tribunal. Where he does not agree, he may either allow or dismiss the appeal or he may refer the case back to the Secretary of State for reconsideration.

In addition, the draft procedure rules contain a provision for a shorter time limit for lodging an appeal against refusal of entry—two days instead of 10—where the notice of refusal is served in person. In practice, that means that the applicant will be detained. My right hon. and learned Friend made it clear on Second Reading that this shorter time limit is intended to apply only in cases where the claim is certified to be without foundation and I confirm that that will be incorporated into the draft procedure rules when they are revised.

Amendment No. 24 correctly summarises the position in which the shorter time limits will apply. However, time limits are appropriately dealt with in the procedure rules, rather than the primary legislation.

New clause 4 is misconceived in a number of ways. For example, it includes in the definition of an asylum decision a refusal of entry clearance to come to the United Kingdom. The Bill does not confer a right of appeal to a special adjudicator against refusal of entry clearance, since a person must be in the United Kingdom to claim asylum here.

Amendment No. 25 would require a special adjudicator who disagreed with the Secretary of State's view that a claim was without foundation to refer the case back for reconsideration rather than allowing or dismissing the appeal. In most such cases reference back will be the

appropriate course as there will not have been substantive consideration of the claim—for example, where my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State considers the claim not to engage our obligations under the convention because it is proposed to remove the appellant to a safe third country. In cases where there has already been substantive consideration of the claim, however, the special adjudicator may have before him the necessary information to enable him to dismiss or allow the appeal and there is no good reason to prevent him from doing so.

I therefore urge the House to reject the new clause and both amendments.

7.15 pm

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 231, Noes 290.

Division No. 106] **[7.15 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter

Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and Mr. James Arbuthnot.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 5

CREDIBILITY OF ASYLUM-SEEKERS

'Notwithstanding anything in any asylum or immigration rule, the credibility of an asylum-seeker may not be judged by reference to any of the following grounds—

(a) a failure to make immediate disclosure of all material facts;
(b) the destruction of documents;
(c) a failure to apply forthwith;
(d) political activities in the United Kingdom.'.—*[Mr. Allen.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Allen: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause refers to the credibility tests that will apply to people applying for political asylum. It is another example of law being made outside the parliamentary process. It is deplorable that the draft immigration rules do not appear on the face of the Bill. They are important to people applying for political asylum and it should not be left to us to devise ways of discussing them in the House. They should be in the Bill, so that those who want to can ask questions about them.

7.30 pm

The rules list the criteria that can be taken into account when dealing with asylum applications. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees office has made its position quite clear. It is of the opinion that the draft provisions

"do not ensure the full implementation of the 1951 Convention [relating to the status of refugees] in the United Kingdom and some of them appear to vary from internationally adopted principles relating to asylum and the protection of refugees.'

That is a clear warning to the Home Office that its proposals may not meet international standards. It is not even clear why the Home Office thought many of these proposals necessary in the first place.

Earlier, the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) referred to the moves towards European harmonisation, although he did not seem too keen to introduce an element of European accountability to this matter. It appears that the United Kingdom is adopting a tougher line than are many of our European partners. In an interesting exercise the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants compared the text of the draft immigration rules with the text of the resolution adopted by the ad hoc group of European Immigration Ministers. There are a number of revealing comparisons between the allegedly hard-line attitude of some European countries and the actual words used by the ad hoc group of Ministers—words with a softer ring to them than many of the phrases that appear in our immigration rules.

The ad hoc group resolution mentions an asylum seeker who has

"deliberately made false representations about his claim, either orally or in writing, after applying for asylum".

The words "deliberately" and "after applying for asylum" do not appear in the English text. Throughout the ad hoc group's document one is aware of more qualifications and greater sensitivity in what is, after all, a brutal political area. Far from harmonising our rules with those of Europe, it seems that we are bringing our European partners down to our level—that level being the lowest common denominator.

One of the conditions in the rules is that the applicant "has made false representations, either orally or in writing". That provides no safeguards for asylum seekers and does not mention the motivation that may have been behind untrue statements. So the Home Office could decide to refuse an application merely because of its own misunderstanding that a false representation had been made. Further, there are no time limits on this, so it would mean that the person who had sought entry as a visitor because he did not understand the procedures for claiming asylum, and who had therefore maintained that he would leave the country after a visit, could be refused on credibility grounds.

The Home Office notes to the rules also state:

"Self-evidently, if the applicant has been shown to have lied on specific points there will be more general doubt about his story",

but there is no explanation of the reasons why many asylum seekers do not feel secure enough to reveal all the details of their suffering immediately after meeting an official.

The second criterion is that an applicant has

"destroyed, damaged or disposed of any passport, other document or ticket relevant to his claim".

That needs further examination. As it stands, the rule means that if a passport has been accidentally damaged, that can be held against the applicant. There is no requirement to show that the damage occurred deliberately. The Home Office notes assume that such damage is always deliberate so as to make it more difficult to remove people if their applications are refused. The other assumption is that passports may be re-used by agents helping other people to escape. Some asylum seekers are badly advised by agents before reaching the United Kingdom.

The third criterion reflecting on the credibility of an application is that the applicant

"has lodged concurrent applications for asylum in the United Kingdom or in another country".

An interesting example of recent pedigree would be that of someone who has lodged an application in Germany and whose close family members have either reached another country or been granted asylum there because of the dangers that they faced in their first country of asylum. Such people may have been persecuted by racist gangs in east Germany, for instance. How might such cases be dealt with in practice?

Another criterion concerns

"failure to comply with a notice issued by the Secretary of State requiring the applicant to report to a designated place to be fingerprinted".

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) may want to comment on that shortly. The rules go on:

"or failure to complete an asylum questionnaire, or failure to comply with a request to attend an interview concerning the application".

At first sight these last criteria appear relatively innocuous—but a requirement to be fingerprinted has nothing to do with the substantive nature of an asylum claim. The Home Office frequently writes to the wrong address or gives inadequate notice of interview or fails to provide an interpreter. Such circumstances should not be held against applicants. The rules will mean that asylum seekers will be penalised for factors unconnected with the strength of their claims; and people who have followed bad advice or who have genuinely lost documents will find their cases prejudiced and may be returned to danger.

It is therefore vital that the rules be amended at least to provide the minimal protections suggested in the ad hoc group's resolution. At best, these restrictions should be removed altogether so that each claim can be considered on its merits.

The UNHCR suggests that it is not advisable

"to list . . . the factors which should be given special consideration when assessing an asylum-seeker's credibility. Evaluation of credibility is a process which involves the consideration of many complex factors, both objective and subjective, which are impossible to enumerate. Since all these may be equally important, singling out any of these factors will, by necessity, be incomplete and arbitrary."

New clause 5 is designed, in short, to make it clear that we should not attempt to define applicants' credibility by such arbitrary means. We believe that these are questions of judgment and that if we introduce such rules, mistakes can be made and people will be excluded. Given that these are matters of life or death, the significance of such exclusions must be plain for all to see.

Mr. Corbyn: I rise to support my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) and to ask the House to think seriously about what he has said. It is often not understood in this House—and certainly not in most newspapers—what it is like for someone who seeks political asylum. Many such people feel a sense of defeat

[Mr. Corbyn]

because they have had to flee from their own country to seek a new life elsewhere and transfer their energies into a different society. Many of them have to travel in great danger.

The history books record the heroic deeds of people who sought asylum and those who escaped from religious persecution in the middle ages in western Europe. Many people fled from Nazi Germany in the 1920s and 1930s and from Fascist Spain in the late 1930s and 1940s. More recently, people had to leave South Africa or flee from oppressive regimes in central and south America or Africa. People have had to flee from the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. There are numerous other examples. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps the Home Secretary would listen to the debate on the new clause rather than gossiping with his hon. Friends. Presumably he is discussing football results. He should take seriously my description of what it is like for people who seek political asylum because he makes the decisions and he framed the legislation.

The new clause seeks to remove the destruction of documents, failure to disclose all material facts, failure to apply immediately or political activities in the United Kingdom as bases upon which an application may be refused. Let us consider the case of someone who has been consistently opposed to the regime in Iran. He is forced to live and work underground and to change his name and identity. He manages to flee the country, often paying people to guide him at night, and arrives in Peshawar in Pakistan. He then seeks to buy an identity and to travel to a place of safety in another part of the world. That example is based on an actual case.

When that person finally arrives at, say, Heathrow, he would be loth to reveal all that information. He would seek to enter Britain as a visitor before considering with friends the next step and would apply for political asylum. The fact that such a person does not make an immediate application and has destroyed all evidence of his identity on the way here would be detrimental to his case. He would have destroyed that evidence by throwing documents away, flushing them down a toilet, tearing them up or burning them. People do such things because they are frightened and want to get away to a place of safety. If someone carried such documents during his night time journey in Iran, he would be liable to arrest, detention and possible execution and his family, relatives and friends could suffer a similar fate.

I mentioned political activities in the United Kingdom. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and others represent a rather curious lunatic element in the Conservative party. The hon. Gentleman is not here, but I shall later tell him what I have said about him as I am sure he would be interested to hear it. Political activity in Britain is detrimental to a person's chances of gaining political asylum. Is it so wrong for someone seeking political asylum from a repressive regime to undertake peaceful political activities against that regime? I see nothing wrong with that if he had been consistently opposed to that regime throughout the time that he lived under it.

I know people who have been asked by the immigration service what they had been doing in this country to oppose the regime from which they had fled. They said that they had not done much because they were worried about their position. That was counted against them. The new clause seeks to make clear and specific what can or cannot be used in forming a judgment of an asylum seeker's credibility. I hope that no hon. Member will ever have to seek political asylum.

7.45 pm

Many refugees have made enormous contributions to science, art, literature, politics and medicine. Many such people hold senior positions in the health service and in universities and other places both here and in the United States. Many of them sought political asylum, but if the judgments outlined in the Bill had operated in the 1930s, many would not have been granted political asylum. If such judgments had been used against people fleeing from Chile in 1973, they would not have gained asylum. There are many other examples.

The new clause would make the legislation more credible and would lead to a greater understanding of the needs of people seeking political asylum because it would ensure that decisions were based on the entire experience of the asylum seeker. Many people have grown up in a society in which people have been taught to mistrust officialdom in any form because it does not work for their benefit and to mistrust anyone in uniform because he may have taken part in attacks or murders of family members. Political asylum seekers with such experiences are unlikely to reveal their entire life story at the first point of entry; such people are often psychologically disturbed and would be incapable of doing so anyway.

We seek to ensure that all such factors are taken into account and that officers conducting interviews do not try to extract all the information at the first point. People must be given a chance to recover from the nightmare of the journey and the reality of the escape. They should be allowed to consider their situation and their safety and that of their families and friends who may still be living under a totalitarian regime. Unhappily, the world contains far too many such regimes and many countries in western Europe and the United States support them economically and militarily. We should think of the wider implications of what we say and do. I hope that the Minister will recognise the force of the arguments for the new clause.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I do not disagree with the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) about some genuinely harrowing cases to which he has alluded in the debate and raised more than once in Committee. I hope that he appreciates that the Bill will enable us to move more swiftly through unfounded cases so that we can deal more rapidly with precisely the sort of harrowing case that he describes. As I said earlier, about 75 per cent. of those who apply for asylum have already established themselves here as visitors or in some other way.

As the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) will appreciate, the rules that he criticised have to be laid before Parliament and if prayed against can be debated and, in theory, can be disapproved. The new clause is misconceived and impractical, as I shall seek to explain. It would undermine the provisions of the draft rules relating to credibility. There are several reasons for the way in which the factors are set out in the rules.

First, the rules make clear to applicants and advisers and to those determining the claim the factors that may be considered important. In Committee, Opposition Members frequently asserted that an asylum seeker

arriving here may be unfamiliar with our procedures and may not know what is important and what is not in presenting his case. The rules form a useful guide to the points that may be deemed of interest. Secondly, the rules are drafted to address quite specific problems of which we have become aware through vast experience of processing claims.

Let me give one or two examples. The first is of a person who applies for asylum only after several unsuccessful attempts to extend his or her stay in some other capacity and having exhausted all other rights of appeal under the normal immigration laws, or where there has been no change in the situation in the country of origin. Another is of the person whose story changes markedly when he is confronted with a rebuttal of part of his original story, which changes several times more with each successive interview. Another is of the person who destroys identification documents en route to, or after entering, the United Kingdom in order to delay removal. I understand that that will happen for other reasons, as the hon. Member for Islington, North has pointed out.

We fully appreciate the importance of an asylum claim and of making the right decision. For those reasons, it is vital that all the relevant factors of a case are examined. The general credibility of the applicant is crucial to the eventual decision. Therefore, it is somewhat unworldly to suggest that certain key factors should be taken entirely out of the frame and should play no part in reaching the final decision. It is surely natural to question why a person who has been here for two years suddenly makes an asylum claim in the absence of any obvious changes in his circumstances.

I have stressed on many occasions, and I am pleased to do so again, that the draft rules are framed in conditional language. Some factors may count against an applicant if no reasonable explanation is given. If a credible explanation is forthcoming, applicants may considerably enhance the strength of their claim to asylum. However bizarre the behaviour may have been, if there is a credible explanation, that will be taken into account, and so it should be.

However, it is simply not an option to ignore the fact that someone has deliberately sought to hide his identity or the fact that he has taken part in political activities in which he has never previously taken an interest and thereby placed himself in a particularly difficult situation. It is not unreasonable to explore such behaviour and seek explanations of it as part of the overall assessment of the case. That is what the draft rules provide for. For those reasons, I urge the House to reject new clause 5.

Question put and negatived.

Clause 3

FINGERPRINTING

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 1, line 20, leave out from line 20 to line 47 on page 2.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: Government amendments Nos. 29 and 30.

No. 5, in page 2. line 3, at end insert

'; except that no claimant or dependant under the age of 16 years shall be fingerprinted.'.

No. 6, in page 2, line 3, at end insert

'; except that the claimant of dependant under the age of 18 shall not be fingerprinted unless in the presence of their parent or guardian or social worker.'.

Government amendments Nos. 31 and 32.

No. 28, in page 2, line 47, at end insert—

'(11) Where a child under 16 years of age is an asylum seeker or is the dependent of an asylum seeker, an appropriate adult shall be present during the fingerprinting procedure; and an "appropriate adult" is a parent or guardian, advocate, social worker aged 18 or over and who is not employed by the police or immigration services'.'

Mr. Watson: Of all the clauses in the Bill, clause 3 is seen by Opposition Members and many outside as the most offensive. That is one reason why it was vigorously opposed and resisted in Committee. Despite some minor concessions squeezed from the Minister, which appear in the form of four Government amendments, the Opposition are no more convinced than they were when the Bill was first published that fingerprinting of asylum seekers and their relatives is anything other than a denial of basic civil liberties.

Amendment No. 4 offers the Government an honourable escape from the opprobrium that has been heaped upon them by the simple device of deleting the whole clause from the Bill. That would be the easy way out, although we do not anticipate that the Government will accept it, and it would go some way to easing the fears of a wide range of organisations and concerned individuals who have expressed their disgust at the relish with which the Home Secretary and his colleagues appear to wish to criminalise every man, woman and child who arrives on our shores seeking sanctuary.

It is no use the Home Secretary doing what his Minister did in Committee and consoling himself with the thought that fingerprinting is not a humiliating process or, as the Minister said, an unpleasant one. People associate fingerprinting with criminality in this country because hitherto only those charged with, or convicted of, a criminal offence have been forced to submit to it. When this odious Bill becomes law, the situation will be dramatically changed and, on a wide-ranging basis, fingerprinting will be carried out on every asylum seeker.

Opposition Members stressed consistently, both on Second Reading and in Committee, that the provision is not even necessary because the powers that it will bestow already exist. Under the Immigration Act 1971 and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, fingerprinting is carried out when an offence has been committed or, in some circumstances, when a person is charged with an offence.

I see that I have the honour of facing the Home Secretary this evening. I do not know whether he believes that all asylum seekers would be criminalised by the introduction of fingerprinting, but that is not of much significance. What is important is that those facing the fingerprinting process will feel that they have been criminalised, will feel guilty, and will feel that they have to prove themselves innocent when they arrive here. Perhaps even more importantly, the people of Britain will view such people as criminals because that is the way in which we customarily view those who are subjected to fingerprinting. Only rarely have people been fingerprinted and then not been charged with a fairly serious offence. That is undoubtedly how it will be perceived by the British people.

It may be that that latter point serves the Government's overall strategy which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said in the opening debate, has been

[Mr. Watson]

aimed at characterising all applicants as frauds, scroungers or impostors. It is assumed that their applications are bogus. Only on rare occasions are people treated at face value when they arrive here. The situation will worsen dramatically once the Bill becomes law.

Any country that claims to be a democracy should be able to offer asylum seekers more than that assumption when they arrive at its shores. Neither I nor my colleagues have ever argued, either here or in Committee, that there are not some instances of people applying for asylum in a less-than-honest manner. Sometimes there are multiple claims. That has always happened. What we are talking about here is the scale of the problem. Our argument has always been that the scale fails to justify the knee-jerk reaction embodied by the Bill.

Furthermore, it comes nowhere near justifying the universal assumption of guilt being applied to each and every asylum seeker. I do not believe for a moment that much of this will make any impression on the Home Secretary or his colleagues. They have set out their stall clearly. Many of them were involved with the Asylum Bill that was debated last year. Their aim has been clear, and in Committee they have wavered only slightly.

This is a modest amendment in the face of widespread opposition both inside and outside the House. The latest event in that process is what we are seeing this afternoon, with the effective lobby organised by the anti-racist alliance, as a result of which many people were here lobbying their Members of Parliament. I am sure that Conservative Members felt the sharp end of the tongues of many who feel themselves and their families threatened by the Bill.

That process has gone on for several months and doubtless will continue even after the Bill is on the statute book. It is unfortunate that the Government have failed to take account of the widespread views of people, but once they have set their course, they sit back rigidly to fight rather than listening to the arguments put by others.

One of the minor concessions made by the Minister in Committee was his promise of what he called a "tighter form" of words in terms of who will be permitted to fingerprint asylum seekers. The wording is rather loose, with its references to other persons, apart from policemen, immigration officers and prison officers, being permitted by the Home Secretary to take fingerprints. We pressed the Minister strongly on that and, although Government amendment No. 29 clarifies the procedure and goes some way towards restricting those who can become involved, it is not clear what it meant. The amendment states that persons other than those to whom I referred—policemen, immigration officers and prison officers—are officers of the Secretary of State. However, all those people are already officers of the Secretary of State, and it is not clear why the other category is needed. I do not understand why it has to be left so vague. The Minister said in Commitee that he did not imagine that the practice would be applied widely. If that is so, why not restrict it to the three categories which, reasonably, have been included in some detail?

8 pm

Those who framed the 1991 Bill, when the previous Conservative Government were in office, did not seek to drag into the net of fingerprinting the relatives of asylum seekers. Yet this Bill seeks to cast the net considerably wider to ensnare the dependants of asylum seekers.

In Committee, my hon. Friends and I left the Minister in no doubt about the consequences of clause 3. Indeed, we highlighted in considerable detail the effect that it would have on children. I do not propose to go into that detail again because it would seem that we advanced our arguments to little avail. Some sympathy was forthcoming, however, from some Conservative Members in Committee. It is fair to say that some of them participated in debates on the clause. None the less, I regard the Government's concession to be of little value.

My hon. Friends and I argued in Committee that children should be excluded from fingerprinting, and we talked about children of certain ages. The Government's amendment does not represent an attempt to meet our arguments and it is clear that they remain resolute in their aim to exclude no children.

I find little solace in the Minister saying, in effect, that it is not the Government's intention routinely to fingerprint children. Under the Bill, any child who arrives at our shores can be fingerprinted if those who receive the child feel that that is necessary. The door that faces those who arrive in the United Kingdom is open far too wide. Unfortunately, the Minister's undertaking to produce an amendment to meet our fears has not been fulfilled. Government amendment No. 30 provides that children under the age of 16 years who are fingerprinted should be accompanied by someone who is termed to be

"a person of full age who is not an authorised person."

That is a welcome concession, but it does not go far enough. It means that all children will or can be fingerprinted. It goes only part of the way to allaying our fears. Further, it goes only part of the way to meeting the commitment that my colleagues and I believe that the Minister entered into when he responded to the debates on fingerprinting in Committee.

The Government's amendment does not define who the accompanying adult should be. My hon. Friends and I and the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) introduced amendments in Committee which were considerably more detailed and referred exactly to who the accompanying adult should be. Under the Government's definition of who an "authorised person" should be in amendment No. 29, it follows that any adult apart from those referred to who happened to be passing at the time could, in theory, be asked by the officers of the immigration authorities to witness the fingerprinting of a child under the age of 16. The only people excluded are the officers of the Secretary of State. In theory, anyone else could be brought in as a witness.

Surely that is unsatisfactory. That is leaving aside Muslim girls and women who, due to their religion, could become most distressed on being faced with fingerprinting by a man or by being accompanied by a male person. If a child is to be accompanied, and if the provision is to have any meaning, the accompanying adult should be the parent or guardian. It should be a person who the child knows. At the very least, it should be someone who has experience of asylum legislation, of some aspects of social

work care and of the feelings of children in what will be inevitably a distressing situation, quite apart from the actual fingerprinting.

We are disappointed with the Government's response. There must be some assurance that the person accompanying the child will provide some reassurance to the child. It should be someone in whom the child can have some confidence and feel able to turn to in what will be a difficult situation.

In contrast to Government amendment No. 30 there is amendment No. 28, which offers a much more useful definition of the sort of person who should be permitted to accompany a child in these circumstances. It should be made clear that the accompanying person should have some knowledge of child welfare and of asylum procedures. It is made clear in amendment No. 28 who the accompanying adult should be. The amendment is consistent with the views that were expressed by many Opposition Members in Committee. To provide that someone should be an authorised person and not to go any further fails to secure what we regard as the safeguards that are necessary to build confidence in a child. The Home Secretary must make clear why he feels that Government amendment No. 30 is adequate in that context. It would have been far better if children below the age of 16 had been excluded. That has not happened, and that is regrettable.

The impression that has been gained by my colleagues and I is that the Government failed to appreciate the situation that will face children who are fingerprinted. There has been no adequate explanation of why the Bill requires children to be fingerprinted when the previous Bill did not. The Government have failed to give serious thought to the awkward position in which they are placing children.

The Government are over-reacting in believing that it is necessary to go to such lengths. The provisions in clause 3 are distasteful. Our relations with other European countries may lead to certain obligations—in other words, we are seeing an alarming drift. I was not assured by the responses of the Minister in Committee about the exchange of computerised information that may take place on asylum seekers. It will become increasingly difficult for people outwith the European Community to enter any of the EC countries, and that is a matter of great regret. The clause cuts across what has been seen in some senses as a commitment by the United Kingdom to many parts of the developing world, not least those which were part of the Commonwealth.

The amendments highlight the Government's insensitivity to the needs of asylum seekers when they come to the United Kingdom and the Government's failure to grasp their obligations under international conventions. We debated at length in Committee the 1951 convention, which should be taken into account, and the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, which would outlaw the taking of fingerprints if the Government were prepared to be bound by it in relation to the inhumane and cruel treatment that the convention seeks to circumscribe. It is not surprising that the Government have decided not to be so bound, but it is regrettable. We oppose most vigorously the Government's fundamental approach to fingerprinting.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Much was said in Committee—the argument has been advanced again this evening—to the effect that fingerprinting is associated with criminality. But I was fingerprinted when my car was broken into. That was done to ensure that my prints were excluded from any others on the car. When my grandparents' home was the scene of a robbery, they were fingerprinted to exclude them from any possibility of being associated with the prints of those who broke into the house. There are, therefore, aspects of fingerprinting that are good, to which no credence is given by Opposition Members.

When I was in the United States last year I saw many children—they were accompanied by mums or other members of the family—who were lining up voluntarily to have their fingerprintes taken because of the rising problem—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps hon. Members will agree to listen the second time around. They may learn something this time. Children were being fingerprinted because of the rising incidence of child abduction. The fingerprint records mean that such children can be traced at a later date. People thought such fingerprinting to be a good idea. In the culture of the United States—indeed, in our culture too—if someone has his fingerprints taken it does not necessarily mean that he has committed a criminal act, or even that people might think that he had done so.

Mrs. Roche: I have listened to the hon. Gentleman with great interest. Does he think that there is a difference between parents in the United States accompanying their children during fingerprinting as part of a voluntary exercise, and the horror felt by children who are fleeing persecution, civil war or torture and are confronted by figures in authority—however kind or benevolent—who insist on taking their fingerprints?

Mr. Evans: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her remarks. I have tried to show that the act of fingerprinting does not necessarily mean that the person has committed a criminal act. I recognise the trauma of refugees coming to this country, but surely having their fingerprints taken would be one of the least worrying acts that they will have faced during the past four, five or 10 years. People flee from their own countries because of persecution, so having their fingerprints taken in this country would be the least of their concerns.

I believe that the Government's amendment will be beneficial. In Committee many of my hon. Friends made known their concern that someone in uniform might, in certain circumstances, worry some refugees. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has dealt with that specific point and we are grateful to him for that. We have no qualms about his amendment. Opposition Members have blown the fingerprinting issue out of all proportion. Refugees coming to this country will have no cause for concern at having their fingerprints taken.

Mr. Maclennan: It would be ungracious of me not to acknowledge that the Government have moved some way towards fulfilling their undertaking in Committee to introduce an amendment to deal with the problem of children being fingerprinted. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) well described the limits of the Government's concession and properly drew attention to the doubt whether it goes far enough.

In answer to the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans), may I say that one reason why people have focused on the fingerprinting issue is that there is a much

[Mr. Maclennan]

more widespread concern about the treatment of children in general under the Bill. During the Committee stage of this Bill and its predecessor, that concern was manifestly shown on all sides of the House, not least by the hon. Member for Ribble Valley and other Conservative Members. I confess that I had hoped that the Government would recognise the advantage of supporting young children seeking asylum and that they would move some way towards the appointment of an advocate or social worker to look after them during consideration of their asylum applications. I still hope that that matter will be considered in another place.

These amendments inevitably are confined to the issue of fingerprinting. I agree with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central that the way that the Government have drafted their amendment would open the door to inviting almost anyone—perhaps a secretary in the next office who is not technically an officer of the Secretary of State—to witness what was being done. That is not what lay behind the original proposition. We did not want to ensure that the circumstances were regular in a purely legal sense; we wanted to ensure that a young person, who might well be fleeing from the circumstances described by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central, did not view the act of fingerprinting as a sign of hostility by those handling the case.

8.15 pm

A number of questions arise about the fingerprinting of children. The Minister said in Committee that he would consider specifying the locations where fingerprinting could take place. He said:

"It is easier for all concerned if prints can be taken in a variety of suitable locations by trained personnel."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 19 November 1992; c.194.]

There is no amendment on the Order Paper to put that statement into practice. It would be helpful if the Minister said again that that is the intention and that fingerprinting will be done only at a number of properly supervised locations—presumably, ports of entry, the immigration and nationality department, perhaps Home Office public inquiry offices—and that they will be taken only in connection with asylum applications. None of that has been spelt out in the primary legislation. Perhaps it is not important that it is, but it should certainly be clear beyond argument that that is the firm intention and policy of the Home Office.

I prefer the wording of amendment No. 28, which was tabled by myself and hon. Members from both sides of the House, to that of the Government amendment. However, I do not intend to press my amendment over the Government's amendment—at least, not until the Minister has explained why he has chosen such extraordinarily wide language to meet the concerns expressed in Committee and why he did not think it appropriate to ensure that the person who is to accompany a child is supportive in some way, and not merely a witness to the event.

Mr. Corbyn: I endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) and the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). There are serious concerns about the fingerprinting of asylum seekers. The hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) portrayed a picture of lines of happy children in United States' supermarkets queueing up to be fingerprinted, having had the position fully explained to them. That may be true. However, in this country even when children are fingerprinted simply to eliminate them from inquiries—to protect them—they are worried about it. It has to be carefully explained to them why they must be fingerprinted. People allow themselves to be fingerprinted only with the greatest reluctance, even when it is in their own interests. The hon. Gentleman's example is not suitable as support for the case for fingerprinting children seeking political asylum. Most of them do not have English as their first language and they may not even speak it at all. Their only experience of fingerprinting will have been in extremely hostile and dangerous circumstances.

There is also the question why fingerprinting is being done in the first place. In Committee on both this and the original Bill, much concern was expressed about the effects of fingerprinting on children and why it need be done. The Minister's predecessor, the hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd), said:

"Fingerprinting will maintain our system's integrity and help check cases where there is evidence of multiple social security claims . . . that is what it is intended to do."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 28 November 1991; c. 61.]

Those remarks related to the original Bill, which fell because of the onset of the general election.

The new Bill has brought the return of the whole fingerprinting issue. We were told repeatedly in Committee that the purpose of fingerprinting was nothing more than to check against multiple applications for political asylum, yet when introducing the Bill the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) spent a great deal of time explaining that multiple social security applications were the real reason for it. He could not provide details, state their total volume, or confirm the level of fraud. Happily, that individual has gone on to do nothing and is no longer a Government Minister—for which we are all grateful.

When the hon. Member for Fareham made his statement in Committee, I believe that he let the cat out of the bag. While the real purpose of introducing fingerprinting is to check against multiple applications, with the very existence of that fingerprinting bank in the Home Office, what is there to stop the Home Secretary's friend, the Secretary of State for Social Security—after reading exaggerated stories in the *Daily Mail* and other newspapers—deciding that it is necessary to check on social security fraud and to introduce a little Bill giving social security inspectors the right to fingerprint people during the course of their investigations, to eliminate them from inquiries?

The public take their civil liberties and the fingerprinting issue very seriously. I doubt that they accept that the Government amendments go anywhere near meeting the wide range of concerns and opinions expressed on Second Reading and in Committee.

All that has been said in answer to criticisms from the children's legal centre and a number of other organisations concerned with child welfare is that a suitable adult must be present during fingerprinting. Obviously, that is better than no adult or independent person being present—but it would be even better if there were no fingerprinting of children at all.

At no stage has the Home Secretary or his Ministers said what will be the minimum age for the fingerprinting

of children. We asked whether it would be 17, 16, 15, 14, 13, or 12 years of age—right down to children aged two or one, or even babies—but the Government were not prepared to state the lower age limit. Are we to permit the indignity of frightened children arriving in this country as asylum seekers being fingerprinted? That is on the cards.

I remind the House—perhaps the Minister will confirm this—that the fingerprinting provisions are retrospective. Some current asylum applicants arrived in this country three years ago or longer. I know of some applications that remain under consideration after five years. I do not complain about the length of time involved, because some applications require detailed examination and the collection of evidence. However, because of the retrospective nature of the Bill, those applicants—who arrived in this country long before the right hon. and learned Gentleman became Home Secretary—will also have to be fingerprinted.

I hope that the Minister appreciates that we are unhappy about the fingerprinting provision and do not accept that the Government's amendments go anywhere near meeting our objections. First, children should not be fingerprinted. It is wholly inappropriate, disturbing for the children, and unnecessary. The Government have not convinced me or anyone else of the need for fingerprinting other than as part of the process of curtailing individual rights by the creation of a central fingerprinting bank that can be used for other purposes.

Even if we cannot defeat this part of the Bill, I hope that it will be radically amended or defeated when it reaches another place, or will subsequently be ruled inadmissible because the Government are a signatory to other conventions—such as the United Nations convention on the rights of the child—which prohibit them from implementing this particularly nasty undertaking.

Mrs. Roche: My hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) graphically described why the Opposition object so strongly to the Bill's fingerprinting provision. The idea of fingerprinting children is the most abhorrent of all.

I listened with interest to the description by the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) of children being fingerprinted in the United States and of his experience of being fingerprinted in this country so that he could be eliminated from inquiries into a car crime. That was a perfectly natural and understandable use of fingerprinting of a kind that arises every day. There is, however, no way in which the hon. Member for Ribble Valley can equate those harmless instances with the taking of fingerprints of children arriving in this country in a traumatised state.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North said, the Government have not imposed any minimum age on the fingerprinting of children. If the Government win the day and the fingerprinting of children is done in our name, that will bring shame on us all. That is the reason for our series of amendments. I would like no fingerprinting at all, but if that cannot be done, there should be no fingerprinting of children.

Amendment No. 28 has cross-party support, including support from the hon. Members for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith). It seeks to ensure that if fingerprinting is to be undertaken, an appropriate adult—a parent, guardian, advocate or social worker—will be present. In Committee, the difficuties affecting unaccompanied children arriving in the United Kingdom were described. The numbers are relatively small. In 1991, 128 children aged 16 or below applied for asylum on arrival—when they are often traumatised by conflict in their home countries. They may have suffered torture or bereavement.

Local authorities face many difficulties in catering for their needs—not least because it is impossible to predict their arrival, or their linguistic or cultural background. My own borough of Haringey experienced a number of cases of unaccompanied refugee children and I know that my hon. Friends the Members for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) and for Islington, North have had similar experiences of these cases.

Such considerations led to a certain amount of cross-party support for a panel of advocates with statutory responsibilities for befriending children who have been through horrific traumas and for ensuring that they receive appropriate and co-ordinated services. That would apply to children living in the community as well as to those in local authority care and would extend to representing a child's interests in the determination of the process.

Right hon. and hon. Members may have read in the *The Guardian* today a persuasive letter signed by a wide range of children's organisations, including Save the Children Fund, Refugee Council, children's legal centre, Barnardo's and the Association of Directors of Social Services. Many other organisations concerned with children and with refugees also support the proposals.

That letter points out that,

"at the moment, asylum law in the UK makes no distinction between adults and children . . . A small change to the current Asylum Bill would remedy that . . . and would be of great benefit to an extremely vulnerable group of children."

In Committee, amendments were withdrawn because the Government promised to discuss the matter with the Department of Health. Since then, we have heard nothing about the progress of those discussions. I should be grateful if the Home Secretary would tell us how they are progressing; as I am sure he will appreciate, there is a great deal of interest in and support for the proposal on both sides of the House.

It is often said, in the Chamber and elsewhere, that a civilised society should be judged according to the way in which it treats children—not only children who are British citizens, but children who come to this country traumatised, frightened and threatened by what they have seen and experienced elsewhere. That is why our proposal is so important; and that is why it is so invidious even to contemplate fingerprinting children.

8.30 pm

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: At least the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) made it clear at the outset that the main purpose of amendment No. 4—the principal amendment in the group—was to remove the requirement for fingerprinting from the Bill altogether. The hon. Gentleman rightly anticipated that we would resist that proposal: we believe that it would largely destroy the measures that we have put together to combat misuse of the asylum system.

Let me begin by addressing the main question: why we have decided that we must take this power to fingerprint applicants. Our straightforward aim is to establish a system whereby we can identify individual applicants. We need to establish the exact identity of people who present

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

themselves—as people frequently do—with no documents at all, or with forged documents, to guard against multiple applications. Such applications may involve the same person applying in several different identities for the purpose of social security fraud—there is a substantial history of that and we have recently been tackling it—or the same person trying repeatedly, with a different story and in a different guise, to obtain entry.

If we are to establish the fair and proper system of assessing each asylum claim that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and I have described, we must first establish the identity of the applicant. Currently, nearly two thirds of asylum seekers at ports arrive either with no documents or with forged documents. In the second quarter of 1992—the latest period for which I have figures—46 per cent. of applicants had no documents at all, 14 per cent. had forged documents and 1 per cent. had mutilated documents. That represents nearly 300 asylum seekers a month arriving in the United Kingdom whose identities could not be satisfactorily established in any objective way.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) gave examples of why that might be. In our debates on the Bill, he has frequently given dramatic examples of escapes by persecuted people who felt the need to destroy their documents on the way. I acknowledge—as has my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State—that such cases can occur. I feel, however, that it is naive in the extreme to believe that nearly half the people who arrive at our ports seeking asylum have arrived there in the circumstances described by the hon. Gentleman. The fact is that the vast majority do not turn up in a particularly distressed condition, having either destroyed the documents in the course of their journey or handed them back to the agent who arranged their provision so that they can be used by another applicant. Given that, for one reason or another, those people have arrived with no documents, it is surely not unreasonable to provide a straightforward, foolproof way of establishing their identity once they are here.

Let me also remind the hon. Gentleman that a majority of applicants for asylum are already living here. They have entered the country on some other basis and, after they have been here for a while, have applied for asylum. Between one third and 50 per cent. of such applicants now present themselves without documents. The hon. Members for Islington, North and for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) have described traumatised people fleeing persecution. Many more people who come here claiming asylum have destroyed their documents—frequently on advice—simply to throw confusion into the system, believing that that will somehow help them to extend their stay here. We need a method of distinguishing the traumatised people seeking asylum from those who have destroyed their documents as a device to extend the time that dealing with their claim will take, and fingerprinting is the most straightforward method.

Mr. Corbyn: Does not the Home Secretary accept that people destroy documents, or try to hide their identities, because if it is known to the authorities that they have sought asylum in certain countries, their families are liable to be taken into custody and may be imprisoned or badly treated?

Will the Home Secretary also concede that the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987, which he supported, encouraged the use of agents and the spiv culture because of the fines that it imposed on airlines? Is not that Act the main cause of the problem—although it recognised the need for people to use forged documents in the first place?

Mr. Clarke: We never disclose to the country from which an applicant has come that the applicant has made an asylum application, precisely to avoid reprisals in that country. It may be that a small proportion of those who destroy documents—for some reason best known to themselves—fear that somehow the news of their applications will get back to their own country, although I do not know why they should believe that.

Although we cannot specify the exact figures, I think that the cases cited by the hon. Gentleman represent a small minority. We all know that people who come here in the knowledge that they have no grounds for entry according to the rules are frequently advised to destroy their documents on the journey and to leave the aeroplane or port saying that they are asylum seekers in order to cause confusion and delay in this country. We also have considerable experience of multiple applications—by which I mean either the same person seeking asylum in several different identities to substantiate several social security claims, or the same applicant presenting himself with a variety of identities and a variety of stories.

At present, 1,600 cases of multiple application are under investigation. So far, 11 convictions have been obtained for fraud against the Department of Social Security. In one investigation, 15 individuals were found to have used 76 identities and to have obtained overpayment of £80,000 in benefits. The main defendant pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to four years' imprisonment. In another investigation, five individuals were found to have used 19 identities and to have obtained overpayment of £50,000. One individual, with his wife and two children, has been identified as the subject of no fewer than 54 separate files in various identities. I think that that establishes sufficient reason—even on the ground of social security abuse alone—for wanting to establish specific identities.

The Opposition propose no measures to protect against multiple applications. They propose to allow people to present themselves with no identity checks of any validity. Internationalism has become important. Under the Dublin convention, we have agreed that asylum applications will be dealt with by the country to which the first application is made. There is plenty of experience of people presenting themselves to different countries with different identities trying to establish different claims. Our partner countries in the European Community, all of which have the same civilised values as ourselves towards asylum applications under the Geneva convention, are moving towards fingerprinting.

All Community countries, except Ireland, have the power to take fingerprints. France introduced a system of fingerprinting all asylum applicants in January 1990. When France introduced its system it found initially that almost a fifth of the applications involved false identities. When the Dutch introduced a fingerprinting system they found that 10 per cent. of the applications were multiple applications. The Opposition ignore all that. All that they talk about are traumatised people arriving at our ports, terrified of the country from which they come.

We have already established that 19 out of 20 applications in this country turn out not to be well founded when investigations are made. I have now revealed that a fifth of French applications for asylum are made under a false identity and that 10 per cent. of the Dutch applications are multiple applications. What protection do the Opposition urge against that? None whatsoever. They argue that we should not have this protection because the very fact of taking fingerprints is, somehow, criminalising, an argument with which my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) dealt very adequately.

Mr. Allen: Oh, dear. We have just heard the press release that has been drafted for *The Sun* and other newspapers tomorrow. The minuscule percentage of people whom the Secretary of State quoted as defrauding social security have been discovered under a system that does not use fingerprints. The question that I have for the Secretary of State, who is a reasonable man, is this: let him imagine that he is being politically persecuted and is fleeing for his life with his family and that to get out of the country he must obtain forged documents, perhaps from dubious sources, and that other members of his family have perhaps acquired dubious documents. What would the Secretary of State then do on the aeroplane?

Mr. Clarke: In such a case, I believe that under our proposed system we would grant that person political asylum.

Mr. Allen: Would the Secretary of State destroy the documents?

Mr. Clarke: No, I would not. I know that to destroy the documents would be of no earthly assistance in obtaining asylum and would add nothing to my story. I believe that our system identifies those people and that they would be given political asylum. I am sure that occasionally we make mistakes, but the circumstances in which such people are returned to a country where they face persecution are few and far between. I have not encountered one such case during my comparatively brief period as Home Secretary. They are not typical cases. I know that there are campaigns when such cases arise. I well remember the Sri Lankan who was holed up in a Manchester church. Although he was passionately believed in by those who campaigned on his behalf, his case turned out to be total nonsense.

The fact is that 19 out of 20 applications turn out not to fall within the description just given by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North. We have had cases of multiple applications. There have been spectacular frauds of the kind that I have just described. Other countries with the same values as ourselves which have introduced fingerprinting have discovered almost straight away that there have been large numbers of false and multiple applications.

What defence do the Opposition offer against that? None whatsoever. They continue to produce arguments as though 100 per cent. of those arriving here are fleeing from dictatorships and that they are in a traumatised state when they arrive. I remind the hon. Gentleman that three quarters of them have not arrived from anywhere. They are living here when they make the application.

8.45 pm

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): The person to whom my right hon. and learned Friend referred was holed up in a Manchester church with the full authority of the bishop of Manchester and the curate. The curate went back to Sri Lanka with that person and found that there was no problem whatsoever. When he arrived in Sri Lanka the only people who met that person were members of the press—nobody else. He had no difficulties whatsoever.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that, like me, she does not traduce the sincerely held views of those who supported that man at the time. I encountered some of them. They all believed profoundly that they were protecting this man against persecution. What they proved guilty of was naivety in the extreme, a naivety that is frequently repeated by Opposition Members. They have conjured up for themselves this picture of men, women and children arriving here after torture in a traumatised and shocked state. They refuse to take the slightest notice of what we say: that three quarters of those people are already living here and that they said that they were visitors or students before they even made their application. They take not the slightest notice of the evidence we have of multiple applications and fraud, although they concede that there are unpleasant agents who batten on to these people and tell them that they can get them here, if they take advice about how to make an asylum application. They take not the slightest notice of experience in other countries where fingerprinting has been introduced and has exposed multiple applications. They offer no defence against abuse. They present a naive and emotional picture of the applicants and then resist the procedures that we put forward to protect this country against fraud.

It is said that fingerprinting is wrong because it means that people are accused of having committed a criminal offence. It does not mean that, unless that is what they are told. Children in particular will not think that, unless someone has told them so, which encourages them to believe it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley rightly said, there can be few people in this House who have not given fingerprints at some stage in their lives. I have; my hon. Friend has. It depends for what purposes the fingerprints are asked. In this case it is perfectly clear to almost all the applicants that they are not being asked for fingerprints because they are being accused of a criminal offence but that it is in order to establish their identity when they—as the hon. Member for Nottingham, North says, for good reasons—have destroyed every other proof that they might have of who they are and where they come from. A system without any identity check has been proved to be porous in the extreme and not valid.

It is just possible that people will believe that they are being accused of a criminal offence. Therefore, we propose to present each applicant with a written notice explaining that they are not being singled out and that this is a routine fingerprinting test to establish identity and does not involve any allegation of crime. Without there being any serious suggestion as to how else to identify individual applicants and stop them turning up again using another name, or to stop them applying to every other country in Europe for asylum, using a different story, or to stop them making 10 claims so that they can have the benefit of 10 social security benefit entitlements, I believe that our

[Mr. Clarke]

system is the right one to adopt. The Opposition will not face up to the fact that there are such people who bedevil the system for genuine asylum seekers who will benefit, if we get rid of all this nonsense and have a practical system that identifies who they are.

Mr. Madden: What puzzles me and a number of other hon. Members is why the Home Secretary wishes to extend the identification to fingerprinting when his Administration introduced what are called standard acknowledgment letters that include photographs and details of each asylum applicant, including their dependants. That is an adequate safeguard against social security fraud and multiple applications for political asylum. Why is the Home Secretary so enthusiastic about going down the fingerprinting route? I suspect that he gave the game away when he said that this had already been agreed as a general policy throughout the European Community. That I think is the truth. Why on earth does he not admit it?

Mr. Clarke: We are under no Community obligation, if that is what the hon. Gentleman thinks. We are following a practice that other European countries have followed, bar one. It is the only foolproof way of establishing identity. Photographs are not so foolproof. I have just returned from a visit to our entry clearance officers in the Indian subcontinent. I have seen at first hand the way in which applications for entry clearance or visitors' visas are being handled. It is a pity that more people cannot see the process. The criticisms and fears that have been expressed about the way in which applications are handled would be considerably allayed if people could see the professionalism and care with which they are entertained.

I saw cases of multiple applications. I saw a case of a man who undoubtedly was applying under the second identity that he had used in the past two to three years to find a fresh basis for settlement in the United Kingdom. One of the bases with which he was confronted was his photograph. The man in the photograph certainly looked like the same man to me and it looked like the same man to the clearance officer. The man said that it was his brother, thereby seeking to disclaim the close resemblance between the man in the photograph and himself. Subsequent questioning about his relationship with his brother and everything else rapidly revealed that he was talking a lot of nonsense. He was not able to answer the questions in a way which correlated with the answers that his so-called brother had given about the family.

Such cases do occur. A photograph is not an adequate defence. Fingerprints are straightforward and foolproof. It is not the case that the very act of taking fingerprints in all circumstances implies an accusation of crime. That argument is used by Opposition Members, but they do not do themselves credit when they use it.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that most people, certainly my constituents who have read about these matters in the newspapers, would be appalled by cases such as those listed by my right hon. and learned Friend of people who have made multiple applications so that they can defraud social security, which costs the country thousands of pounds? Most people would wholeheartedly welcome the measures being taken by the Government to prevent such fraud from taking place in the future. The Government's measures will have the wholehearted support of the country.

Mr. Clarke: I do. I do not think that the support is confined, as the hon. Member for Nottingham, North always tries to make out, to the redneck reactionaries in the United Kingdom.

Opposition Members pay lip service to the view. Of course, they are against bogus and multiple applications. I doubt whether any Opposition Member would defend somebody who enters the United Kingdom with 15 different identities and makes 15 different social security claims. Opposition Members say all the right things about such applications because they know that the view is held not just by shell-back reactionaries. All sensible members of the public know that we should take steps against multiple applications and social security fraud.

Every time the Government table a proposition to deal with the matter, Opposition Members are against it. They retreat into a Mickey Mouse, make-believe world in which everybody who applies for asylum in the United Kingdom is a traumatised victim of torture who arrives trembling on our shores. In so far as traumatised victims of torture arrive on our shores, we give them political asylum. Opposition Members should face up to the common sense of having a system which protects us against other people.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Clarke: Before I give way I shall emphasise the extent to which the Government have tabled amendments to meet some of the fears expressed, although we think that those fears are exaggerated.

Amendment No. 29 clarifies the classes of person who will be authorised to take the fingerprints of asylum seekers and their dependants. The powers will normally be exercised by civil servants in the asylum division of the Home Office or by immigration officers at ports. In some circumstances it may be necessary for the fingerprints to be taken by a police officer or prison officer. The wording in the amendment,

"officer of the Secretary of State authorised for the purposes of this section"

makes it clear that only Home Office civil servants will be so authorised, occasionally together with police or prison officers.

We do not anticipate having to fingerprint routinely every child. However, there is no particular reason why a child of 16 or younger should not be involved in somebody else's fraud plan. Indeed, children are frequently involved in such plans. It is just as important to establish the identity of children who may otherwise be presented under a variety of different identities. If we simply excluded the fingerprinting of all people under the age of 16, as amendment No. 5 suggests, there would be the danger of deciding the exact age of a child, which could create difficulties in some cases in which there is no documentation. In some cases children will be presented in multiple identities with different fraudulent claims.

We are persuaded that it should normally be necessary for somebody to be present to protect the child if he or she becomes frightened or to give some independent oversight of what is occurring. Hence, we have tabled amendment No. 30 to meet some of the concerns expressed in Committee.

In Committee, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department undertook to consider including in the Bill a requirement for an independent person to be present when a child is fingerprinted. Amendment No. 30 incorporates such a requirement. The amendment is drawn in wider terms than the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland would like and an alternative amendment specifies rather more tightly the adult who should be present when a child is fingerprinted.

I accept that normally the child should be accompanied by the parents or guardian or, when a child is unaccompanied, a local authority social worker or a person from the refugee legal centre or some other suitable voluntary body. If such a requirement is prescribed tightly in the legislation, as the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland would wish, the effect could be that on occasions it will be difficult to give effect to the requirement or it will cause more delay while someone in that category was obtained. A suitable independent volunteer may be required on occasions, outside any tight definition that we could devise. Therefore, we prefer the wording set out in amendment No. 30.

In this debate hon. Members have expressed concern about multiple applications and possible abuse of the system, but those who oppose the Government have not tabled any serious proposals of their own. Fingerprinting is a straightforward way of ensuring that we know the identity of each applicant. The applicant can then have the case fairly and properly considered. No one has any reason to fear adverse consequences as a result of being fingerprinted by our officials in the United Kingdom when they seek asylum. I ask the House to support the amendments that the Government have tabled and to resist amendment No. 4 and the other amendments tabled by Opposition Members.

Mr. Corbyn: With the leave of the House, I would like to say that the Home Secretary has failed to answer two questions. He has failed to say whether the Bill is likely to lead to the extension of the use of fingerprinting to, in his words, deal with social security frauds. All the cases of multiple applications and so on which the Home Secretary has quoted at length have all been discovered without the use of fingerprints. They have been discovered only by the use of photographic evidence which is available at present on the standard acknowledgement form, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) said.

Secondly, the Home Secretary referred in a jocular fashion along with several of his hon. Friends to the case of Viraj Mendis. Many Opposition Members strongly supported his case at the time. He sought asylum in the Church of the Ascension in Manchester.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: You were wrong.

Mr. Corbyn: We were not wrong, with respect to the hon. Lady. We were correct and honest at the time and we remain so.

Mr. Mendis spent 16 years in this country. He was eventually bundled out by the most enormous police phalanx I have ever seen in my life. He was dragged out of a church in the process. He spent a year in Sri Lanka. During that time he had to change his identity every several days. He had to go from hiding place to hiding place. His mother's house was surrounded by—*[Interruption.]* I do not know why the Under-Secretary finds this so amusing. Mr. Mendis' mother's house was surrounded by jeeploads of armed police asking for him and looking for him. He managed to escape and change his identity yet again. He sought another place of safety and sanctuary in another part of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Mendis spent a year of absolute nightmare. The reason why he survived the death squads in Sri Lanka was that he had international support and friends in Sri Lanka. Six people went from Britain specifically to look after him in Sri Lanka during that year. If he was not in any danger whatever, why were so many people and organisations in Britain and in Europe so prepared to support his case? He has now been given permission to live in Germany. Yet he was refused asylum by the British Government.

The Minister should be ashamed of himself. If he thinks that it was correct to deport Viraj Mendis from Britain, perhaps he will have the courtesy to read the information that Viraj Mendis has provided of his experiences during that year in Sri Lanka.

9 pm

Mr. Bernie Grant: The Home Secretary has not answered the points that have been raised by Opposition Members. He stated that in any event three quarters of applications for asylum are from people who are already in Britain as either visitors or students. If that is the case, presumably their identities have been established because they are living in Britain and attending colleges and so on. They are here legally. I do not understand how the Home Secretary can give that reason to support his case.

If the Home Secretary now believes that photographic evidence is not enough to support a case, whether for asylum or anything else, is he saying that people who provide photographic evidence to entry clearance officers to enter Britain as visitors or to settle will be required to be fingerprinted? That is obviously the import of what he says. I wish that the Home Secretary would answer that point. If photographic or other evidence is not sufficient to support the case of an asylum seeker, why should it be sufficient to support a case for settlement or to visit Britain?

Mr. Clarke: Photographic evidence in itself is not always conclusive. I am not sure what photographic evidence we are talking about. Obviously, a photograph is one proof of identity, but if one has a database, it is extremely difficult to check every photograph to discover multiple applications. The entry clearance officers in Delhi whom I visited had turned up this chap's previous application. However, it is not always easy to do so. If one is lucky, sometimes it is possible to do so.

It is the intention that eventually all applicants for asylum will have given their fingerprints so that we have a quick and foolproof way of establishing their identity. Any future applications by that individual will be dealt with in the light of the previous application. I see nothing wrong with that. As we all know, fingerprints are a foolproof way of establishing identity. It merely means that every applicant will apply only once. Whatever name applicants choose to give, we shall have some previous record of the basis on which they applied before.

A tremendous amount of froth has been worked up about fingerprinting by Opposition Members, but they are silent about how we should protect against multiple applications, which plainly take place on quite a scale. In

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the absence of any explanation of what the Opposition would do, I invite the House to reject their various proposals.

Amendment negatived.

Amendments made: No. 29, in page 1, line 21, leave out from beginning to 'may' in line 22 and insert

"an 'authorised person', that is to say, an immigration officer, constable, prison officer or officer of the Secretary of State authorised for the purposes of this section".

No. 30, in page 2, line 3, at end insert

"but in the exercise of the power conferred by paragraph (a) of that subsection, fingerprints shall not be taken from a person under the age of sixteen except in the presence of a person of full age who is not an authorised person".

No. 31, in page 2, line 44, after 'section', insert '(a)'.

No. 32, in page 2, line 45, at end add 'and

(b) "dependant", in relation to the claimant, means a person—

(i) who is his spouse or a child of his under the age of eighteen; and

(ii) who has neither a right of abode in the United Kingdom nor indefinite leave under the 1971 Act to enter or remain in the United Kingdom'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Clause 4

HOUSING OF ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND THEIR DEPENDANTS

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 3, line 42, at end insert—

'(6) "Dependant" in this section or section 5 does not include a person who has leave to be in the United Kingdom other than as an asylum seeker or a person who has been granted political asylum, or who is a United Kingdom citizen.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 33.

Mr. Gerrard: The amendment deals with the housing clauses and in particular the definition of who is a dependant of an asylum seeker. The housing clauses refer to not only asylum seekers but their dependants. I welcome the Government amendment which is similar to my amendment but I suggest that its scope is not as wide as that of my amendment. I shall return to that later.

It is important to clarify exactly who is to be treated as a dependant as such people will fall within the scope of the Bill. While it may be a minor point in terms of the scope of the Bill and it is certainly minor in terms of clauses 4 and 5, it is something that we need to clarify.

We still object in principle to clauses 4 and 5, which deal with housing and we believe that it is wrong to single out one group of people for inferior status and treatment when they apply for local authority housing. Harsher criteria will be applied to determining their applications. They will be eligible only for temporary housing and, once their asylum status is determined, they will have to reapply and be reassessed, which does not apply to other applicants. We argue that that is unnecessary and that it is based on, at best, a misunderstanding of the way in which the homelessness legislation works.

At the moment people have to overcome three hurdles and must prove: first that they are homeless; secondly that they are in priority need; and thirdly that they are not intentionally homeless. The latter is particularly relevant to someone who comes to a local authority from another area.

As it stands, the legislation will deal with intentional homelessness. I believe, and I think that my hon. Friends would agree, that the housing provisions are based on the myth that homeless people, and asylum seekers and their dependants, are responsible for the present housing and homelessness crisis. However, that crisis is entirely due to lack of investment. Although resources may be short, at least local authorities are operating a system which does not discriminate against one type of applicant.

Local authorities should not have any part in asylum control and, inevitably, if they are drawn into it, people who apply as homeless at the housing department will be treated differently if their name is not English or if their face is black. Those people will be asked to produce passports and to prove that they are eligible for rehousing because they are homeless.

The removal of the reference to dependants will at least remove some people from the group that will receive inferior treatment. As the Bill is worded, it applies equally to asylum seekers or to anyone who is classed as a dependant of an asylum seeker. People who have permanent right of residence in this country may become dependants of asylum seekers. For example, it is conceivable that someone might marry an asylum seeker and thus become a dependant—they would certainly then be regarded as such by the Department of Social Security. The Government accept that asylum seekers may have been in this country legitimately for some years before applying for asylum and so it is feasible that that could happen. As the Bill is worded, anyone who becomes a dependant of an asylum seeker will lose his rights and we must safeguard against that.

Perhaps the Minister could clarify the point of Government amendment No. 33 and the differences between it and amendment No. 7. The Government amendment applies only to people who have neither a right of abode nor indefinite leave under the Immigration Act 1971 to enter or to remain in the United Kingdom. As a result, someone who might well have been in the country for some years and have been given exceptional leave to remain by the Government—exceptional leave which could be renewed in due course and which would often become indefinite leave—will not be covered by the Bill.

They may still be treated as a dependant even though they have been in the country for a number of years and have leave to remain. Amendment No. 33 is narrower than amendment No. 7, which seeks to limit the effects of the clause to deal with asylum seekers only.

Ideally, we should like the clauses relating to housing removed altogether, but at the very least it is important that people who have rights of residence—people who have had rights to housing—should not lose them simply because they become the dependant of an asylum seeker.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I should like to deal first with amendment No. 33 because that is the one on which the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) sought clarification. That amendment defines "dependant" of an asylum seeker for the purpose of the housing provisions of the Bill in the same way as amendment No. 32 defined "dependant" for the purposes of fingerprinting powers—

that is as a spouse or child under 18 who does not have the right of abode or indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom.

Amendment No. 7, which relates only to the housing provisions of the Bill, like amendment No. 33, would exclude from the definition of dependant anyone who had a limited leave, as well as those who have indefinite leave. In response to the question posed by the hon. Gentleman, the exclusion relating to those with limited leave would avoid the situation that could arise if, for example, a woman obtained leave to enter as a visitor and her husband then arrived to claim asylum. It is right that a person in that position should be treated as a dependant.

For those reasons I urge the House to support amendment No. 33 but to reject amendment No. 7.

Amendment negatived.

Amendment made: No. 33, in clause 5, page 4, line 18, at end insert—

'( ) In relation to an asylum-seeker, "dependant" means a person—

(a) who is his spouse or a child of his under the age of eighteen; and

(b) who has neither a right of abode in the United Kingdom nor indefinite leave under the 1971 Act to enter or remain in the United Kingdom.'.—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Clause 6

CURTAILMENT OF LEAVE TO ENTER OR REMAIN

Mr. Charles Wardle: I beg to move amendment No. 34, in page 5, line 7, leave out 'rejected' and insert 'given to the person notice in writing of his rejection of'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: Government amendment No. 35, amendment No. 8, in page 5, line 8, after 'person', insert 'at the same time as the notice of refusal'.

Amendment No. 9, in page 5, line 23, after 'order', insert 'only if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the applicant will not comply with restrictions placed on him to report to an immigration officer at an appointed time;'.

Amendment No. 10, in page 5, line 26, at end insert—

'(5) Any decision to detain and the grounds therefor must be given to the person detained, in writing in a language which he understands.'.

Mr. Wardle: The amendments require that if the power to curtail a leave under clause 6 is exercised, the notice of curtailment must be served at the same time as the notice refusing the asylum application. I am pleased to repeat the assurance that I gave to the Committee that curtailment of leave will not automatically follow refusal of an asylum claim. Each case will be considered on its merits.

The key question will be whether the asylum application has raised doubts about the continuing entitlement of the person to stay in this country under the immigration rules. When it is decided at the time the asylum claim is determined that a person no longer qualifies to remain here the intention has always been that the notices should be served simultaneously: the person would be notified of the refusal of his claim, the curtailment of his leave, and the decision to make a deportation order against him. He would then be entitled to appeal to a special adjudicator against the deportation decision. Where the decision is not taken at the time the asylum application is refused, we accept that it would be wrong to leave the person uncertain as to his status in this country: for example, it would be unfair to leave a student pursuing long-term studies in suspense as to whether his leave was to be curtailed at some later date. Clarification was sought in Committee about that and I am happy to give it. Amendments Nos. 34 and 35 therefore make clear the way in which the powers should be operated and I commend them to the House.

Amendment No. 9 would provide that a person could be detained only if there were reasonable grounds for assuming he would not comply with other restrictions requiring him to report to an immigration officer. This is already our practice when considering detention in immigration cases generally. It will continue to be so under the specific power in clause 6. We will exercise the power to detain only if we do not think that the person would keep in touch; and that a failure to detain would frustrate our intention to enforce departure.

Detention is not undertaken lightly. As well as having an obvious impact on the individual concerned, it is also costly and it is generally undesirable for the Department to tie up limited detention accommodation unnecessarily. However, it must remain an option for those—relatively few—cases where we have reason to believe that an applicant will not co-operate or comply with other restrictions that might be placed on him.

9.15 pm

Amendment No. 10 provides that a person who is to be detained should be supplied with the reasons in writing and in a language that he understands. Few would disagree with the view that applicants should be informed about the processes affecting them, particularly where a matter as serious as detention is concerned. However, I am not convinced that such a requirement needs to be placed on the face of the Bill.

Applicants who are to be detained will be notified in person by the detaining immigration officer in a language that they can understand and via an interpreter if necessary. We are considering what written information should be given to detainees to reflect the procedures that will affect them.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister amplify the question of the translation of information to be given to people being interviewed? The trained officers often have no access to a sufficient number of interpreters who can translate into the appropriate languages. When one asks for more unusual dialects or languages, the Home Office is unable to assist. What progress has been made in that matter? During the last round of Home Office questions, the Minister promised progress.

Mr. Wardle: That point will arise under a later set of amendments. I remind the hon. Gentleman that we are now discussing information on the intention to detain. That will be available in a limited number of languages. It is impracticable to expect notices to be available in every conceivable language, but every attempt will be made to explain what is happening to individuals concerned in those relatively few cases. When we discuss amendments Nos. 22, 26 and 27, I shall be pleased to comment a little further on the question of interpreters if the hon. Gentleman presses me.

I think that further written information is available in about 10 languages in the immigration detention accommodation and staff are available to deal with detainees' inquiries.

[Mr. Wardle]

For those reasons, I urge the House to support amendments Nos. 34 and 35 and to reject the other amendments grouped with them.

Mr. Fraser: The Government amendments have met the point that I raised in amendment No. 8. Although they have not amended the Bill, the Minister has given assurances, so we shall not take the matter further. As we cannot vote against the clause, may I say that we are deeply concerned about the principle of curtailment of leave because it can discourage an application for political asylum. It is particularly severe when a student who may be doing a three-year degree course is considering whether to make an application, because the effect of applying for asylum if conditions change in the student's home country may lead not only to a refusal but to the student being returned to the country from which he appealed for safety. However, I made that point in Committee and we do not wish to divide on the matter.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 35, in page 5, line 8, after 'person', insert

'concurrently with the notice under paragraph (b) above'—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Clause 7

Appeals to special adjudicator

Mr. Fraser: I beg to move amendment No. 11, in page 5, line 30, leave out 'in consequence of the refusal.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take amendment No. 12, in page 5, line 47, at end insert—

'( ) Nothing in section 15(5) of the 1971 Act shall be taken to prevent a person appealing against a refusal to revoke a deportation order under the preceding subsection where that person remains in the United Kingdom.'.

Mr. Fraser: The amendment may seem to make a trivial point, but we propose to leave out the words

"in consequence of the refusal"

because the appeal should be based on whatever grounds are available rather than simply on the consequence of the approval. I cannot understand why it is necessary for those words to appear in the Bill as they seem to restrict the right to appeal. The Minister may have an explanation. If he assures us that they do not inhibit the appeal, then so be it.

Amendment No. 12 was raised in Committee. As the Minister knows, section 15 of the Immigration Act 1971 prevents an appeal against a revocation of a deportation order while the appellant is in the United Kingdom. The Minister promised to ensure that the law was amended so that, if the application for revocation of the deportation order could be made to raise a political asylum matter under the convention, section 15 of the 1971 Act would not prevent that application from being made. Unless it was intended for the issue to be covered by Government new clause 6, it is still not clear to us how an application for revocation can be made while a person remains in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Amendment No. 11 is unnecessary since removal is only at issue following a refusal. The wording of the current draft thus accurately and clearly reflects the appeal rights of a person who has been refused leave to enter.

Amendment No. 12 appears to reflect misunderstanding about the way in which the new rights of appeal against a deportation decision for asylum seekers will work. I am grateful for the opportunity to clarify the issues raised by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser).

Clause 7(3) confers a right of appeal against a decision to make a deportation order under section 3(5) of the 1971 Act. It also confers a right of appeal against a refusal to revoke a deportation order which has already been made, either under section 3(5) or, on the recommendation of a court, under section 3(6). Unlike the equivalent provision in the 1971 Act, there is no requirement in the Bill that an appeal against a refusal to revoke a deportation order should be made from abroad. The only restriction is that a person may not bring an appeal against a refusal to revoke a deportation order if he has already appealed under clause 7 against the decision to make the order.

Amendment No. 12 seeks to provide that nothing in section 15(5) of the 1971 Act shall prevent an appeal under clause 7 against a refusal to revoke a deportation order being made while the person is still in this country. But the key words of section 15(5) are:

"A person shall not be entitled to appeal under this section against a refusal to revoke a deportation order so long as he is in the United Kingdom".

The restriction clearly applies only to appeals under section 15 of the 1971 Act, not to appeals under clause 7 of the Bill.

Therefore, I trust that, on reflection, the hon. Member for Norwood will accept that both amendments are unnecessary, and I urge the House to reject them.

Mr. Fraser: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 8

Appeals from Immigration Appeal Tribunal

Amendment proposed: No. 13, in page 6, line 22, after 'law' insert 'or fact'.—*[Mr. Allen.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 14, in page 6, leave out lines 23 to 25.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I am sorry for my delay, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the hours have been dragging on and I get the strong impression from the helpful hint of the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) that I may deal with the amendments fairly swiftly.

Both amendments seek to widen the scope of clause 8. In respect of amendment No. 13, the final tier of appeal in immigration and asylum matters from the immigration appeal tribunal to the Court of Appeal is intended only for the resolution of questions of law. Questions of fact should already have been resolved by the appeal structure leading up to this tribunal. Asylum claims are initially decided on behalf of the Secretary of State by officers of the asylum division. Appeals against the initial decisions can be made on questions of either fact or law to a special adjudicator. Provision is made for appeals, with leave, from the special adjudicator's determination to the tribunal on questions of either fact or law. As a matter of general practice, the Court of Appeal does not usually interfere with a

tribunal's findings of fact, particularly where such findings turn on which witnesses are to be believed or the weight to be attached to particular evidence. I can see no reason to make an exception to this practice in the situation covered by clause 8.

With regard to amendment No. 14, a leave requirement is routinely provided for in the case of appeals to the Court of Appeal from courts, such as the county courts, and tribunals, such as the employment appeal tribunal. I can see no reason why a special exception should be made in the present case. In addition, the absence of a leave requirement would be likely to result in an unacceptably large number of unmeritorious appeals having to be heard by the Court of Appeal, thereby causing significant delays in those courts and consequent hardship for litigants.

For those reasons, I urge the House to reject the amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 9

VISITORS, SHORT-TERM AND PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS AND THEIR DEPENDANTS

Mr. Allen: I beg to move amendment No. 15, in page 6, line 36, leave out from line 36 to line 5 on page 7.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 16, in clause 10, page 7, leave out lines 6 to 33, and Government amendments Nos. 36 to 39.

Mr. Allen: It is hard to choose the most obnoxious clause in this Bill, but I suppose that this one would get my vote. In its previous incarnation this Bill was known as the Asylum Bill; it has now turned into the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill. Why "Immigration"? My colleagues and I do not believe that immigration matters have any place in an asylum Bill. If the Government were serious about helping people whose desperate plight we outlined so vividly in Committee, they would have introduced measures that related only to political asylum. The Government threw in immigration only in order to make what they see as political capital out of the Bill. This looks more like a ploy to assist the Secretary of State's campaign for the leadership of the Conservative party than a conscious effort to help people seeking political asylum or wanting to visit relatives and friends in this country.

This deliberate confusion is a smokescreen to sell the idea which the Secretary of State tried to sell in his wild contribution on fingerprinting—that asylum seeking is somehow linked to the mass immigration policies pursued 30 years ago. He tried to raise the spectre of mass immigration. That pre-election scare is also part of the new ideology which the Secretary of State is using to improve his image with the right wing of the Conservative party.

What worries me most about the Secretary of State's cavalier attitude to civil liberties, in fingerprinting and other matters, is that certain fundamental principles which have long been part of British law are being undermined because there is seen to be political advantage in that. I am thinking particularly of the principle of natural justice. In almost every other walk of life there is a right of appeal. Even a convicted murderer has a right of appeal. A social security claimant who believes that his claim has been wrongly assessed has such a right. For all systems of administration this right offers the possibility of redress when a decision has been wrongly taken. This basic tenet of natural justice has survived intact for several hundred years—until the advent of this Government.

It is a dangerous step to throw away such a principle of natural justice. Today, the right of appeal for people refused applications for visitors visas is being dispensed with. What group will be the next to lose their right of appeal? Let us not forget that this is not a little-used appeal system. Only last year, 1,700 successful appeals were heard from the Indian sub-continent. If a similar number are unjustly refused next year, however, they will not have the chance to put the matter right by appeal because their right to do so will have been abolished. It is argued that many more might have lodged successful appeals had they wished to pursue them.

As the Secretary of State pointed out, in his usual callous manner, at the press conference that launched this Bill, there is no point in giving these people the right of appeal as many of them have now lost their reason for coming to this country because of delays. He took an almost perverse pride in the fact that the weddings, funerals, christenings or religious ceremonies which had provided the original reasons for coming had now taken place—so why give these people the right of appeal? That was the Minister's attitude when he should have been admitting that officers in his charge continually make wrong judgments that require to be put right on appeal. He almost took pride in saying that there was no need for appeals.

9.30 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) hit the nail on the head when he spoke about the European dimension. In the harmonisation process, Britain seeks to become the lowest common denominator in the Community. Britain still retains a right of appeal which does not exist in many other countries. In seeking the abolition of the right to have a visitor's visa refusal heard again the Secretary of State is lowering to European level one of the few areas of immigration law in which Britain can take some pride.

Thousands of unjustified refusals are being brought to light and corrected by the appeals system and only Conservatives would think that the answer is to abolish the appeals system rather than to find out why so many appeals go wrong and why so many unjust decisions are taken in the first place. There is a 20 per cent. failure rate by the civil servants. What an outcry there would be if one in five income tax assessments and one in five social security applications were wrong. The right of appeal has brought the problem to light, and rather than abolishing appeals the Secretary of State should find out why the system allows so many wrong decisions to be made in the first place.

We shall later discuss the better training and supervision that is required for officials who take the decisions. Once again it is a question of openness versus secrecy and the way that the Government have pushed the Bill through Committee. When the Trevi group was meeting in the Queen Elizabeth conference centre the Committee was in session. The Committee was not informed about what was going on until we demanded papers from the Trevi meeting. It was almost as if the Trevi group had a life of its own and did not need to worry about what Parliament was deciding.

An example of that is the way in which immigration officers are virtually immune from having their responsibilities scrutinised in this place. Despite my best efforts and those of my hon. Friends, the immigration officers' training manual is not open to public view. On the day that we were debating that and the Trevi group were meeting we were told that there would be a European manual on immigration officers' practice and that it would be publicly available. However, the British manual is not to be seen.

There is no rational justification for removal of the right of appeal against an administrative decision. It will give unfettered powers to civil servants and immigration officials and can only lead to worse decisions since they will not be subject to review by an independent authority. That is exemplified by experience. When the courts decided in 1976 that there was no right of appeal against a refusal to vary leave if the application was made late, more late applications were refused. When the Immigration Act 1988 removed the right of appeal on the merits of people threatened with deportation who had been in the United Kingdom for less than seven years, the number of deportation decisions shot up from 863 in 1987 to 3,440 in 1991. The removal of the right of appeal can therefore be expected to lead to a rise in the number of refusals.

Many refused visitors do not appeal and, of those who do, many more do not pursue their case after the initial anger and humiliation and the need to understand have faded. That makes it clear that the number of people who win such appeals is only a small percentage of those refused wrongly and unjustly. Many more would have been successful had they pursued their case or kept in touch with their representatives and provided documents and information as necessary. There is room for reform of the immigration appeals system to ensure that all cases are heard and decisions are reached more speedily, but this should not be at the expense of justice.

The Home Office reacted to the widespread criticism of this part of the Bill—in Committee and elsewhere—by issuing a press release on 8 December 1992 when the Minister made his response to the Committee. I will not delay the House by describing the pantomime in Committee, when the Minister as the dame was dragged, feigning reluctance, to announce one or two supposed concessions. As I hope to demonstrate, the concessions amounted to nothing.

The Government's response does not meet the main concerns about the loss of the right of appeal. The main proposal is that refused visitors should receive a far more detailed refusal notice, setting out the reasons why a visa had been refused. This might help to explain the thought processes of the entry clearance officer dealing with the case, but may also be intended to pre-empt any application for judicial review of decisions—the only method of challenge remaining open. It was interesting to hear Lord Justice Taylor's remark, in the Dimbleby lecture, that if the due process is not gone through one will necessarily end up with more and more judicial reviews. If the intention is to speed up the process, the exact opposite may occur.

The press release also stated that a previous refusal would not prejudice any subsequent applications. This should be a matter of course. Every application should be considered on its own merits, but it is known that this is not the case. The standard entry application form asks, in question 19:

"Have you ever been refused a visa or entry clearance at a UK diplomatic mission or Post?"

It then asks people to complete an additional form if they have been refused. It is clear that the purpose of the question is to enable the entry clearance officer to find any previous papers about the earlier application and to compare them with the present one. It is not unknown for people to be asked whether anything has changed since the previous application and, if they say that it has not, for the application to be refused.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Does my hon. Friend agree that the so-called concession that the Under-Secretary announced in Committee, and to which my hon. Friend referred, is only what is happening at the moment? Any constituent can go to his Member of Parliament, who writes to the Foreign Office and gets a detailed response. There is nothing new here.

Mr. Allen: A number of practices set out by the Minister in his press release are already standard. Equally, one does not need an asylum Bill to make the amendments that the Minister announced in Committee. If he wishes to make those amendments, they can be done easily, and with the agreement of many hon. Members on both sides of the House, provided that they are not a substitute for the right of appeal, which is the backdrop for all these matters.

The press release issued by the Minister also sets out the other courses of action that are open to would-be visitors, and my hon. Friends have referred to them. The Home Office also states that the Foreign Office will revise its information leaflets for visitors and will consider a leaflet for sponsors. At present the leaflets are produced only in English and do not explain the pitfalls of immigration rules. It is our view that any leaflet produced should be translated into appropriate languages and should be accessible. They should be widely available, and not only on request, at British posts.

Most seriously, the Home Office press release is exclusively about visitors and visas. It does not mention the other forms of entry clearance, entry certificates, letters of consent, refusals at ports of entry of people who do not require visas or students or prospective students.

The Minister said in Committee that he meant to include all forms of entry clearance, but he said nothing about people who do not require prior entry clearance who are refused at a British port or airport. If the statements in the leaflets do not apply to port refusals, they amount to a further attempt to introduce a universal visa requirement through the back door. If they do not apply to students, there is no justification for this further discrimination against them. It is important that the Home Office provides further clarification.

The clause will hit hard British families—black British families, Asian British families and other British families whose only crime will be the wish to see relatives—parents and grandparents, for example—on occasions such as holidays, religious ceremonies, marriages, christenings and funerals. It is one of the worst parts of an extremely poor Bill and the Opposition will divide the House when the Question is put on the amendment to ensure that the clause is thrown out of the Bill. If that is not done in this place, we hope that the clause will be seriously revised, if not thrown out completely, in the other place.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Many hon. Members on both sides of the House have a

substantial Asian or Commonwealth community residing in their constituencies. Much resentment has been expressed to me—I am sure that this has been the experience of many other Members with such a community—about the clause. It is difficult to understand why it is in the Bill. Such a clause was not in the 1991 Bill. Goodness knows what considerations led the Minister to decide to include it in this measure.

The Minister has not taken aboard sufficiently the fact that settled in our country are hundreds of thousands of people from new Commonwealth countries who are here legitimately. Visitors from those countries have to obtain a visa to come here, and that puts them apart—in a sense it discriminates against them—from others who come to the United Kingdom who are not required to surmount the same hurdles. I talk, of course, of visitors from visa countries and their families who are in this country.

Taking account of that, is it not extraordinary that given the number of appeals—it is not huge in relation to the number of appeals generally that remain outstanding within the system—the Minister should ask the House to remove entirely the right of appeal for visitors who have been refused a visa and entry to the United Kingdom?

I take the view that officials are nothing other than people who are trying to do their best in administering our laws. I am not mounting an attack on entry certificate officers, but obviously they are not infallible. Mistakes are made occasionally, and they are duly recorded, as is the number of successful appeals. As my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) said when addressing the House from the Opposition Front Bench, about 1,500 successful appeals were made last year. I think that that is the Minister's own figure. Are we saying that we are not interested in 1,500 examples of injustice that would otherwise be allowed to stand?

Is it not the fact that the availability of appeal is an important element in the decision making of entry certificate officers generally? It is only a back-up power, as it were, but to some extent it enables there to be surveillance of their decision making. It is an important factor in the decisions that they make.

9.45 pm

The Government have made a grave error and I shall explain why. First, I want to emphasise the number of people from visa countries who want to come here simply as visitors for family reasons. Surely families, especially grandparents, have the right to see their children and their children's children. Unlike those of us who have our families of all generations with us in Britain, those families are separated not by 50, 100 or even 300 miles, but by thousands of miles. It requires great effort simply to get to this country. The Minister knows the considerable cost of air fares. For the most part they are poor families—and, quite frankly, their families in this country are often among the lowest paid workers. Those families already have to overcome many obstacles.

There is another point of which I do not think the Minister has taken any account. However, I assure him that it is well understood and resented in our settled immigrant communities. I am referring to the fact that the Minister is actually imposing a double discrimination system—the visa system and the abolition of the right of appeal—at the very moment when the Single European Act has come into force and 300 million Europeans can come to this country at will. They are not required to prove that they will not be a burden on public funds or that there is adequate housing and accommodation for them. They do not have to show that they will stay here for only six months—they can stay here for six years. That is what the Government have granted to 300 million Europeans, very few of whom have the human and family contacts with people in this country that is enjoyed by many of our constituents whose parents and grandparents come from the Indian sub-continent and some of the African Commonwealth nations.

That policy is discrimination. It is granting truly extraordinary rights to millions of Europeans who do not have close family connections with this country, while erecting a new barrier, by abolishing the right of appeal, against the millions of people who have family connections with people who are settled here. The Minister has made an appalling error and I ask him to think carefully about what has been said. The matter was thoroughly turned over in Committee, when the arguments were put very powerfully. I ask him to think about the effect of such a double discrimination on the sentiments and thinking of hundreds and thousands of people in this country who believe—or at least hope—that all political parties are determined to rule and administer our laws in a way that is equitable to all.

Mr. Madden: There is a common view that the clause represents a new and sinister dimension to the Bill that goes well beyond the provisions of the previous Bill. When news of the clause swept through our black and Asian communities there was panic among the Conservative Members who represent some of them. Soon after the Bill had been published and been given its Second Reading, there were newspaper reports that Conservative Members were concerned about the abolition of the right of appeal for those refused a visitor's visa. The reports suggested that those Conservative Members had warned the Government that they could not be certain of their support in the Lobby tonight during Report stage and Third Reading.

We were told that Members of Parliament, including the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller)—I am pleased to see him in his place—the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) and eight other Conservative Members were so concerned about the matter that they would not automatically support the Bill.

In Committee, the wriggling and squirming of the hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) was a spectacle to behold on almost every occasion that the Committee sat. There were all sorts of gossiping and chats about how the hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth and other Conservative Members could be got off the hook on which the Minister and the Home Secretary had put them. There were meetings at the Home Office between those worried Conservative Members and the Minister.

Lo and behold, the day came—and on 8 December, in Committee, the Minister was able to read from a prepared press release that a number of concessions were to be made, which would meet the concerns and worries of the Conservative Members in question—it would be all right, lads and lasses, because they could all vote for clause 9 tonight with a clear conscience.

As you have already heard, Madam Speaker, those concessions do not amount to a row of beans. In reality, if clause 9 becomes law, large numbers of people refused a visit visa will have no remedy. They will be able to write to,

[Mr. Madden]

or otherwise contact through their sponsors, Members of Parliament—including those worried Conservative Members who had doubts about clause 9 in the first place. We will then be able to write to a Foreign Office Minister responsible for visit visa administration, urging that a person refused permission to visit relatives, to attend a family wedding or funeral, or to visit for some other legitimate purpose should be allowed to do so. No doubt we will receive the same kind of letter that we already receive, expressing regret but saying that there is nothing that the Minister can do and that the applicant will just have to lump it.

At present, such people have a right of appeal—and we heard that a large proportion of those who appeal are successful. That right is of central importance, and it is extremely worrying that the Government are proposing to abolish it—which is triggering in the minds of many black or Asian people in particular concern over further action and whether other rights of appeal might be abolished.

I wonder how many other hon. and right hon. Members shared my concern when I saw tonight the gleam in the eye of the Home Secretary when he was saying how unsatisfactory are photographs as a means of identification. How much longer before a fiancé applying to enter this country to be married, or a spouse seeking to join his or her partner in this country, will have to be fingerprinted before applying? How much longer will it be before settlement refusals will no longer be capable of being appealed against?

In Committee, the Minister failed miserably to justify clause 9. He said:

"With a backlog of 23,000 appeals awaiting hearings by adjudicators, it must be recognised that the system is not delivering a fair, effective and timely remedy either to would-be visitors or to those seeking to settle here. It is necessary to concentrate resources on those cases which vitally affect a person's future. We do not undervalue the importance to many people born or settled here of visits by relatives. We recognise that what we need is to develop measures to ensure that the small proportion of would-be visitors who at present succeed in their appeals are not disadvantaged."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 8 December 1991; c. 649.]

What disingenuous gobbledegook is that?

The Minister was arguing that the inefficiencies of the appellate system, which have created a backlog of 23,000 cases, is the justification for abolishing a longstanding right of appeal.

Mr. Bernie Grant: My hon. Friend speaks of justification. Is he aware that the right of appeal for visitors came about as a result of an initiative by the Wilson Government, and that a commission was set up specifically to examine the way in which new Commonwealth citizens were being treated at our ports of entry? Is it not strange that it takes a commission to establish a right of appeal, and that this Government can destroy that right of appeal at a stroke without even having the courtesy to justify their wish to get rid of it?

Mr. Madden: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. No doubt that is why the director of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, writing to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 5 January, said:

"We must convey the now widespread belief that there can be no rational justification for this proposal"—

that is, clause 9.

"Removal of a right of appeal against an administrative decision, thus giving unfettered power to a civil servant or immigration official, can only lead to more careless decision-making since the officials know that their decisions will not be reviewed by any independent authority."

Mr. Moraes continued:

"You will already know from the statistics that this removal of an appeal right will disproportionately affect black British people and those settled here, as people from black and third world countries have a much higher chance of refusal."

In the new spirit espoused by the Minister in Committee in November, I deliberately delayed writing to him until 17 December about a constituent of mine whose 63-year-old mother wished to come here for medical treatment that she had been advised urgently to undertake when she last visited the country in 1990. She wished to come accompanied by her daughter. Her son, who has lived here for five years, had arranged for private medical treatment to be provided in Bradford; he was already prepared to pay the £2,500 that was required. As a home owner in full-time employment, he was perfectly willing to accommodate his mother and sister during their stay.

I was surprised to receive, on 31 December, a reply from a Foreign Office Minister, who informed me that he, rather than the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Home Department, was responsible for such matters. An official in the migration and visa correspondence unit told me:

"Because of the break in diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Iraq and the closure of the Embassy in Baghdad, Mrs. A and Miss A have no alternative but to apply for entry clearance at one of our visa-issuing posts outside Iraq. I enclose a list of our visa-issuing posts in Europe which have a waiting time of two weeks or less for non-resident applicants, which I hope your constituent will find helpful. I suggest that Mrs. A and her daughter first telephone or write to the post they choose in order to answer any preliminary enquiries and to book an appointment for a personal interview, which is an essential part of the entry clearance procedure. This will save time and avoid the risk of a wasted journey."

That came as very bad news to my constituent, who told me this weekend that there was no European country to which an Iraqi national could obtain a visa within Iraq, and that the nearest place where his mother and sister could obtain a visa was in Jordan. That would involve a 16-hour bus ride, and the lady concerned is now so badly disabled that she is wheelchair bound.

That case clearly illustrates the difficulties that will confront the Minister, and many other Members of Parliament, in the coming months and years if this wretched clause becomes law. My constituent is right to argue that if the Government hold a compassionate view and want to help those who wish to visit this country for medical and other reasons, the information that I have received from the Foreign Office does not reinforce or strengthen any conviction that the public might have about the true intentions of this Government.

Clause 9 is an integral part of this wretched, racist Bill. I hope that Conservative Members who, when it was first announced, were extremely worried about its consequences—

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Bill, not amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Madden: Once again I urge those Conservative Members who initially had reservations about the clause to have the courage of their true convictions and to vote against clause 9. We understand that they cannot bring themselves to vote against this wretched Bill, but I urge them to pluck up the courage to vote against the clause. To do so would reinforce whatever reputation they may have for their belief in principles, the right to natural justice and the right of appeal against judicial and quasi-judicial decisions. It would be appreciated by their constituents who, if the clause becomes law, will lose the right to have their relatives and friends visit them in this country, a right that many of them, as British citizens, hold very dear. I hope that the clause will be defeated, that this important right of appeal will be retained and that we shall be able to say to the British people, whatever their race, colour or religion, that we believe that they, as British citizens, are all equal before the law and have the right to appeal against administrative decisions.

Mr. Maclennan: This is undoubtedly one of the most important amendments before the House and it should enjoy the support of hon. Members in all parts of the House. Certainly it should enjoy the support of those who earlier expressed their anxiety about the importation into a Bill, purportedly dealing with asylum matters, of a further measure to clamp down on visitors to this country who are not seeking asylum.

It might tolerably be argued that a Bill to curb asylum seekers will not cause deep public concern. It may be thought that, after the passage of a modest amount of time, anxieties about fingerprinting and people coming from Angola and other countries who have no relatives in this country to welcome and support them when they arrive here will be blocked out and that no problems will arise from the asylum aspects of the Bill. The Government can have no such hope, however, regarding clause 9. It will directly affect the lives of many citizens in this country for many years to come. It will stimulate deep hostility among those who feel themselves to be discriminated against, when members of their families are denied the right to visit them here. Such people cannot experience the support and joy of temporary visits because the Government of the day believe that it is administratively inconvenient properly to scrutinise their applications. That must be bad for race relations in the United Kingdom.

It may be that Governments of different political complexions have felt it necessary to have a firm immigration policy for the benefit of race relations in the United Kingdom. However, that firm policy must be seen to be fair if it is not to exacerbate the ill feeling among minority communities that those who are in the majority are abusing their power to their family disadvantage.

I hope that the Minister will not seek to justify the inclusion of something in this Bill which even the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker)—stimulated as he was by a desire to split the House on the issue of race before an election—did not think it appropriate to include in his Bill. This nasty inclusion is the creation of someone who postured in the past as a liberal in matters of race. The Home Secretary appeared to relish that reputation, and I will not speculate on why he now chooses to cast off that mantle.

If the House fails tonight to extrude the obnoxious clause from the Bill, I hope that those in another place will examine with particular attention the possibility of restoring what successive Governments accepted as necessary to ensure that applications for visits to the United Kingdom were fairly perused and open to appeal. The obnoxious clause was not included by the Government on a whim in response to pressures from a particular group in society; it was introduced as a result of careful deliberation. It is true that the right of appeal was introduced by a Labour Government, but it was endorsed by Conservative Governments. No political parties were divided on the matter until this Government introduced the amendment.

The Government's method and approach to immigration and race relations are obnoxious because they cause a split in the United Kingdom on not only the grounds of colour but the grounds of party. The Minister must remove the clause and accept the amendment. If he does, he will receive the thanks and appreciation of all hon. Members for having allowed sense to prevail over the corruption of administrative power that has been too long enjoyed.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department for listening to the concerns which some of my hon. Friends and I have expressed about clause 9. My hon. Friend listened most courteously. He went away and thought about the issues which we had raised and proposed some changes. I am not critical of the changes. Indeed, I believe that they will help the way in which administrative decisions are made in the future. But they will remain essentially administrative decisions.

I share the anxieties that have already been expressed tonight that there will be no possibility of appeal against administrative decisions which may be wrong because human decisions so often are fallible. One must bear in mind that those decisions are of great significance to many people. It is often difficult for people who have settled in Britain to travel to visit their relatives in their country of origin. People who have settled in Britain often have jobs from which it is difficult for them to spend much time away. Therefore, if a family is to be brought together from time to time, there is no alternative to a journey to Britain by a relative.

Entry clearance officers certainly have difficult decisions to make. The information that they have is often limited. That is why adjudicators are often better placed. They will see the sponsor and perhaps others. As constituency Members we know that, while ultimately it is the intentions of the visitor which are important, the evidence given by sponsors can be absolutely vital. In the communities in Britain, a sponsor would be unlikely to co-operate in a decision to ignore immigration rules because that would do great damage in a close-knit community.

When one reads the adjudicator's decision in the determination of many cases, one appreciates that where successful appeals are made there is often no credible reason for rejecting an application. As we have heard, every year there are 1,500 or so successful appeals. I am not satisfied that, because an applicant will have another opportunity to apply and the evidence will be heard by different entry clearance officers wherever possible, the decision will necessarily be right.

[Mr. Gary Waller]

At present, we have a helpful safeguard and I regret that it will be lost in the future. I have had few representations against clause 9. It is not because of the number of representations that I have received that I intend to vote against the Government on amendment No. 15. I intend to vote against the amendment because of my knowledge of such cases as someone who has represented constituents and dealt with such cases for many years.

If the amendment would make it essentially easier for people to overstay illegally or evade the immigration rules, one would have to think carefully about it. However, in my experience the people who appeal do not intend to overstay or evade the immigration rules. They are often people with a good case. It is because those good cases will not have an opportunity to be heard and because administrative decisions will not be overturned where they are weak that I am afraid that I shall have to go into the Opposition Lobby this evening.

Mr. Corbyn: I compliment the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) on what he said and his decision about how to vote this evening. That is a sign that at least some Conservative Members are not prepared to accept what the Government gave as a great retreat as anything more than a figleaf to cover them during the Committee proceedings. The removal of appeal rights for visitors is a disgraceful removal of the right of ordinary people to a proper hearing. It is also the removal of any accountability for public officials who grant or refuse the right of entry clearance or a visitor's visa.

Earlier today, almost 1,000 people—almost all of them black—were brought to the House of Commons by the National Black Caucus to lobby against this clause. I pay tribute to the National Black Caucus for doing so, for the spirit and intelligence of its lobby and for everything that it said, because it came directly from the heart.

All hon. Members who represent constituencies that contain many people with families living in the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, the far east and many other parts of the world, are aware of the consequences of the system. To put it in context, last year there were 10,000 appeals against refusals of visits to this country. Those appeals were made by people who arrived in this country, sought entry, were refused and were sent back to the country that they had come from, where they went through the appeals system and 17 per cent. of those appeals were granted. Under the Government's cock-eyed system and by their own admission, 1,700 people were wrongly denied entry to this country.

10.15 pm

The existing appeals system is seriously flawed because the appeal must take place in the country of application. If someone who has saved up a great deal of money to come to this country from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India or the Caribbean is refused admission on arrival and has to return home, although he might win an appeal it is useless if he has spent the best part of a year's wages on the air fare to come here in the first place.

I do not know whether the Minister understands the heartache and misery caused to families who prepare years in advance for a wedding or some other great family occasion, only to find that the grandparents, distant uncles or cousins whom they so desperately wanted to attend are suddenly not allowed to come. Does he understand the humiliation of it? Families preparing for a great family occasion on a Saturday or Sunday often get an anguished call on Wednesday or Thursday the week before from relatives who cannot get permission to come into the country or who have arrived and been sent back. Hon. Members who represent inner-city constituencies regularly experience the hassle of trying to persuade immigration officers that there is some new evidence, or some merit in contacting the Minister's private office and all the rest of it.

The way in which the system operates is wrong and the Minister should not be introducing clause 9 but should accept its removal and should introduce a new clause to allow an in-country right of appeal so that people would not have to suffer the nonsense of being removed from this country and told that they can appeal in the country that they have come from.

Another side to the question is the way in which entry clearance officers at particular British missions abroad will be making the decisions. I have attended interviews for entry clearance for permanent residency and I am sorry to have to say that entry clearance officers indulge in a large degree of subjective decision-making, based on a person's wealth and on what they choose to call the immigration history of the family concerned. Basically, that subjective decision-making means that if one is poor, black and comes from Africa, the Caribbean or south Asia there is a high chance that one will be refused admission to this country for a visit, but if one is white and comes from the United States, South Africa or Australia one is unlikely to be refused admission to this country.

If the present rather inadequate right of appeal is removed, immigration officials will have totally untrammelled power over the lives of many families and the happiness of many people. There will be no accountability. The system is racist because of whom it is directed at and it is flawed in its approach.

I hope that the Minister will understand that the anger outside the House and throughout ethnic communities in this country will not go away, whatever the decision this evening. There will be challenges and I hope that successful amendments will be made to the Bill in the House of Lords and that the decision will be challenged legally by a judicial review. The Minister has not heard the end of it yet.

I also remind the Minister that, although many people are badly treated when they apply to visit this country, British tourists who seek to visit India, Bangladesh or any other country are treated decently by their high commissions and embassies here. The Minister should think about the small rate of refusal for visitors' visas for British tourists who seek to visit those countries. I can imagine the screaming headlines in the *Daily Mail* if many British people seeking to visit India as tourists were denied entry. I can just imagine the way in which that newspaper would present such stories. Why cannot such papers turn their undoubted propaganda skills round to attack the Government for removing a basic right of appeal against an unjust decision by an unaccountable official?

I ask the Minister to recognise the strength and justice of our case for the removal of clauses 9 and 10 from what is a wholly inadequate Bill in any case.

Mr. Winnick: I wish more Conservative Members other than the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) had spoken against the clause. He rightly said why its inclusion

could not be supported and said that he would vote against it. I welcome that decision, but it will be rather unfortunate if he is the only hon. Member on the Conservative Benches so to vote because many people are deeply concerned about the clause. They rightly understand that it represents a form of discrimination against a section of people who will be discriminated basically because they intend to invite here relatives or friends from the West Indies or the Indian sub-continent.

I regret that the Government have decided to include this clause in the Bill. We were not told that that was their intention when the Bill was submitted to the House prior to the general election. I am particularly worried because if the Bill as it now stands is passed, how long will it be, as my hon. Friends have already asked, before other rights of appeal are taken away? Does it mark the beginning of the end of the appeal system?

The appeal system came into existence 22 years last July. I speak with some experience of it, because in the past I represented people, almost on a continuing basis, who appeared before adjudicators. As the Minister knows, one must prove before the adjudicator the relevance of circumstances at the time that the decision was made by an entry clearance officer. It is no use someone coming before an adjudicator and saying that the situation has improved because the appellant has more money than he did when he originally applied to visit this country. The adjudicator must simply decide whether the decision taken by the entry clearance officer at the time was right in law.

One must argue the case on behalf of the appellant to show that the circumstances at the time of the original decision were such that that decision should have been different. The fact is that in nearly 20 per cent. of visitor cases appeals the adjudicators or the immigration appeals tribunal have found that the original decision by the entry clearance officer was wrong. Surely that is a matter of some concern.

Mrs. Roche: Does my hon. Friend agree that another reason for having the appellate system is that it provides a check on the way in which entry clearance officers and immigration officers carry out their functions? That check is important even if those functions are not subject to an appeal. Recently an immigration officer at a port of entry changed his mind on a decision because, as he said frankly to me, he knew that he could not argue his decision on appeal. The mere existence of the appellate system changed his mind. That is why it is so important to keep it.

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. If a decision is appealed against, the entry clearance officer must write what is known as an explanatory statement, which can run to eight or 12 pages, and in which he or she must give, at length, the reasons it was decided to refuse the application.

If there is no appeal system for visitors, entry clearance officers know that, however much they believe that they have done their job well, it will not be subject to appeal. At most what will happen is that the Member of Parliament representing the sponsor will write to the Minister. In reply the Minister will probably say——

Mr. Madden: Sod off.

Mr. Winnick: Well, he may not say that as such; he will put it in more dignified terms. He will say that the entry clearance officer considered all the facts and circumstances, came to his or her decision and that he, the Minister, can see no reason for overruling it. The entry clearance officer will know that there will be no adjudicator, no immigration appeals tribunal, no judicial review in certain circumstances, and no High Court case. He will therefore have total power to decide whether a person can come to this country on a short visit. I believe that that is wrong.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) referred to the Wilson committee. That committee recommended an appeals system because it believed that if the United Kingdom were to have tight immigration controls, which most of us believe are necessary, there must also be elementary justice and that people who are denied the right to come here should have the right to appeal. That system has operated for some 22 years and if we are to take away certain people's right to appeal, how soon will it be before other rights are also taken away?

Some people may say that few people are involved in sponsoring visitors. That is neither here nor there. Many people invite relatives to this country for perfectly genuine reasons. They want to see their parents or adult children and are willing to make sacrifices so that that close relative can come to the United Kingdom. When the relative from the Indian sub-continent or the West Indies is refused, they believe—rightly or wrongly—that it is because he or she has a black or Asian skin and that, had the person concerned been white, there would have been no trouble. Great harm may come to race relations in this country if people who are settled here, with every right to be here, find that their closest relatives cannot visit them. We are discussing not people coming here to live—that is not the issue—but people who wish to visit. Once they are here as visitors, they have no right to stay. The Minister is not arguing that the appeals system must go because people overstay their visit and go underground. He is nodding in agreement at that.

A fundamental right is being taken away. We shall no doubt lose the vote tonight, especially if only one Conservative Member intends to vote with us. However, the principle is important and I hope that the other place will not reach the same decision as I fear this House will reach tonight. I hope that the other place will recognise that what the Labour party has been saying, supported by the Liberal party and the one Conservative Member, is extremely important and that it will successfully challenge the Government. We shall be unable to do so tonight because, although Conservative Members understand the issue, they fear opposing the Government. They do not have the courage to do so and they are abdicating their responsibility as Members of Parliament.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I could not let the clause pass without making a few remarks because the Bill will affect so many of my constituents and has the potential to affect many British citizens throughout the country.

We have heard that one Conservative Member will vote against the Bill. Although some Conservative Members may have the excuse of ignorance about the Bill's effects, some of them know only too well the misery, humiliation, financial loss, unfairness and racism that will flow from the Bill. If they march through the Lobbies with the Government tonight, they should look to their consciences.

[Ms. Diane Abbott]

One of the strengths of the appellate system in relation to visits is the guarantee of fairer decisions by administrators. I worked in the Home Office and I am familiar with the type and grade of official who makes such decisions, and I cannot understand how Ministers think that it is acceptable to remove checks and balances from middle-ranking, often not entirely satisfactorily trained, executive grade officials in the Home Office. They leave relatives of British citizens liable to arbitrary and unfair decisions.

At this late stage I do not expect to change anyone's mind about clauses 9 and 10, but I should like to convey, both to my hon. Friends who may be wondering why we cannot proceed to a vote and Conservative Members who are to vote with the Government what it feels like to be a Jamaican, a Pakistani or a Turk who has lived in the countryside and saved the equivalent of many years' salary to come to this country for a wedding, birthday or christening. In the religions and cultures of such countries, weddings and christenings mean much more than they do to most of us. I want to try to convey to hon. Members what it means to have saved the equivalent of many years' salary, put on one's best clothes, left the Jamaican or Bengali countryside, travelled to a big city in one's own country for the first time and taken an aeroplane to Heathrow only to be humiliated by the sort of treatment that is ritually handed out to black people visiting this country.

10.30 pm

Like many Opposition Members, I have been telephoned at all hours of the night by frantic relatives who, at the last minute, have realised that a loved sister, cousin, grandparent or even parent will not be able to come to a wedding or a christening. It is hard to convey to people who are not familiar with those cultures what such a denial means to the families involved.

It will be starkly obvious to black British citizens whose relatives are unable to visit them for such family occasions that if they were French or German—if they were white—their relatives would be able to visit them without encountering all the hindrances. No other clause in the Bill more clearly reveals the racist nature of immigration control than clause 9, which hits, not those who are coming to settle, but those who genuinely want to visit and who may not have seen their grandchildren, brothers, sisters or other relatives for 10, 20 or 30 years.

The clause is an abuse of the process. It is wholly unjustified. The majority of hon. Members do not understand how much unhappiness, unfairness and wasted money the clause will cause. Anyone in the House who knows, understands and works among those whom the clause will affect cannot, in good conscience, vote for the clauses as they stand.

Mr. Vaz: There is one brave man sitting on the Conservative Benches: the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), who, through his experiences and his daily work dealing with immigration cases, has decided to come to the Chamber today to show his dissent over the Bill's proposals and to vote with the Opposition against the measure.

Clauses 9 and 10 are squalid measures that will hit out at the rights that have, for many years, been accepted as fundamental. Before I entered the House I worked as a lawyer in a law centre in Leicester. When people came to that centre the one guarantee that I could give them when their relatives were refused admission to this country was that they could use the appeal process. That right is to be removed and the one concession that the Minister is proposing to make is an administrative one that already exists.

In Committee—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the Minister does not wish to hear what I have to say because I want to comment directly on his visit to the sub-continent. In his submission to the Committee in which he discussed the administrative changes that he was proposing to introduce, he talked about his visit to the sub-continent. I, too, have visited the sub-continent in the past month and I, too, met the immigration and entry clearance officers whom he met. *[Interruption.]* He wants to know when and whom I visited. I do not think that the Minister can tell us the name of the First Secretary (Immigration) in Bombay. Can he remember it? It is no use his looking at his officials. Does he know the name of the First Secretary (Immigration) in New Delhi? He does not. I have met Martin Hilson and David O'Rourke and I have discussed with both of them and with other entry clearance officers what the Minister proposes to do by means of this squalid measure. He proposes to put these entry clearance officers in an intolerable position. They are supposed to become judge and jury in both first and second applications.

I looked at the *Official Report* of the Committee's proceedings to find out whom the Minister consulted before he came to this conclusion. He did not discuss the Bill with the very people who will have to administer its provisions. He said of the system in Committee:

"I then asked myself what could be done administratively to improve it".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 8 December 1992; c. 650.]

So the Minister consulted himself. Those who daily deal with these cases in Bombay and New Delhi have a wealth of experience and if the Minister would only ask them they would tell him that they will not be able to cope with the number of applications that will be made.

The Minister went on to say that three Members of Parliament came to see him to discuss these matters and at the end of a great struggle and fracas he emerged with these concessions. They represent no more than what already happens. If a person cannot get his or her relative into this country as a visitor, he or she goes to see the relevant Member of Parliament. That Member writes to the migration and visas correspondence unit. That unit then writes to the post abroad and the post abroad writes back setting out reasons. It is not clear how the Minister's proposals differ from what already happens.

The Minister goes on to talk about exceptional and compassionate circumstances. I refer him to the case of the gentleman who came to visit one of my constituents in Leicester. His former wife was dying in the royal infirmary in Leicester. Her last wish was to see her former husband whom she had not seen for several years. I submitted to Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials, the very people to whom the Minister suggests Members of Parliament should write, a doctor's certificate, signed by a consultant at the royal infirmary. It was faxed to the office of the Minister and from there to Bombay. We asked that exceptional and compelling circumstances be considered because the woman in question was dying.

When the visa was refused, I raised the matter with the Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, who is not here tonight even though these measures touch on his area of responsibility. He refused to overturn the decision. I gave a personal undertaking that if the person was allowed to come here he would return a month later, after he had seen his dying wife and attended her funeral.

In the meantime, the woman died at the royal infirmary —while the administrative procedures on which the Minister wants us to rely were under way. Finally, I went and begged the Under-Secretary of State, in his office, to reconsider the matter and allow the man to come to this country. The Minister refused to make a decision until he had been briefed. He would not accept the personal undertaking of a Member of Parliament and a doctor's certificate. He saw me in the House at 11.30 pm the night before the funeral and on the basis of that meeting he at last overturned the decision of the entry clearance officer.

Is this what Members of Parliament will have to do to get people into this country for exceptional and compassionate reasons?

When in New Delhi I dealt with the case of a gentleman of substantial means—one of the wealthiest industrialists in India. He wanted to send his son to a university in this country and was prepared to pay the full overseas fee of £10,000. He was able to show that this young man had invested £500,000 in this country. The entry clearance officer in New Delhi would not allow that young man to undertake the course of study because he said that the last time that the young man was here he went through the appeal process and therefore manipulated the situation in order to stay longer.

I appealed to the First Secretary (Immigration) in New Delhi and tried to contact the high commissioner, Sir Nicholas Fenn, who was unfortunately suffering from food poisoning that day and was unable to see me. I tried to get through to the deputy high commissioner, but unfortunatley he had gone to Uttar Pradesh and was also unable to see me. I left my discussions with the First Secretary, who would not change his mind. He said that he would look at the case and he discussed it with his officers, but could not overrule the decision.

I gave a personal undertaking. I said, "This gentleman will return to India because his father is a substantial industrialist. He wants to remain in India and does not want to remain in Britain. He is prepared to give our country £10,000 a year in overseas fees." However, the First Secretary (Immigration) would not change his decision. He told me, "This young man has the right of appeal." I said, "That right is to be taken away by the Government." He said, "That does not matter: the right exists at the moment."

I called a press conference to publicise the case in India so that people realised in advance of Prime Minister Major's visit on 26 January how Indian citizens were being treated. Lo and behold, half an hour before my press conference the visa was issued. Those are the lengths to which hon. Members will have to go to get genuine visitors into this country and that is totally unfair.

The procedures outlined by the Minister will not solve the basic problem. During the general election campaign Conservative Members promised people that they would protect their rights, but at the first opportunity they are prepared to renege on those promises. The Minister knows that the legislation will double the workload of every hon. Member who deals with immigration cases, but he has said that he will not restore it because of the backlog of cases.

I shall tell the Minister what happened to me when I went to the immigration appeal tribunal on Thursday. He may not like to hear about it, but he shall. I went to give evidence for a constituent who had been waiting 12 months for a case to be considered. I arrived for the hearing, but the Home Office officer who was to present the case was not there. The appeal could not proceed and the adjudicator had to telephone my office and give me a personal apology because of the way in which the Home Office had operated. Does the Minister want us to place our confidence in people who cannot turn up for agreed engagements?

It is getting late and hon. Members want to vote, but this right is extremely important and we should not be ashamed to stay here for as long as it takes to change the procedures. If the Minister does not change his mind, he will be remembered in the history of immigration law as the Minister who removed the right of appeal and wherever he goes in the country to whatever community event, he will be reminded of that.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Understandably, strong feelings have emerged in the debate. Some hon. Members have spoken with passion and sincerity. However, the debate has not been without some confusion and humbug. I am frequently impressed by the contributions of the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz). If it were not for a trace of self-importance that seems to creep in, he would more frequently advance most impressive arguments.

I will not stand by while any hon. Member seeks to malign officials. It is entirely wrong to name officials who cannot answer back. Some hon. Members said that entry clearance officers treat badly people who apply for visit visas. It has also been suggested that Home Office officials treat people badly and the calibre of immigration officers has been impugned.

There has been confusion. For example, a person from the Indian sub-continent, as the House knows, will require a visa. Therefore, a citizen of that part of the world who has no visa should not travel here without it and would most definitely waste an air fare if he did so. However, if that individual has a proper and valid visa and arrives here having spent the air fare but is refused entry for whatever reason, he will still have a right of appeal because he would have been turned away while he had valid documentation.

Other hon. Members spoke of the Caribbean. As was pointed out in Committee, most of the Caribbean islands are not countries whose nationals require a visa to visit here. Jamaica, which was once my home, has been mentioned. Jamaicans are not visa nationals for the purposes of visits to this country. In 1991, some 26,000 people from Jamaica visited the United Kingdom and just 392 were refused entry. As well as confusion, there has been humbug and not a little scaremongering to boot.

It is worth bearing in mind the fact that in 1991, the last full year for which records are available, some 5,700,000 visitors were welcomed to the country, of which some 400,000 came on short stays, in one capacity or another, from the Indian sub-continent. The confusion and the humbug do not end there. Let us look at applications for 1991, globally, for visa applications. Some 919,000 applications were received, and 91·6 per cent. were successful at the first attempt. Of those refused, 12,300

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

appeals were made, of which 1,542 were allowed. I agree with Opposition Members that that is 1,542 cases about which one should think long and hard.

We had a little humour and some fun from the hon. Member for Leicester, East—why not—when he spoke about me drawing my own conclusions. The hon. Gentleman told me that he has recently paid another visit to Bombay and Delhi, but he knows that I met every entry clearance officer on post there and listened to their advice. I did the same in Islamabad, Karachi, Colombo and Dakha. When I draw my conclusions, they are based on the research that I have carried out.

Mr. Vaz: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wardle: I wish to make some progress and the hon. Gentleman had a full go, but as he asks so charmingly, how can I resist his entreaties?

Mr. Vaz: Let me try to be charming again. When the Minister went to see the entry clearance officers and immigration officers, did he discuss the removal of the right of appeal? Did he discuss the implications for their daily workload of removing the right of appeal?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman's question is a little disingenuous because, if he had any pretensions to government, he would know full well that no Minister could talk about a Bill that had not been published and presented to Parliament. He will appreciate that the line of inquiries that I followed enabled me to learn a great deal while I was there.

The appeals backlog on immigration cases is about 23,000 and about half those cases involve visas for short-term visits. Opposition Members are right, of course, to say that we should look to staffing, to the calibre and training of our entry clearance officers in posts abroad and to improve the facilities and training of personnel in the Home Office. It is right for me to say that we do all of those things. Why, I wonder, is there humbug when someone makes suggestions which, if implemented, would improve administrative measures? Why should it be said, "That is not a good thing"?

Why not take a hard look at the reality of visit visa appeals, bearing in mind that no other country has quite the same mechanism? It is a creaking, improbable out-of-date appeal mechanism. It seems that its principal justification revolves round sponsors. The person who intends to make the visit will find under the present machinery that the term of his visit has long passed and the purpose of it has eluded him because it takes so long for an appeal to be sorted out. It must make much more sense to take a hard look at the procedures, instead of wallowing in compassion, and to say, "How can we improve the service for anyone who has to apply for a visit visa to come to the United Kingdom; what can we do to serve him or her better?" I assure the House that to leave the current creaking and outmoded appeal mechanism in place will do the applicant no service. It must make more sense to consider the realities and to abolish the appeals that run for so long, and instead to offer a service that will enable the genine visitor—let us bear in mind that there were 5·7 million such visitors in 1991—to continue to enjoy the object of his plans, which is to come to the United Kingdom.

Amendments Nos. 15 and 16——

Ms. Abbott: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Wardle: Not for the moment—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] I gave way to hon. Members throughout the consideration of the Bill in Committee and I have done so on the Floor of the House, so why should I make an exception of the hon. Lady, as long as she will be brief?

Ms. Abbott: I listened with great care to the Minister and he has failed to clarify the matter for Opposition Members. Even if there is a creaking right of appeal, how will there be an improvement in the service if we take away people's rights?

Mr. Wardle: People have a right to a decent, well-run service. Instead of indulging in all this compassion, the House should look for effective administrative measures, some of which are listed in the press release. It is a document that won much interest when it was published before Christmas.

Amendments Nos. 15 and 16 would, not surprisingly, delete clauses 9 and 10 from the Bill. Clause 9 amends section 13 of the Immigration Act 1971 to provide that a person shall not be entitled to appeal against the refusal of an entry clearance, or against refusal of leave to enter, if he is seeking to enter the United Kingdom as a visitor, if he is a short-term student on a course of not more than six months duration, if he is a prospective student or is a dependant of a person in one of those categories. Appeals remain in place for someone who is about to be deported or for someone who is seeking to obtain settlement in this country.

Clause 9 is necessary to streamline the appeal system to make it work properly and so to enable it to provide an effective and timely remedy to those to whom I have just referred, who will be challenging decisions which vitally and centrally affect their lives. It is not an attack on the entitlement of people who are settled in this country to have their relatives come here to visit them. Those visitors —genuine visitors—will always be welcomed to this country. It is scaremongering to suggest otherwise. The measures that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is putting in place, which were the subject of the press release, will provide a speedier means of having disputed decisions reviewed and treated.

Clause 10 removes the right of appeal against decisions taken on certain specified grounds where the applicant does not meet a mandatory requirement of the immigration rules. It is worth explaining why such appeals cannot succeed at present. Again, there has been confusion. The power of the appellate authorities in determining an appeal are set out in section 19 of the 1971 Act. Subsection (1) provides that an adjudicator shall allow an appeal if he considers that the decision involved was not in accordance with the law or any applicable immigration rules, or, where a decision involved the exercise of a discretion, if he considers that the discretion should have been exercised differently. In all other cases he must dismiss the appeal. Subsection (2) provides that a decision which is in accordance with the immigration rules is not to be treated as involving an exercise of discretion simply because the Secretary of State has declined to depart from the rules.

It is right and necessary that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State should retain a residual

discretion to waive the requirements of the immigration rules in exceptional circumstances as no set of rules can cater for every possible set of circumstances. The flexible use of exceptional leave in asylum cases is the obvious example of the need for that. However, the general expectation in the non-asylum cases with which clause 10 is concerned must be that the immigration rules, which reflect the policy laid down by my right hon. and learned Friend and approved by Parliament, will be applied and that the function of the appellate authorities is simply to ensure that the rules have been applied correctly in individual cases. If the appellate authorities were able to direct the Secretary of State to waive the rules in particular cases, in effect they would be determining immigration policy, which is not their proper function.

Some immigration rules provide for the exercise of discretion—for example, a decision to deport will always be discretionary. Other rules contain requirements that the Secretary of State or the immigration officer has to be satisfied of certain matters that can be tested only in a balance of probabilities, such as a person's intention to leave the United Kingdom at the end of a period of study. In both those cases, there is room for argument as to whether the decision is correct and an appeal may be either allowed or dismissed.

Some rules, however, contain requirements that must be met if the application is to succeed and where the question of whether the requirement is met can be easily determined on the basis of documentary evidence. When an application is refused because such a requirement is not met, the adjudicator has no option but to dismiss the appeal when it eventually comes before him. The existence of a right of appeal in such cases does nothing to redress genuine grievances; it serves only to enable those appellants who have no claim under the immigration rules to remain in this country and to spin out their stay here pursuing hopeless appeals, while delaying the hearing of other appeals that certainly do involve issues of substance. I therefore urge the House to reject amendments Nos. 15 and 16.

Government Amendments Nos. 36 to 39 clarify the types of document that are involved in mandatory refusals for the purpose of clause 10. Those are essential official documents that must be held if an application is to succeed under the relevant immigration rules—entry clearances, passports or other identity documents and work permits. I believe that that clarification will be generally welcomed. I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Fraser: Not a word that has been said by the Minister justifies clause 9 being included in the Bill. The clause can be summed up in two words—it stinks. When the Prime Minister was doing his memory lane stuff in Brixton, pointing out where he used to live in Loughborough junction, why did not he point out that we had a great big piece of redundant machinery that gave people rights of appeal which he would remove as soon as he got back into office? When the Home Secretary was going around ethnic constituencies in the midlands and Yorkshire at the time of the general election, why were not people told that there was a piece of creaking machinery that the Government proposed to remove?

Clause 9 is a deceit for the ethnic communities of this country. It breaks a trust. Those people trusted the Government. There used to be a bipartisanship about fairness and decency in appeals on these matters. Clause 9 will split families, prevent reunion in times of joy, prevent visits in times of bereavement and give validity to decisions that often will be based on speculation, not evidence. Clause 9 will give credence to decisions that are often based on speculation, not evidence; and a spurious validity to previous refusals, so that people will have the stigma of an immigration refusal. It will also refuse the right of appeal at the very time that we have citizens charters which are supposed to improve the lot of those who challenge administrative decisions. This exception will remove them.

Most of all, clause 9 will be a stain on the reputation of the Home Secretary who, on the whole, is a man who is aggressive rather than spiteful, tough rather than mean. I believe that he will come to regret this occasion. It will be a stain on the reputation also of the Under-Secretary who, even if we do not agree with him, is generally considered to be fair-minded. It will be a stain on the reputation of this country. Let no one be deceived about the kind of reputation that it will create when people's right of appeal is taken away. There will be a stain also on the reputation of every Conservative Member who votes for clause 9 tonight.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 248, Noes 299.

Division No. 107] **[11.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Cohen, Harry
Ainger, Nick	Connarty, Michael
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Allen, Graham	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Alton, David	Corbett, Robin
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*	Corbyn, Jeremy
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*	Corston, Ms Jean
Armstrong, Hilary	Cousins, Jim
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Cox, Tom
Ashton, Joe	Cryer, Bob
Austin-Walker, John	Cummings, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Barnes, Harry	Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Battle, John	Dalyell, Tam
Bayley, Hugh	Darling, Alistair
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.	Davidson, Ian
Bell, Stuart	Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Benton, Joe	Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Berry, Dr. Roger	Denham, John
Betts, Clive	Dewar, Donald
Blair, Tony	Dixon, Don
Blunkett, David	Dobson, Frank
Boateng, Paul	Donohoe, Brian H.
Boyce, Jimmy	Dowd, Jim
Bradley, Keith	Dunnachie, Jimmy
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Eagle, Ms Angela
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*	Enright, Derek
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*	Etherington, Bill
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Burden, Richard	Fatchett, Derek
Byers, Stephen	Faulds, Andrew
Caborn, Richard	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Callaghan, Jim	Flynn, Paul
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*	Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*	Foulkes, George
Canavan, Dennis	Fraser, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*	Fyfe, Maria
Chisholm, Malcolm	Gapes, Mike
Clapham, Michael	Garrett, John
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*	George, Bruce
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*	Gerrard, Neil
Clelland, David	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Godsiff, Roger
Coffey, Ann	Golding, Mrs Llin

Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and
Mr. John Spellar.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*

Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 10

REFUSALS WHICH ARE MANDATORY UNDER IMMIGRATION RULES

Amendments made: No. 36, in page 7, line 10, at end insert 'relevant'.

No. 37, in page 7, line 18, at end insert—

'(3C) For the purposes of subsection (3B)(a) above, the following are "relevant documents"—

(a) entry clearances;

(b) passports or other identity documents; and

(c) work permits.'

No. 38, in page 7, line 24, after 'a', insert 'relevant'.

No. 39, in page 7, line 33, at end insert—

'(2B) For the purposes of subsection (2A)(a) above, the following are relevant documents—

(a) entry clearances;

(b) passports or other identity documents; and

(c) work permits.'—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Clause 11

CARRIERS' LIABILITY FOR TRANSIT PASSENGERS

11.15 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle: I beg to move amendment No. 40, in page 8, line 11, after "territory", insert
"but not by reference to race, colour or religion".

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 41.

Mr. Wardle: Amendment No. 40 provides that the criteria which are used to specify a group of persons who will be required to produce transit visas under the new provisions in clause 11 shall not be based on race, colour or religion. Amendment No. 41 makes a similar provision with regard to the different commencement dates which are permitted under clause 13.

In Committee some Opposition Members expressed concern that the criteria of origin or connection with a particular country or territory might be operated in a racialy discriminating way. I am pleased to move amendments which make it clear that that is not the case. The criteria that will be used will relate only to matters akin to but not necessarily confined to nationality, such as the type of passport or travel document which a person holds. Like the existing immigration controls, the new provisions will be operated without racial prejudice or discrimination. I urge the House to support the amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 13

COMMENCEMENT

Mr. Allen: I beg to move amendment No. 22, in page 8, line 33, at beginning insert—

'( ) Sections 3 to 11 above and section 1 so far as it relates to those sections shall not take effect until the Secretary of State has laid a report before both Houses of Parliament describing those arrangements which he has made for the consideration of and adjudication upon complaints about the conduct of those within his department engaged upon the work of immigration and nationality.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 26, in page 8, line 33, at beginning insert—

'( ) Sections 3 and 6 to 10 shall not come into force until the Secretary of State has laid a report before both Houses of Parliament describing the arrangements for the training of those within his department engaged in the examination and interviewing of those who are or who may be asylum-seekers.'.

No. 27, in page 8, line 33, at beginning insert—

'( ) Sections 3 and 6 to 10 shall not come into force until the Secretary of State has by order made by statutory instrument specified standards of training and competence for those within his department engaged in the examination and interviewing of those who are or who may be asylum-seekers.'.

Mr. Allen: Given the lengthy discussion in Committee on the complaints and training procedures, can the Minister give an assurance that he is still open to receive representations on that matter?

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Charles Wardle: I can give such an assurance. As I explained in Committee, the complaints procedure is currently under review with the object of examining whether there should be an independent element in the review.

Amendment No. 22 will prevent the main provisions from being implemented until after the results of the review have been placed before Parliament. There is no particular reason why the results should be linked to the commencement of the Bill in such a way. I expect the results of the review to be available in the next month or so. In the meantime, representations from the hon. Members for Nottingham, North and for Islington, North will be welcomed.

The immigration and nationality department of the Home Office places great emphasis on training in so far as it relates to asylum staff and immigration officers. Opposition Members may wish to pursue the idea which the hon. Member for Nottingham, North suggested some weeks ago about a visit to the Harmondsworth training facilities and Croyden to learn more about the operations of the immigration and nationality department of the Home Office.

I hope that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) will take up that opportunity to learn more about the functions of interpreters. He will appreciate that we must deal with 100 languages. The staff face a difficult task. As I said in Committee, we have been reviewing the Department's requirements for interpreters. That review is not quite complete. Some of the improvements which we wish to put in place before the Bill is implemented include better and more consistent procedures for recruiting interpreters and monitoring their performance, together with new guidelines.

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister was a little fast on his feet, so I hope that he does not mind if I now follow him. I support the amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North which will have the effect of delaying the Bill until the review has been completed. Frankly, I see nothing wrong in that. Many of us have complained for a long time that there should be better and more extensive training facilities for those who undertake interviews.

Far more consideration needs to be given to security of those who are employed to do translation work. As the Home Secretary admitted earlier, the revelation of the true identity of a person seeking asylum is a sensitive process. People live in Britain under assumed names because of the threat to their families at home. He should also be aware that for many years secret agents have operated in Britain on behalf of several oppressive regimes, not least South Africa, Iran and Iraq. They pass information back to their Governments which is used as a basis for attacking the families, friends or comrades of those people. It is essential that anyone who is employed as an interpreter will maintain any confidences that are picked up during discussions and in translation work.

Those who undertake interviews should also be given psychiatric training so that they can understand the degree of trauma, disturbance and disorientation which people who seek asylum have suffered. I will certainly take up the Minister's offer to visit the training facilities and discuss what goes on during training. Our constituents and the people seeking political asylum in Britain whom we represent are the ones who suffer if the system does not

work properly and those who are supposed to have been trained to undertake interviews do not undertake the work properly.

Therefore, I wish that the Minister had paid slightly more attention to the amendments that we tabled and delayed the introduction of the Bill until such time as the training episode had been thoroughly examined, the report had been received and any suitable changes in it had been implemented.

May I ask through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether the Minister will make a report or statement to the House when the review has been completed so that Members can comment on it at the review stage as well as at the evidence-taking stage which we are apparently in at present?

Mr. Wardle: The review is purely internal. I made it clear a few moments ago and in Committee that ideas suggested by Opposition Members and, indeed, other parties would be carefully considered. However, the review is an internal matter.

Amendment negatived.

Amendment made: No. 41, in page 8, line 47, after 'territory', insert

'but not by reference to race, colour or religion'.—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Schedule 2

APPEALS TO SPECIAL ADJUDICATOR: SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Wardle: I beg to move amendment No. 42, in page 13, line 34, at end insert

'and the making of such a reference shall, accordingly, be regarded as disposing of the appeal'.

The amendment is intended to clarify a point which was raised by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) in Committee. When a special adjudicator refers a case back to the Secretary of State for reconsideration because he does not agree that the asylum claim is without foundation, that will be the end of the proceedings on that appeal. The reconsideration will result in a new decision and if that decision is still unfavourable there will be a fresh right of appeal.

Mr. Fraser: I was hoping for an assurance that if a case was referred back, the Home Secretary would not come a second time to a decision that the case was without foundation. It is a common cause for complaint, especially over visitor appeals, that people go to appeal and win their appeal and the matter is then referred back to an entry clearance officer or the home officer. Despite the success of the appeal, the same decision is reached all over again. It seems a double jeopardy that someone launches an appeal against the decision that the case was without foundation, the thing is referred back to the Home Office and the Home Secretary comes to exactly the same decision.

It is a great pity if, as a matter of policy, the Home Office has two bites of the cherry. These people are in considerable jeopardy. They have only two days to appeal. It seems that enough harm is done if the decision is reached once, not twice.

Amendment agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Order for Third Reading read.

11.24 pm

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The Bill has been thoroughly considered this evening and it obviously arouses considerable concerns in some parts of the House, which I hope that we have satisfied and answered adequately.

The need for the Bill is demonstrated and when it is on the statute book it will be a substantial improvement on our system for dealing with asylum applications. Despite the controversy over particular amendments, there is a wide range of agreement in most sections of the House.

I think that every hon. Member is agreed that Britain must continue to honour its international obligations under the 1951 convention and to adhere to our long-standing tradition of giving political asylum to people who flee here fearing persecution in their own country. I also trust that there is widespread support for the proposition that we must maintain our improving race relations and improve our community relations. We all know that those relationships are far from perfect, but we have a good record of improvement. In many ways the situation in this country is more satisfactory than that in other parts of the European Community or north America. One contributory factor to that steady improvement is the fact that the host community feels comfortable with present immigration controls.

We all know that in recent years we have faced sudden increased pressures, especially on the asylum front. About five years ago there was a sudden upsurge in the number of asylum applications. With hindsight, I do not think that that was because the world or certain key countries suddenly became more dangerous. For one reason or another there was sudden widespread awareness in the outside world that, because of the international obligations placed upon us to consider each application, an application for asylum was a way to establish residence in this country without satisfying the normal immigration rules.

Just like every other European country, we have experienced a sudden upsurge in applications. We are not alone among European countries in deciding that procedures need to be considered carefully if we are to be able to cope with those added pressures.

I could cover many of the provisions in the Bill at Third Reading, but I shall not do so as we have covered them exhaustively already. Essentially, the policy aim is to adhere to our international obligations, to investigate thoroughly each claim and to ensure that we continue to grant asylum in well-founded cases. To satisfy that obligation, it will help if we have a quicker system to deal with manifestly unfounded claims, to ensure that we turn away from these shores people who might otherwise come in excessive numbers—an important result—and who might impose a burden on our public services by establishing the right to live here when, in reality, they have no legal or any other basis for doing so.

I am sure that the pressures that we have faced during the past few years will not diminish during the coming decade. At times during the passage of the Bill it has been argued that the pressures that we face are not as acute as those faced by other European Community countries. The number of asylum applications to this country is sometimes contrasted with the 0·5 million people who

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

enter the Federal Republic of Germany in one year to claim asylum, which is causing the Germans to reconsider their basic law and to find out what they can do.

Because the world remains a dangerous and turbulent place and because it is easier to travel, we must expect that ever greater numbers of people will want to come to this country to improve their quality of life. I feel no resentment at that. I am convinced that if I were young and single and living in some destitute third-world country, I might regard coming to the United Kingdom to establish a different future for myself from that which I could expect to enjoy in a third-world country as a legitimate aspiration. There is a part of me—as there must be of most Members of Parliament—that would like to satisfy vast numbers of those aspirations, but common sense tells us all, as it tells the majority of the British public, that we cannot accommodate flows on the scale that would follow from such a widespread and indiscriminate acceptance of entry into this country of people from poorer countries.

The 1951 Geneva convention was meant to set bounds to the right of asylum. Political asylum still means what it has always meant—the right to refuge, from a well-founded fear of individual persecution. The systems in the Bill provide a better and more sensible way to deal with that, they protect against fraud and provide a quicker way to determine all the difficult cases that are near the border line, which need to be determined with some expedition.

I therefore commend the Bill to the House. I believe that once it is in place we will see a marked improvement in our ability to deal with all the worrying pressures upon us. We will continue to discharge our obligations under the convention and in general in a humanitarian and sensible way. The Bill will enable us to do that in a practical manner.

11.29 pm

Mr. Blair The Bill has been vigorously opposed by the Opposition for good reasons. I should like to pay tribute to my hon. Friends who served on the Committee for some 59 hours, which I am informed is more than twice the time spent on the same Bill when it was put to the House before the election.

Such scrutiny of the Bill has been necessary because of the huge strength of feeling not just in the House but outside against some of its provisions. Many of its elements are thoroughly objectionable. The procedures for shortening the time in which applicants can appeal against refusal of asylum have been condemned, not just here but throughout the land, as unfair and arbitrary. Many of the rules reflecting on the credibility of applicants seem to bear little relation to the reality of their position as asylum seekers. In particular, as we learnt from earlier debates, the removal of the right to appeal from those seeking visitors' visas is a measure without any justification—no justification was put forward for the abolition of those rights.

People who come here for a wedding, funeral or to pay a last visit to an elderly relative will have their right to appeal against refusal of entry taken from them. Last year, almost 2,000 such appeals were allowed. Injustices will mount up in the future and it is no surprise that this provision has caused deep and lasting offence within the Asian and other ethnic minority communities. As was pointed earlier, not once was that provision put before the people in an election manifesto; it was concealed before the election and introduced afterwards.

We do not take exception to the detailed provisions of the Bill alone, but to the ethos and prejudice that underlie it. We take exception to the assumption that asylum seekers should be treated as bogus until shown to be genuine. We take exception to the assumption that those from Pakistan or India who wish to visit their relatives will not feel the same sense of injustice and outrage as we would were we to be denied the right to visit our relatives in another country.

That prejudice, which runs throughout the Bill and which was the unspoken sentiment behind the entire deliberations of the Committee is nasty—worse than that; it is calculated. It is part of a design to play up this issue not for any interests of the public or the country, but simply for the interests of the Conservative party which sees that political capital can be made out of it. We saw that in debate after debate. The Home Secretary may have been fairly moderate on Third Reading, but hysterical claims were made earlier when isolated cases of fraud were used to construct an entire argument to provide that the current system is subject to wide-scale abuse.

An attempt has been made to portray anyone who has opposed the provisions on the ground of natural justice as someone who is advocating an irresponsible or open-door policy for immigration. All that has been done in the knowledge that those who will be most affected by the Bill will be of a different race or colour. I cannot believe that that is irrelevant to the way in which the Bill has been handled. This is a matter which arouses alarm among some of the population and which is designed to arouse the most virulent type of nationalism among others. An attempt has been made to pretend with varying degrees of crudity that those who seek to enter this country do so from the worst of motives rather than the worst of circumstances. Some elements of the debate may have been more elevated than that, but in several respects we have witnessed a fairly distasteful exercise—an attempt, under the guise of making necessary regulations, to stir up passions and prejudices that were better left dormant.

It will not be Members of Parliament who suffer once the Bill is enacted: it will be those who are least able to defend themselves and in the poorest condition to withstand some of its provisions—those most vulnerable to racial sentiment. I do not believe that that can possibly help good race relations in this country. The way in which the Bill is presented and the sentiment that underlies it do not merely make it objectionable in its provisions and unjust and arbitrary in its operation but reflect discredit on the Government who have introduced it.

11.35 pm

Mr. Maclennan: The Bill reflects no credit on the Home Secretary or on the Government who have introduced it. It was conceived before the election in circumstances of political exaggeration. It was designed not to deal with an administrative problem that was out of control but to suggest that the party of government had a peculiar concern about the prospects of the people of Britain being faced with uncontrollable immigration if the party or parties of opposition were to gain office.

The then Home Secretary flagrantly stirred up racial animosity. In introducing this Bill, the present Home Secretary has, in large measure, fallen heir to a Bill designed by his predecessor—whom the Prime Minister, for whatever reason, decided should not continue in office. The present Home Secretary has compounded this unacceptable measure's ugly face by including clause 9, which enjoys little support among any of those concerned about race relations in Britain and which some of the Conservative Members who are most closely involved in these matters find distasteful at best and certainly unnecessary.

It is also an indication of the futility of our legislative process, particularly after the dominance of one party in government for well over a decade, that it has proved almost impossible to obtain any significant amendment to the Bill, even though those who have to deal with the problems of those seeking asylum and immigration agree, almost unanimously, that the Bill is misconceived. That has been true notably of those parts of the Bill that deal with the housing of asylum seekers. Local authorities, social work departments, voluntary agencies and all those agencies to whose advice the Government pay lip service have been united in saying that the Bill would work injustice and place intolerable administrative burdens upon the local authorities.

The Bill limits due process. If we had a decent constitution, the curtailment of rights of appeal would be unlikely to pass muster in the courts. But we do not have a proper constitutional system for dealing with these matters. We have to rely upon the sense of virtually all-powerful Ministers who cannot be shamed even by the more sensitive members of their own party into conceding the most modest amendments. That is why we shall vote against the Bill tonight.

11.39 pm

Mr. Maddon: As a member of the Standing Committee on both asylum Bills, I have listened for many hours to Ministers seeking to justify the legislation. They have lamentably failed to do so, not only throughout those two Standing Committees, but again tonight. We heard nothing from the Home Secretary or the Parliamentary Under-Secretary or their predecessors to justify the legislation. They have been unable to call in aid any objective evidence or the views of any reputable organisation or individual to justify the legislation. I very much hope that the other place will defeat parts, if not all, of the Bill. If that is not the case and the legislation becomes law, and if, because of the unrealistic appeal rights given to those seeking asylum in this country, even one man or woman is sent back to torture or death, the responsibility for that will fall squarely on the Government.

The Bill's antecedents lie in the planning that was carried out by this Administration in 1982-83 when careful decisions were taken to restrict entry into this country, predominantly by black and Asian people, whether visitors, those seeking settlement, those coming for marriage or those seeking asylum. Almost every year, more and more restrictions have been introduced by legislation or by administrative action. Each year a few more rights have been chipped away. The Bill has substantially accelerated that process.

I very much regret clause 9, which did not form part of the original Bill. As has been said, I believe that that action was deliberately taken to avoid the embarrassment of criticism during a general election. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), who had the courage of his convictions and voted against clause 9. I have not had an opportunity of checking the voting list, but I suspect that a number of other Conservative Members who serve constituencies with substantial numbers of black and Asian constituents know the heartache that clause 9 will cause. It will divide families, and cause considerable concern, anger and resentment in the homes of many black and Asian constituents throughout the country.

There is no justification for the abolition of that right of appeal. That abolition sends out a signal to those people settled in this country, in some cases for two and three generations, that they are not welcome here or trusted, and that their relatives and friends are not even to be given the right to visit them in this country. Feelings will run deep.

Today more than a thousand people from this country, predominantly black and Asian people, expressed their anger at the abolition of the right of appeal against a refusal to grant a holiday in this country. They fear—their fears have been reinforced by some of the expressions used by the Home Secretary and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary today—that there may well be more to come. Will those seeking settlement applications in this country be fingerprinted? Will other rights of appeal on applications to enter this country be abolished? Is it the beginning of the slippery slope towards more restrictions and more difficulty?

Those involved look to the European Community. As has been said, it is possible in theory for 300 million EC nationals—predominantly white people—to enter this country without a visa, establish a business without any recognisable assets and have their parents, grandparents and children up to the age of 21 come to join them without any difficulty. Given that such people are not obliged to apply for permission to enter or for visas of any kind, the sense is created that there are two sets of citizens in this country: first-class citizens, who are predominantly white, and second-class citizens, who are predominantly black or Asian. The thrust of this legislation, which the Home Secretary is steamrolling through the House tonight, intensifies the feeling that there are indeed two such classes of citizen.

If we are to unite and overcome the great difficulties affecting race and community relations in this country, we should not pass such legislation. We need only a one-clause Bill to introduce an effective right of appeal for all—a system that will lead to applications being dealt with quickly and fairly, which is what Ministers say that they want. Such a right would help the general public. If Ministers really want to help them, there is no need for this Bill. All they need to do is inject more money into the system, providing more officials to deal with the applications.

There is no reason why applications for political asylum cannot be dealt with in six months, or 12 months at most. I do not seek to defend or justify delays of up to five years. Someone who came to see me last week had put in an application that has been considered now for five years. There is no justification for that, but we do not need the Bill to remedy it. We need a Government that is anxious

[Mr. Madden]

to provide justice and efficiency, not a Minister who accuses those of us who are concerned with such matters of wallowing in compassion.

11.46 pm

Mr. Corbyn: I deeply regret the fact that the Bill has reached Third Reading. We saw off the last attempt to introduce such a Bill, with the onset of the general election, but now another Bill has returned to us.

There is enormous opposition to the Bill outside the House. Despite the attempts by newspapers to whip up support for limiting rights to political asylum in this country, considerable numbers of people have expressed concern and signed petitions when they have seen asylum seekers from former Yugoslavia, Zaire, Somalia and other countries denied entry. More than 6,000 people have signed a petition to be presented to the House tomorrow, supported by the Refugee Council. Large numbers of people are deeply worried about turning our backs on people who seek safety within our shores.

People are also worried about the barbed wire barrier constructed around western Europe to limit the numbers of people seeking safety here. In response to the racist and fascist attacks in Germany, the response has not been, as it should have been, a wholehearted attack on the fascists. Instead, the system which grants people political asylum has been blamed for the rise of the far right. People should read the history of Europe in the 1920s and 1930s and recognise what appeasement did then—and what the appeasement of fascists and racists will do now.

The Bill has implications for democracy, too. Increasingly, decisions are being taken in secret by the Trevi group of Ministers, not in open debates in Parliaments. The Bill has implications for local authorities, which are expected to become the agents of the Home Office in dealing with refugee matters. It has implications for everyone's civil liberties because it will enable children to be fingerprinted merely because their parents or guardians have brought them here to seek political asylum. It will sweep away the right of appeal against totally erroneous decisions by immigration officers. It is surely a basis of democracy that anyone who makes a decision affecting others should be subject to challenge. People should have a right of redress, but the Bill will take it away.

The introduction of a visa requirement for transit passengers travelling through British airports is an extension of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987. That Act stops people seeking political asylum in this country and those people are primarily from Sri Lanka. The visa requirement for transit passengers will stop people in transit at airports such as Heathrow from approaching an immigration officer and seeking political asylum. The effects are quite appalling. There are obvious commercial effects, but I am more concerned about the effects on the rights of asylum seekers.

I hope that no hon. Member will ever have to seek political asylum. Millions of people who lived under oppressive regimes and sought safety and asylum in various parts of the world are now venerated as a good part of history. When the history of the 1980s and 1990s is written and people read that those who tried to escape from tyrannical regimes were denied entry to Britain, our history will be seen as just as infamous as the histories of countries in western Europe in the 1920s and 1930s that refused asylum to Jewish people who subsequently perished in the gas chambers. The issue is as serious as that, and the Bill is part of a process of turning our backs on oppression and its causes, perhaps because we make too much money from selling arms to regimes which use them to kill their own people.

Cheap remarks have been made about those of us who supported the right of Viraj Mendes to stay in this country. I remind hon. Members who made those remarks that in the year after he was deported back to Sri Lanka, after being in this country for 16 years, 60,000 illegal killings occurred in that country. The British high commissioner was expelled from Sri Lanka a year later because he had the temerity to criticise the human rights record of its Government. Could anyone say that Mendes was sent back to a place of safety? He had to live in hiding for more than a year.

We oppose the Bill. If it is passed, I hope that the House of Lords will amend it in a way that makes it virtually useless. I hope that the campaign for decency, civil rights and the right of appeal will continue. Above all, I hope that the campaign for genuine internationalism and understanding outside the House will continue. I hope that we shall stop turning our backs on people who plead for our help and support and a place of safety. We have had enough newspaper campaigns and racist remarks in support of the Bill. I hope that future campaigns will operate differently and that we can look forward to a world based on humanity and sanity rather than one that closes doors on people who need help.

11.52 pm

Mr. Piara S. Khabra (Ealing, Southall): I spoke on Second Reading and voted against the Bill. It is a sad day when Conservative Members are forced against their consciences to support the Bill. The legislation will have its worst effect in my constituency because many people from the Indian sub-continent come here to stay with relatives. They do that for various reasons.

In the past this country has provided natural justice and people had recourse to the courts for mistaken decisions. That fundamental right is being taken away and that is against this country's history and traditions and its natural justice. The Bill is evil and immoral. I have opposed it and I shall oppose it again.

The Secretary of State knows that, when I last went to India, I was able to see Sir Nicholas Fenn, our high commissioner. I was given the opportunity to see some of the officers working in the British high commission in New Delhi. I am sure that they are not happy about the Bill. They did not want to spell out why they were not happy, but they knew that until now, if the entry clearance officer made a mistake, those involved could go to a court of law to test his decisions.

I am not happy about the Bill. It will affect the position of many Tory Members of Parliament in the next election. I know that during the last general election campaign many Ministers visited constituencies with a large number of Asians. Many Tory Members, who have thousands of Asians and black people in their constituencies, know that they now have potential political foes. I know that promises were given to the Asian communities and lies were told to the people. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman can rephrase that.

Mr. Khabra: I can put it this way. Untruths were told to the people. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is in order as long as he is not saying that anyone has told lies in the House.

Mr. Khabra: The Conservative party is the party of family. It believes in family unity. Family members should be able to meet each other in this country. A false promise had been made. People were not told the truth. Conservative Members should take note of the fact that in the next election—perhaps the council elections in 1994, or the elections for the European Parliament—their party will not be spared. They should consider their position. I know that many of them are already searching their consciences and they should have the courage of their convictions and vote against this wicked, evil Bill. I oppose it and I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to do the same.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 293, Noes 243.

Division No. 108] **[11.58 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boneor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Killedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter

Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Ordered,

That Mr. William Ross be added to the Select Committee on Members' Interests.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Procedure (Public Petitions)

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I beg to move,

That this House approves the recommendations contained in paragraphs 15 and 16 of the Fourth Report of Session 1991-92 from the Select Committee on Procedure, relating to Public Petitions (HC 286).

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order, order.

PETITION

Garden Centre, Stockton-on-Tees

12.10 am

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I beg leave to present a petition collected by Peter Barratt's garden centre, Yarm road, Stockton-on-Tees, and signed by 1,324 people. It says simply that they want to be able to continue to shop at their local garden centre on Sunday mornings and afternoons.

To lie upon the Table.

Hillingdon Hospital (Incinerator)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

12.11 am

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): My purpose in speaking in this Adjournment debate is to make the House aware of the deep sense of grievance felt by my constituents in Hillingdon about the pollution of their environment caused by the operation of the Hillingdon hospital incinerator plant. It is also to call on my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside to use his considerable influence and powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to protect the people whom I represent from the emission of noxious substances into the atmosphere, the noise caused by the operation of the incinerator and the disturbance caused by the delivery of clinical waste at all hours in large vehicles in a residential area.

I also call upon my hon. Friend the Minister to ensure that the people who sent me to the House to represent them can enjoy the peace and quiet of their homes and gardens—which is surely every Englishman's right—and to see that the statutory body established by Parliament to license the proper disposal of waste puts the interests of residents first, not last, and that it cracks down on the illegal activities of those who seek to avoid responsibility for their actions. Above all, I want the existing operation of the incinerator plant in a residential area brought to an end as quickly as possible.

This is a classic example of the kind of case that a Member of Parliament brings to the House in his representative capacity. The background is that an application was submitted by Hillingdon area health authority to Hillingdon council in July 1990 for an extension to the incinerator plant at Hillingdon hospital. It was made at a time when the authority had the benefit of Crown immunity. Subsequently the incinerator plant was extended to include a condenser unit and a gas plant. It was not a planning application in the accepted sense because the area health authority enjoyed the benefit of Crown immunity. It was, therefore, required only to consult the local planning authority before proceeding with a development that would otherwise have required planning permission in the normal way.

As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, that immunity was removed from health authorities on 1 April 1991, but still existed when the proposals were considered. Local residents were consulted by Hillingdon council's planning department, and six residents responded. In November 1990, the council's environment sub-committee decided that, had this been an application for normal planning permission, approval would have been granted subject to conditions. However, it was not, and still is not, possible for the council to attach conditions in respect of consultations. Consequently, the council states that there are no conditions to fulfil. As far as I can tell, the only body able to attach conditions was, and is, the London Waste Regulatory Authority, which is responsible for licensing the operation of the disposal of waste.

Having said that, I should add that it is important to put the proposed extension into perspective. I understand that, at the time when residents were consulted by the local planning authority, the original incinerator burnt 10 to 15 tonnes of clinical waste each week; it was burnt during the

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

daytime only. The waste originated from three local hospitals in the health authority's jurisdiction. The only annoyance to local residents was the occasional emission of smuts which spoilt the washing on local washing lines, and minor damage to the paintwork of cars parked in the area. Even those difficulties had been minimised following representations that I had made, over a number of years, on behalf of my constituents.

It was against that background that local residents were advised that the proposed extension to the original incinerator was needed to facilitate the installation of a cleaner burning plant to enable compliance with legislation governing emissions to the atmosphere. Local people also believed that the extension was to cater for local needs alone. It was therefore not surprising that only six residents responded to the consultative process, and that the planning authority would have recommended acceptance had this been a normal planning application. In fact, the position has turned out to be very different from what was expected.

A number of local residents consider that the local planning authority misjudged, or was not properly informed about, the scale of the development and the impact that it would have on a residential area. They also tell me that they consider that the use of Crown immunity was inappropiate, and that the local health authority's proposals should have been subjected to statutory "bad neighbour" development procedures. I hope that my hon. Friend will comment on that when he replies.

Let me now describe the reality of the situation that faces my constituents. It is not a comparatively minor extension to the incinerator plant, or just an improvement in measures to control emissions to the atmosphere adopted by a benevolent health authority; in fact, it has turned out to be a fairly substantial clinical waste incineration operation, run by Basic Energy (UK) Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Blue Circle Industries. In other words, it is a commercial waste disposal industry, operating 24 hours a day in the middle of a residential area and burning not 10 to 15 tonnes—as happened previously—but 300 tonnes of waste each week.

It appears that to achieve that massive increase in throughput, the old incinerator plant was virtually demolished, and has been replaced with a new and larger building. At the outset, the operators began burning rubber tyres, and stopped only as a result of local opposition. Moreover, it started to operate before a certificate of registration had been obtained from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. Although an application was made on 21 March, it was not granted until 27 November 1991. Despite requests by local residents to Basic Energy to see the licence and the authorisation by HMIP, they were not granted.

Another aspect of the matter that infuriates my constituents is that clinical waste is being delivered to the plant from all over the country—from places as far away as Durham and Newcastle. There are inadequate storage facilities for the waste. I am talking about dressings, disposable syringes and similar material that one would expect would have to be disposed of by hospitals carrying out surgical operations and the like.

For this and other reasons, large vehicles are being unloaded throughout the night, with all the associated noise that that causes. I am told that there is no ash facility under cover and that ash was stored in open containers adjacent to the hospital swimming pool. This ash contained unburnt clinical dressings and syringes. Consequently, my constituents maintained that Basic Energy was not observing the conditions of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's registration, although that was subsequently remedied. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution also issued an eight-point improvement notice on this operator, but unfortunately the problems persist.

I come now to the responsibilities of the London Waste Regulatory Authority. What action has it taken to deal with the problems faced by local residents who are unable to use their gardens in the summer because of noise, smells and other similar manifestations? The London Waste Regulatory Authority does not seem to have acted promptly, and it was not until comparatively recently that it took action and insisted that the plant should be run properly.

Why did the LWRA apparently permit an unauthorised incinerator plant to continue in operation without a licence? Why did it take so long to act, following alleged breaches of conditions of its licence? It was, after all, at a meeting of the authority's licensing and registration sub-committee on 21 July 1992 that the licence was eventually granted. At that meeting, the officers were instructed to

"take further appropriate enforcement action in consultation with the Chief Solicitor, should operations at the facility not be in full compliance with the licence, including the working plan, within one week of its issue, save that no enforcement action shall be taken if the facility has ceased to operate by the end of that week and remains non-operational until such time as full compliance with the terms of the licence can be achieved."

Subsequently, following the alleged breaches of the conditions, LWRA officers visited the site. A prosecution is now pending at Uxbridge magistrates court. I realise that my hon. Friend the Minister cannot comment on the prosecution. However, I ask him to tell me how the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 can and will be activated to protect my constituents. Following a meeting with my hon. Friend, I understand that it is necessary for the operator of this incinerator plant to reapply for a new licence. As I understand the position, it must be applied for between 1 October 1992 and the spring of this year.

I believe that the views of HMIP will be of the utmost importance in considering whether a new licence should be granted. I believe that it should not be granted. I consider it to be unacceptable to permit the storage and burning of clinical waste from all over Britain in an incinerator plant located in the middle of a residential area. There are other commercial incineration facilities well away from people's homes that could be utilised for this purpose. That is where hospitals from all round the country should send bandages, syringes, low-level radioactive waste material and other material which needs to be disposed of. Surely, if the Environmental Protection Act 1990 means anything, we should insist on the closure of this plant now.

This is an important test case. If the incinerator continues as it is at present, the Environmental Protection Act 1990 will be shown to be wanting. I call on my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside to act and to show that he and HMIP are determined to stop this pollution without delay.

12.25 am

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): I am well aware of the public complaint surrounding the Hillingdon hospital incinerator. I have corresponded with my hon. Friend several times, and met him to discuss this distressing matter. I am sorry to hear that his constituents are still unhappy with the situation. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for vigorously pursuing the matter in the interests of his constituents.

It might be helpful to the House if I were to set out some of the background to this matter because it is slightly complicated. In July 1990, Hillingdon health authority referred a proposal to the London borough of Hillingdon, as the local planning authority, to replace its existing incinerator, which was a very rudimentary affair, and could not possibly have met present day standards for pollution control. That was done under the arrangements then in force for Crown development as set out in circular 18/84. By this procedure, the developing department, although benefiting from Crown immunity, notifies the planning authority of its proposal either in outline or in full detail. If the planning authority objects and the dispute cannot be resolved, the developing department may refer the case to the Secretary of State. Although the new incinerator was considerably larger than the old one, the local authority raised no objections, and the proposal was not referred to the Department.

The new incinerator was subsequently built during 1991 and is owned and operated by Basic Energy (UK) Ltd., a member of the Blue Circle group of companies. The incinerator built by Basic Energy has up-to-date pollution abatement equipment and monitoring and control systems, and was designed to achieve present day standards. In principle, that is surely a most beneficial way of disposing of waste of this kind, both rendering the waste biologically and chemically harmless and reducing the emission of combustion products from the hospital's own heavy oil-fired boilers. In addition, the heat generated from the incinerator of the clinical waste is used to raise steam to heat the hospital.

Under current legislation releases to the air from the incinerator are regulated by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. The London Waste Regulatory Authority regulates the waste disposal operation. Both bodies are obliged to register or licence a proposed activity unless they believe that harm will be done to the environment or that there is a danger to public health.

HMIP registered the incinerator in November 1991 under the legislation current at the time, the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. As required by statutory instrument 318 of 1989, the public was consulted, but no responses were received from local residents.

The regulation of the delivery, handling and storage of clinical waste, and the disposal of the ash from the incinerator, fell to the LWRA. Initially, there was some uncertainty in the LWRA about whether the site required a waste disposal licence under the Control of Pollution Act because of the imminent application of integrated pollution control under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

At the end of 1991, the LWRA advised Basic Energy that a licence would be required. A licence was granted in July 1992 after extensive public consultation, although under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 the only statutory consultees are the National Rivers Authority and the local waste collection authority. However, since the plant has come into operation over the last year I am aware that there have been problems and that many complaints have been received from the public and routed through to my hon. Friend.

The LWRA considers that the site is being operated in breach of its licence conditions, but the company is disputing the interpretation of some of the conditions and the matter is to go to court on 25 January. I understand that the company has notified the Department of its intention to appeal to the Secretary of State against the licence conditions. In view of these developments, it would be inappropraite for me to comment any further on this matter because my hon. Friend will appreciate that we are in a quasi-judicial position.

Since the operation started, HMIP for its part has not been fully satisfied with the management of the releases to the atmosphere. Inspectors visited the site 34 times in 1992 —far more than is usual for plants of this type and size —and met representatives of the local community on a number of occasions to hear their complaints at first hand. They have considered prosecution on specific occasions, but there has never been sufficient evidence to support this. However, they have served two improvement notices which have secured specific improvements over and above those obtained by the constant pressure exerted by inspectors.

HMIP has arranged for independent tests on emissions to air on a number of occasions as well as requiring more tests from the company. The most recent tests done on behalf of HMIP show that the incinerator emissions are within the current standards set by the conditions of the certificate of registration.

I also know that offensive odours have occasioned complaints and HMIP has arranged for Warren Spring laboratory to carry out an odour assessment. The results are due shortly and I will let my hon. Friend have a copy of them in due course.

HMIP has also received complaints about the frequency with which the incinerator dump stack operates. The dump stack is necessary for safety reasons and HMIP is satisfied that its operation does not harm the environment. None the less, it has called for a programme, which is shortly to be completed, to reduce the number of times that the dump stack is used and to improve the standards of maintenance of the dump stack and its control system.

As well as releases to the atmosphere, I understand that local residents have complained about noise pollution and my hon. Friend mentioned it tonight. This is primarily a matter for the local authority. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 now provides environmental health officers with extensive powers to control noise which they consider to be a statutory nuisance.

For completeness, the House may want to know that the operation of the incinerator is also authorised under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 to continue the disposal of small quantities of radioactive waste from patient care. This is a common practice at hospitals and HMIP has reassessed the emissions and remains fully satisfied that the public are properly protected.

Under the legislation operating at the time the new incinerator was commissioned, the regulation of the site was split between HMIP and LWRA. On 31 October 1992, the incinerator fell to regulation under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. That is powerful new legislation

[Mr. David Maclean]

which applies integrated pollution control to air, water and land. Basic Energy has submitted an application for authorisation as required by the Act and this will be placed on the public registers held by HMIP, the local authority and the National Rivers Authority.

I can assure my hon. Friend that HMIP will scrutinise the application closely and, before determining it, will take into account all comments from members of the public and the statutory consultees. The company will have to demonstrate that it can meet the new plant standards laid down by the chief inspector's guidance notes for clinical waste incinerators. In anticipation of that, and under pressure from the LWRA, I understand that the company has already applied for planning permission to extend the incinerator building to improve its waste handling practices, and I presume that that is an attempt to deal with the problem of bins being loaded, as shown by the photos that my hon. Friend kindly sent me.

I do not wish to say anything tonight about the conditions to be set in any authorisation as that could prejudice the position of the Secretary of State as regards appeals against decisions by Her Majesty's chief inspector of pollution. Indeed I am afraid that I must tell my hon. Friend that in this matter there are a number of things which I cannot say because of legal reasons and which prevent me from appearing as sympathetic as I would like to be to the concerns that my hon. Friend has raised and to his constituents. I cannot discuss any appeal against the licence condition, nor any matter which is to come before the courts. I am sure that my hon. Friend will also understand that I cannot discuss any matter relating to the planning permission currently being sought nor, as I have just said, any condition to be set under integrated pollution-control legislation.

Although I cannot go into those issues now, I am very well aware of local public concern about the plant. I can assure my hon. Friend that laws against pollution will be firmly upheld. HMIP, the LWRA and the local authority have, I know, all been doing what they can, within the powers that they have, and have secured improvements in the operation of the plant, which will be consolidated in any authorisation issued under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. I am confident that they will continue to keep the operation under close supervision so as properly to protect the environment for us all.

But it is only fair to my hon. Friend that I should make it clear to the House that I will not permit pollution control legislation to be used to close an industrial site which local residents feel is sited in the wrong place. That would be a misuse of pollution control law to deal with a matter which is properly for planning law. Therefore, I cannot—to use my hon. Friend's words—bring its operation to an end, as he asks, merely because it is sited in a residential area, even though I have every sympathy for him and for his constituents. I repeat my assurance that, now that the incinerator is under the control of the integrated pollution control provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, its tough provisions will be fairly applied—but applied they will be. I hope that that will improve the local environment and that my hon. Friend's constituents will see that the law is adequate to protect them.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 12 January 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

DEFENCE

Arms Sales

1. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent contacts his Department has had with the Indonesian Defence Ministry about arms sales.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): My Department has a number of contacts with the Indonesian Defence Ministry covering a variety of issues. Those contacts are, however, a confidential matter for the two Governments.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the Minister confirm that the sale of British Aerospace Hawk combat aircraft to Indonesia is to go ahead? Is he aware that the Indonesian Government have illegally occupied East Timor for many years and have killed more than a third of its population? Does not he feel any shame at all that, despite the lessons of the Gulf, the British Government are continuing to sell arms to a murderous dictator?

Mr. Hamilton: The point of selling Hawk aircraft to Indonesia is to give jobs to people in this country. There is no doubt in my mind that a Hawk aircraft can do nothing to suppress the people of East Timor. The aircraft is not suitable for that purpose and we have guarantees from the Indonesians that the aircraft would not be used for internal suppression.

Mr. Nicholls: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, by third-world standards, the Indonesian regime's human rights record is considerably better than many and is improving all the time? Does he share my sadness that a country which is trying to improve its human rights record, which will be the major player in that part of the world and which has shown that it wants to be friends with Britain, should be constantly denigrated in ludicrous terms such as we have just heard?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, and the fact that we do business with Indonesia puts us in a position where we can influence the actions of that Government. We constantly make every effort to improve their human rights record and to improve the situation in East Timor.

Scottish Regiments and Battalions

2. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received in the review of Scottish regiments and battalions; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): A number of representations have been received about the future of Scottish regiments and battalions, all of which have been noted.

Mr. Salmond: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that it is becoming abundantly apparent from those representations that the regiments and the infantry are becoming overstretched on current commitments? Given that, will the Secretary of State further acknowledge that a reassessment of the Government's position on regimental mergers in Scotland would be welcome? The Secretary of State will have seen the comments of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) that he has already been engaged in such a private reassessment. Is that the case and, if so, will he take this opportunity to share that information with the rest of the House?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman's supplementary question refers to Army manpower as a whole. I am satisfied that at present we can meet all our obligations without undue overstretch. If I ever came to a different conclusion, it would be appropriate to review the assumptions of "Options for Change".

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that he has always made it clear that Army manpower and the pressures on the Army are subject to constant review in the light of events? That is what I have been saying. Will he also confirm that the Scottish regiments are part of the fabric that makes the United Kingdom united, as is Rosyth dockyard, and that the political implications must also be taken into consideration?

Mr. Rifkind: I can certainly confirm that the Scottish regiments have made a fine and honourable contribution to the requirements of the United Kingdom armed forces over many years and I am sure that that will continue. As my hon. Friend knows, the future of the dockyards in the United Kingdom is presently under consideration.

Dr. Reid: What a complacent answer that was from the Secretary of State when neither he nor the Minister of State for the Armed Forces can give me a guarantee that our infantry men and women serving in Bosnia will not receive redundancy notices even while they are there and under fire. Is not it clear that we cannot possibly sustain two extra battalions in Northern Ireland, maintain an extended military force in Bosnia, assign units to an enhanced Western European Union, as the Secretary of State has promised, and contribute to the Gulf on the basis of defence plans that were drawn up before any of those commitments were known? Why does not the Secretary of State now do the honourable thing, carry out a full defence review and ensure that we have the troops necessary to meet the commitments that he and the Foreign Secretary keep making?

Mr. Rifkind: I would find the hon. Gentleman's indignation less synthetic if he did not represent a party whose conference called for further reductions in defence expenditure amounting to many billions of pounds. He should make up his mid about whether his party's policy accords with the views of its members.

Arms Sales

3. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on defence sales to Kuwait.

Mr. Rifkind: I signed a defence equipment memorandum of understanding with Kuwait on 2 December. This will enable Kuwait to purchase defence equipment directly on a Government-to-Government basis from the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, which will place and manage contracts with British equipment manufacturers. Negotiations are already taking place for the sale of GKN's Warrior and Piranha vehicles.

Mr. Evans: That news will be welcomed by the many thousands of people who are involved in the defence industry in this country, especially in the north-west. In 1990, defence sales amounted to £3 billion.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend note the policy of Opposition Members who are opposed to the sale of arms to non-democracies, thereby jeopardising this country's defence industry and the contract that he has mentioned? That could lead to a loss of jobs in this country.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the remarks of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), who, speaking on behalf of the Opposition, opposed any arms sales to non-democracies. If his policy were implemented, the many British industries that will benefit from sales to countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and to middle eastern countries, would be gravely jeopardised and there would be many job losses as a consequence.

Mr. Dalyell: Has the Secretary of State, or any senior Ministry of Defence official, read Kenneth Timmerman's book "The Death Lobby—How the West Armed Iraq"? Given the behaviour of the Kuwaitis towards the Palestinians and many others who built up Kuwait, given the human rights situation and given the legal difficulties over the border with Iraq, would not it be better—in the face of the appalling abyss presented by the alternative—at least to enter into some kind of dialogue with Baghdad?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is incredibly naive if he believes that dialogue with Baghdad is likely to prove fruitful. At this very moment, we are witnessing Saddam Hussein's intransigence in refusing to recognise even the authority of the United Nations Security Council.

Mr. Conway: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take the opportunity to congratulate the excellent management and work force of GKN in Shropshire, which makes the Warrior vehicle—and, more important, Perkins Engines in Shrewsbury, which produces the engine that fires that tremendous vehicle—on the expertise and workmanship that have resulted in such a saleable product?

Mr. Rifkind: I am happy to do so. The fact that the United Kingdom has increased its share of the world market from 17 to 20 per cent. in the past year is a tribute to the professionalism, experience and dedication of the many hundreds of thousands of people who work in our defence industries, including those mentioned by my hon. Friend.

Mr. David Clark: Have the Kuwaitis made any requests for defence equipment recently, in view of the Iraqi incursions into their territory? Do the Government believe that the United Nations did or did not approve that equipment and what does the Secretary of State think should be done if the incursions continue?

Mr. Rifkind: We are currently negotiating with the Kuwaitis about their possible interest in Warrior and Piranha armoured vehicles. They have expressed great interest in taking forward the contracts. As for the recent incursions into Kuwaiti territory, the United Nations Security Council has made it clear that that is unacceptable behaviour and has demanded that the Iraqis return the Silkworm missiles that were removed and cease their transgressions with regard to the frontier between Iraq and Kuwait.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, apart from selling arms to Kuwait, we should give the Kuwaitis strong advice about how to protect the defence equipment in their care? Will he and the Government ensure that representations are made—not only to the United Nations, but to the Kuwaiti authorities—about the recent scandalous stealing of equipment by the Iraqis which suggests that the Kuwaiti authorities have been extremely negligent?

Mr. Rifkind: The equipment in question was in the hands of United Nations personnel, who, under United Nations rules, are unable to be armed. For that reason, the Iraqis who crossed the border were able to remove the equipment. That was unacceptable and the Security Council has made its views known.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the reply——

Madam Speaker: Order. As it was not the hon. Gentleman's substantive question, I cannot take that as a point of order.

"Options for Change"

4. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what cutbacks in defence procurement are envisaged in Wales due to the policies inherent in "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The effect on Wales of any reductions in defence procurement will depend on individual companies' success in winning business and on their commercial decisions about the size and location of their manufacturing facilities.

Mr. Llwyd: Does the Minister agree that the west of Wales has suffered very badly recently, with the imminent closure of RAF Brawdy and Trecwn and today's news that 300 jobs will go at Pendine? Will he assure us that the Ministry will work closely with the Welsh Office to secure some new job opportunities for this highly skilled work force, who are literally without hope?

Mr. Hamilton: We are already working closely with the Welsh office on Trecwn and Brawdy in west Wales. We keep in touch about the other ramifications of the proposals, but we are not directly responsible for defence

manufacturers in Wales. We very much regret the adjustments that were made to the work force which led to the recent job losses.

Mr. John Marshall: What would have happened to defence procurement in Wales and elsewhere if my right hon. Friend had listened to the advice of members of the Labour and Liberal parties?

Mr. Hamilton: Exactly. It is always amazing to see the resolutions that are passed at the conferences of the Opposition parties to cut defence expenditure radically, yet during defence questions Opposition Members constantly jump up and down saying that job losses are regrettable and that we should do all that we can to stimulate orders for defence equipment. As my hon. Friend said, the two do not tie together. The effect of a Labour Government, or indeed a Labour-Liberal Government, would be devastating on defence jobs across the country.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: In the past few days it has become clear that the Pendine proof and experimental establishment in my constituency is under severe threat of closure under the defence review, with the loss of 300 jobs. The base has several unique facilities. It has an excellent cost-efficiency record with the lowest cost per employee of any land unit and it is the only base that makes a profit. Will the Minister assure me that decisions about the future of these establishments will be based on fair cost comparisons? What has he to say to the 300 people in Pendine who are worried about their jobs?

Mr. Hamilton: Whenever a decision is taken to close a defence establishment, every consideration is taken into account, including the implications for local employment. The fact remains that we are dealing with a receding and reducing defence budget and must find savings where we can.

Mountain Rescue

5. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about his Department's participation in mountain rescue work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department has received a number of representations about its participation in mountain rescue work. The open government document, "The Future Provision of Royal Air Force Search and Rescue Helicopters", gives full details of the services that are made available by my Department for mountain rescue work. A copy is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Minister aware that heavy demand over the Christmas and new year period exposed the inadequacy of the existing helicopter emergency service? For example, a fortnight ago the Killin mountain rescue team took four hours to carry an injured man off a treacherous mountainside because all the helicopters were otherwise engaged. As the decision to withdraw the helicopter emergency service from Leuchars from April was taken without any meaningful consultation with bodies such as the Scottish Sports Council and the Mountain Rescue Committee for Scotland, will the Minister act now to ensure meaningful consultations with a view to reversing the closure decision and to replacing the Wessex flight at Leuchars with Sea Kings? Otherwise, there is a real danger that lives will be lost.

Mr. Hamilton: I cannot comment on the particular case of a mountain rescue team taking four hours to bring someone down, but, in such circumstances, the weather is invariably so bad that mountain rescue teams are the only people who can get to the beleagured person. We should not fool ourselves—nor should the hon. Gentleman—that helicopters can operate in all weathers, because they cannot. The point of mountain rescue teams is that they can operate in virtually any weather whereas helicopters cannot always reach the necessary areas.

While making changes to the search and rescue operation, we are fulfilling the civil requirement of being able to get anywhere from the base within an hour and that will be adequately carried out by the Sea Kings from Lossiemouth.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Will the Minister take the opportunity to commend the efforts of the mountain rescue team at RAF Leuchars which, in the past 24 hours, has been engaged in such tasks as rescuing stranded motorists and ensuring that meals on wheels are delivered to those who need them? Does he realise that such efforts create a very warm relationship between the Royal Air Force and the community and that that relationship is likely to be prejudiced by the withdrawal of search and rescue facilities from RAF Leuchars because it is well known that the quality of cover will be reduced in Fife and that lives may be put at risk? There is still time for the Government to think again and to accept that the best way in which to proceed is to replace the Wessex with the Sea King at RAF Leuchars.

Mr. Hamilton: To answer the first part of the hon. and learned Gentleman's question, I certainly commend the mountain rescue team at Leuchars and I am glad that it will continue to carry out its job there. I have already commented on helicopters—mountain rescue teams need them to take up their advance parties, but they move independently with the bulk of their people and are not dependent on helicopters for their work. I accept the hon. and learned Gentleman's point about the recent very bad weather—about 60 cars were identified by the helicopters from Leuchars—but the Sea Kings from Lossiemouth will cover most of that area. As the hon. and learned Gentleman acknowledged, they are much better helicopters and can fly in much worse weather.

Mr. Martlew: Does the Minister accept that his decision last October to close four RAF bases involved in search and rescue will mean an extra response time in coastal areas and in the mountains? It is not good enough for the Minister to say that we shall continue to meet the civil criteria, because his decision last October will mean that lives will be lost. Will he decide today to reverse the closures and satisfy the need for rescue teams in coastal and mountain areas because we are frightened that, if he does not, lives will be lost?

Mr. Hamilton: Our search and rescue capability is set up for military needs and we have found that we can reduce the military requirement and still remain well within the civil requirement. It must be true that if one doubled the number of search and rescue bases and cut response time to half an hour, the number of people who

suffered as a result would probably fall, but that would involve enormous costs. The civil requirement means getting a helicopter there within an hour and we are still able to fulfil that civil requirement.

Arms Diversification

6. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representation his Department has received about Government assistance towards arms diversification.

Mr. Rifkind: We receive a variety of representations from time to time on the question of arms diversification. The product ranges in which companies compete is, however, a matter best left to their own commercial judgment.

Mr. Miller: Against the background of recent arms cuts involving redundancies in my area, such as those at British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., British Aerospace, GEC and Cammell Laird, and in view of the Government's statement at the NATO meeting in Rome in November 1991 that they would support eastern European countries in their diversification, does not the Minister think that it is about time that he gave such support to British companies? Does he agree with the managing director of British Aerospace's military aircraft division that the Government have no policy on spin-off technologies?

Mr. Rifkind: British industry has not requested Government assistance for diversification. That is perfectly straightforward because it believes, rightly, that it is in the best position to judge what is in the interests of companies and how best to diversify to meet its changing needs. I remind the hon. Gentleman that, notwithstanding defence cuts, £9 billion worth of orders are placed primarily with British industry for defence procurement, so it is a continuing massive source of employment.

Mr. Ian Bruce: My right hon. and learned Friend has the difficult task of trying to trim the defence budget to close to our target, which is well above what the Opposition parties would try to achieve. Has he had conversations with my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade about the moneys available for communities that will be affected by defence cuts? When we cut miners' jobs, the Government immediately had £1 billion available for the mining communities. It seems strange that we do not have similar plans for the communities affected by defence cuts.

Mr. Rifkind: As my hon. Friend will be aware, any area that experiences large unemployment can benefit from the Government's regional policy and from the special assistance available to parts of the country that fall within the relevant criteria.

Nuclear Warheads (Soviet Union)

7. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the number of nuclear warheads remaining within the area of the old Soviet Union.

Mr. Rifkind: We estimate that there are some 27,000 or more nuclear warheads remaining within the area of the old Soviet Union.

Mr. Banks: There would be a big bang if they all went off together. All sane people clearly welcome the START 2 strategic arms reduction treaty. What financial and technical assistance has been provided to Russia, to Ukraine and to the other countries in eastern Europe to dismantle their nuclear weapons? Goiven START 2 and the end of the cold war, is not it time for the Government to give up the ridiculous Trident scheme? It is a criminal waste of money as there is clearly no enemy against which it will be pitched. It seems to be a case of political penis envy by the Government.

Mr. Rifkind: On the earlier part of the question, we are providing support to Russia and to other countries in a similar position for dismantling their surplus nuclear weapons. As for the rather absurd comments in the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, I remind him that not only does the former Soviet Union still have 27,000 nuclear warheads, but even after 10 years and the full implementation of the START 2 agreement, Russia will still have more than 3,000 strategic nuclear warheads, which is more than enough to create enormous devastation around the world.

Mrs. Browning: Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that we shall monitor the decommissioning and movement of those warheads in the Soviet Union? Will he also assure the House that Britain will maintain an independent nuclear deterrent as long as it is felt expedient to do so and while there are threats around the world from who knows where—not only from the old Warsaw pact countries—which make such a deterrent vital for the safety of our people?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is entirely correct. Measures will be taken to monitor the decommissioning or destruction of surplus nuclear weapons in Russia and in the United States. On the latter part of my hon. Friend's question, the United Kingdom's approach has always been to maintain the minimum deterrent that we require. In the case of Russia and the United States, there were aspirations to parity which resulted in huge increases in strategic nuclear weapons in both countries. Those weapons are now being cut by two thirds. We very much welcome that change, but both the United States and Russia will still have many more strategic nuclear weapons than the United Kingdom contemplates.

Somalia

8. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the progress of the United Kingdom involvement in the military operation in Somalia.

Mr. Rifkind: The United Kingdom has deployed two Royal Air Force Hercules aircraft together with about 90 RAF personnel to assist in Operation Restore Hope in Somalia. The aircraft are currently based with United States forces in Mombasa in Kenya and since 12 December have been engaged in the transport of humanitarian relief stores to affected areas inside Somalia.

Mr. Hanson: Given Britain's historic role in Somalia, does the Secretary of State agree that we should be doing far more than we are at present to assist the United Nations relief operation there? Is it not the case, however, that, due to the mismanagement of defence forces alluded

to earlier, we are not capable of supporting United Nations resolutions but have to rely on the world's policeman, the United States, to do it for us? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the defence review is needed urgently?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman could not be more incorrect. With more than 3,500 British forces allocated to various United Nations operations around the world, Britain is at present contributing more personnel to the work of the United Nations than any country other than France. That shows the worthlessness of the hon. Gentleman's criticism.

Surface Ships (Portsmouth)

9. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many commissioned surface ships of the Royal Navy are based at Portsmouth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are 23 Royal Navy surface ships, including minor war vessels, base-ported at Portsmouth.

Mr. Martin: My right hon. Friend is aware of my concern to see the maximum number of ships based at Portsmouth, with the implications that that has for the provision of jobs for the fleet maintenance and repair organisation. May I thank him for receiving a delegation to discuss the organisation's future structure and seek his assurance that, before reaching final conclusions, he will take into account all representations made during the consultation period?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes. First, I commend my hon. Friend's tireless efforts to ensure that Portsmouth remains a substantial naval base—which it certainly will. It is a matter of great regret that we had to re-examine the whole question of our dockyard capability, and that that has led to the proposal to close the FMRO in Portsmouth. We shall look hard at all the representations made before reaching any conclusions and I am glad that we were able to extend the consultation period.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Minister recall that on 24 November, in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms. Squire), he promised an announcement on dockyards and bases by the end of last year? As the continuing delay results in wild speculation from all quarters, and in great uncertainty and extreme concern among the work forces at both Rosyth and Devonport, will the Minister now accept that the dual site solution is the better one, not just for jobs in Scotland and the west country but for strategic reasons? Will he now bite the bullet and tell us that an announcement will be made quickly?

Mr. Hamilton: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman and to the House that it was not possible to make an announcement by the end of the year. Further representations were made on the viability of the dockyards and it was important to examine that information carefully before reaching any conclusions. I am rather reluctant to promise the hon. Gentleman another date, but I hope that we shall be able to make an announcement shortly.

Mr. Ward: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the surface ships belonging to the Royal Navy in Portsmouth will be joined at some date by two new amphibious assault ships which were promised during the previous Parliament? Can my right hon. Friend give us some idea when they are likely to be placed on order?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, indeed. A project definition is being drawn up in connection with the replacement of both the amphibious assault ships, with the objective that we should go out to tender later this year.

Unaccompanied Tours

10. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average interval between unaccompanied tours *(a)* two years ago, *(b)* one year ago and *(c)* currently.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The average interval between unaccompanied tours for the infantry in 1990-91 was 18 months. That figure rose to 32 months in 1991-92 as, among other measures, Royal Marine commandos were included, and has fallen to 17 months in 1992-93 due to the unavailability of those units undergoing amalgamation, changing roles or relocating. It is still expected, however, that the target of 24 months between unaccompanied tours will be achieved once restructuring is complete.

Mr. Trimble: I appreciate that it is hoped that it will be possible to get back to 24 months at some point in the future, but when does the Minister think that that target will be achieved? Is it not likely that in the short term—over the next few years—the figure will still be low and may even drop further? Does the Minister appreciate the impact that that will have on the families of service men? If the pressure on the men and their families is sustained, we may have a vicious circle in which more men leave the service.

Mr. Hamilton: Yes. The period of amalgamation will be over the next two years. That has led to the present dislocation and to the emergency tour interval shrinking to the degree that it has recently. So long as there are no new long-term commitments in the next two years, we estimate that we shall be able to return to 24 months. I totally agree with the hon. Gentleman's point about the effect of the amalgamation on families, and we are mindful of that.

Mr. Fabricant: A number of reports in *The Scotsman* and other newspapers have said that there may be a reprieve possibly for some Scottish regiments. Can my right hon. Friend reassure me and my constituents that any review of Scottish regiments will go hand in glove with the review of the Staffordshire and Cheshire regiments?

Mr. Hamilton: I do not think that we are talking about a review of the proposals for the amalgamation of regiments under "Options for Change". We still feel that we have the right number of regiments. We do not think that long-term commitments have changed sufficiently to want to change that.

Skills Base

12. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline measures he proposes to take to minimise the erosion of the skills base in the defence industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: It is for companies operating in the defence business to decide how to preserve and foster the skills that they judge are required to fulfil current and future defence contracts at home and overseas.

Mr. Barnes: That means that the Minister is again sitting back and watching the destruction of skills in British industry—in this case, defence—which are of a high level and should be developed by the Government rather than destroyed. Last week, it was announced that 1,300 jobs were to go in Royal Ordnance factories. Why do the Government not start intervening in such industries and provide back-up and support so that there may be diversification and conversion into other industries? We have had enough of Governments being free-enterprise freaks.

Mr. Rifkind: I pointed out a few moments ago that British defence industries have been successful in increasing their market share from 17 per cent. of the world market to 20 per cent. That is a remarkable achievement and shows that the defence industries are capable of adapting to the new international situation.

Mr. Trotter: May I remind my right hon. and learned Friend of the need to maintain our shipbuilding base and of the importance to that base of ordering the landing platform helicopter carrier? The Select Committee on Defence was recently told by an official in his Department that that requirement remained essential. Can my right hon. and learned Friend give an assurance that the Government's commitment to order the LPH carrier will be maintained?

Mr. Rifkind: I am aware of my hon. Friend's great interest in the ordering of the LPH carrier. The tenders for that particular ship have been received, and they are currently being analysed. However, that will inevitably take some time.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to deny categorically the rumour that he intends to cancel the LPH carrier project, and confirm that he will make a firm procurement decision in the autumn?

Mr. Rifkind: I have just told the House that we are currently considering the tenders for the order.

Bosnia

13. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much food has been delivered by British troops in Bosnia since their deployment.

Mr. Rifkind: So far, 147 convoys have been escorted by British troops, delivering 11,775 tonnes of humanitarian aid.

Mr. Sweeney: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the British troops are performing a valuable humanitarian role in Bosnia and does he consider that the present rules of engagement provide adequate protection for our troops in Bosnia?

Mr. Rifkind: I agree that the British troops are carrying out an enormously important role. The importance of their role is measured by the success of the vast number of convoys that have reached their destinations. We are equally concerned that British soldiers in Bosnia should have the means to protect themselves, and the rules of engagement have been designed to ensure that they are able to achieve that objective.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Secretary of State aware that, in paying a well-deserved tribute to our troops in Bosnia, one recognises that it would be intolerable if they were fired on, as has been the occasion, and were not in a position to retaliate? The British troops have a right to defend themselves in carrying out humanitarian aid and delivering relief supplies, which is undoubtedly supported by most people in Britain.

Mr. Rifkind: That is correct. Under the rules of engagement, they have the right to defend themselves. Indeed, in a recent incident near Tuzla, the 9th/12th Lancers returned fire on those who attacked them. They were perfectly entitled to do that and are entitled to use any of the weaponry at their disposal to protect their own lives or the lives of those for whom they are responsible.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that it is still the policy of Her Majesty's Government not to involve a substantial contribution of British troops in a combat role in Yugoslavia?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I can confirm that it is not our belief that it would be appropriate for ground forces to be used in a combat role. We share that view with all the other United Nations countries that are participating in Bosnia at the present time.

Dr. David Clark: If the British troops in Bosnia need more equipment to defend themselves, will the Secretary of State assure the House that he will ensure that they have further light artillery under similar rules of engagement so that they can perform their humanitarian role? Will he also make it clear that the reported build-up of British forces in the vicinity does not mean an inexorable drift into a bloody conflict without any military or political objectives, which could lead to an even greater loss of life than at present?

Mr. Rifkind: I can indeed confirm that we are not considering any extension of the role of the ground forces currently in Bosnia, who are there to carry out a humanitarian role. Of course we shall continue to monitor whether the equipment available to them to defend themselves is sufficient to meet their requirements. If we were to conclude that it was necessary to enhance the equipment available for their protection, we would not hesitate to supply it.

14. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the role of British armed forces personnel in the provision of humanitarian aid in Bosnia.

15. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current situation of the British forces serving with the United Nations in Bosnia.

Mr. Rifkind: During my own recent visit to the United Nations protection force I was able to see at first hand some of the work that British forces there are doing. By escorting convoys, and creating by their presence a secure

atmosphere in which aid agencies can operate, our forces have ensured that areas that have not received aid for many months have now been reached with vital supplies.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that those who criticise the fact that it is always British and American armed forces who carry out the kind of roles being carried out in Bosnia and Somalia should reflect that that is to the shame of the countries that are doing nothing rather than a valid criticism of the policy of the United Kingdom Government?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, my hon. Friend is correct to emphasise that the United Kingdom can hold its head high as it is making such a crucial contribution in ensuring that food, medical aid and shelter reach the many tens of thousands of people who would be starving during the very severe winter months but for the magnificent contribution of our British forces in Bosnia.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will my right hon. and learned Friend remind himself of the fact that our forces are operating in very difficult winter conditions? Will he assure us that they will be properly equipped to look after themselves and ensure that their capabilities are maintained?

Mr. Rifkind: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance and tell him that we are considering whether any further enhancement might be required to meet that objective with even more certainty in the weeks and months to come.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the understanding that the forces will be properly equipped to protect themselves against winter conditions, but does the Secretary of State not accept that while a Portakabin type might protect against winter conditions, the type of hardened shelter that has been developed in Northern Ireland would protect them better from the shelling that they are enduring now?

Mr. Rifkind: I am very conscious of the fact that the situation has deteriorated significantly in the past week or so. For the first time, our forces have been subjected to what appears to have been a deliberate artillery attack from what appear to have been Serbian positions. We are urgently considering the proper response to ensure the fullest protection for our forces in Bosnia at the present time.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Is the Secretary of State aware that there is general acceptance by all countries with troops in Bosnia that the British troops are among the most efficient there? That being so, is it not inequitable that our troops receive less pay there than they would in Germany or Northern Ireland while the soldiers of other countries receive enhanced pay?

Mr. Rifkind: I believe that the hon. Gentleman's comment is based on a misunderstanding. The allowance that our forces receive in, for example, Germany is to enable them to purchase local goods—which are, of course, quite expensive. In Bosnia, all their requirements are entirely met by the Army. Where their families remain in Germany, they continue to receive allowances to which they were previously entitled.

Mr. Viggers: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that when our troops were first deployed in Bosnia for humanitarian purposes we reserved the right to withdraw them should they come under fire? Does he accept that the situation is deteriorating and that there is a severe risk that the United Nations forces might end up being the fourth side in a civil war? Will my right hon. and learned Friend keep anxiously open the option of withdrawing our forces and perhaps regrouping elsewhere in the area if that is deemed a safer way of maintaining peace?

Mr. Rifkind: I can understand my hon. Friend's concern. We judge these matters against two criteria: first, whether they can fulfil the humanitarian role for which they were sent to Bosnia; secondly, whether the level of risk that they face in the war zone is acceptable. We shall continue to apply those criteria.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Olner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 January.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Olner: I thank the Prime Minister for that reply. Many hundreds of skilled workers in my constituency are, unfortunately, out of work at the present time. Quite frankly, they are suffering from the Government's failure to support employers. Can we look forward in 1993 to no more false dawns but to positive action on jobs so that my constituents and their families can regain some dignity?

The Prime Minister: We all wish to see recovery—there is no difference between any hon. Members on that subject. We shall get lasting recovery only if we have the right basics. These include low inflation, modest interest rates and the right exchange rate. They are now all in place.

Mr. Day: Has my right hon. Friend seen reports that the National Union of Teachers is to organise a boycott of tests for 14-year-olds? If those reports are correct, will he condemn such action as disgraceful and highly damaging.

The Prime Minister: I am certainly prepared to condemn any such call and any such action. I suspect that teachers will be far too sensible to take any such action. Those tests are vital. They are good for children, parents want to see them, teachers need to know how well the children are performing, and parents have a right to know how well their children are performing. Those tests will provide that information.

Mr. John Smith: Since the wrecking of the Braer is a major environmental disaster and one which could happen again before the inquiries that were announced yesterday have been completed, will the Prime Minister take interim action now to protect our coastlines? Will he convene an urgent meeting with the oil companies to obtain an assurance from them that only the safest routes will be used for the transport of oil while the inquiries are going on? Will he also agree to proposals that have been made to make adequate radar facilities available in sensitive areas so that the continuing traffic in oil can be monitored while the inquiries proceed?

The Prime Minister: I will certainly invite my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to examine those matters. They may have many ramifications and I think that I should have them examined before I give the right hon. and learned Gentleman a concrete answer.

Mr. John Smith: I at least welcome the Prime Minister's decision to refer this to his right hon. and learned Friend, but I ask him to engage himself in this important matter. Will he bear in mind that it is frequently the case in matters of aviation that interim action, such as the grounding of aircraft, may be taken while inquiries are being undertaken? Will he bear in mind the acute anxiety that exists in areas all round the coast at what has happened in the Shetlands? May I invite him to look into it personally and to make an early report to the House?

The Prime Minister: That may well be. As I indicated to the right hon. and learned Gentleman a moment ago, it is prudent to examine a matter carefully before making a commitment. *[Interruption.]* Were I to make a commitment without doing so, the right hon. and learned Gentleman would be right to be critical. Of course my right hon. and learned Friend will examine it carefully; he will report to me and we shall report to the House.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that private sector skills have greatly benefited industries such as Rover cars, gas, electricity and British Telecom, following policies which the Opposition have opposed at every turn? Will he confirm to the House today that soon these same private sector skills will be made available to British Rail?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly offer that assurance, and no doubt my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will give further details later this afternoon.

Q2. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: Is the Prime Minister aware that Swan Hunter shipbuilding on the Tyne is now on the verge of complete closure, with the loss of 2,000 jobs and disaster for the north-east? Can he therefore confirm that the new helicopter carrier is still in the programme to be built on the Tyne?

The Prime Minister: We have received tenders and we are considering them at the present time.

Mr. Dykes: If my right hon. Friend has time to think about it today, will he agree that legitimate attempts to protect the privacy of prominent and other citizens alike should not be used as an excuse to launch a fundamental attack on the freedom of the press, which is so vital to a thriving democracy?

The Prime Minister: The Government have now received the report of Sir David Calcutt and we shall publish it shortly. The whole House will then have an opportunity to make up its mind on the contents of the report.

Mr. Ashdown: In view of the grave news of the breakdown of the Geneva talks as a result of Bosnian Serb intransigence, will the Prime Minister now confirm that the British Government are prepared to act with others to protect against the future elimination of the Muslim homeland, to maintain the isolation of the Bosnian Serbs and to increase the pressure, political and military, to force the Bosnian Serbs to return to the peace table?

The Prime Minister: I share the right hon. Gentleman's regret at the breakdown of the discussions in Geneva. I believe that Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen have done an outstanding job. They have put forward a fair plan. It is a matter of great regret that the Bosnian Serbs are unpersuaded and unprepared to accept it. Sooner or later there must be a negotiated settlement; the only question is whether it comes now or following further repression, further suffering and further difficulties. The international community will wish to apply further pressure if the Bosnian Serbs continue to reject this settlement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Does my right hon. Friend agree with me on the important role that small and medium-sized businesses will have to play in economic recovery? Will he undertake to sweep away the unnecessary layers of red tape and bureaucracy which so tie down some of our small businesses?

The Prime Minister: I have indicated that it is certainly the Government's intention to do so. We have already made good progress since the election, but I now want us to go both further and faster. I have therefore asked every Department in Whitehall to prepare plans for action on deregulation. I shall be meeting every Secretary of State in early February, with their permanent secretaries, and I hope that we can then draw up a detailed plan for deregulation of burdens on business.

Homelessness

Q3. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister, when he next expects to meet representatives of London's homeless.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so, but my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing meets representatives regularly.

Mr. Corbyn: Is it not about time the Prime Minister met representatives of London's homeless to learn that 40,000 families—about 100,000 people—spent Christmas in temporary accommodation, a 10 per cent. increase on a year ago, that there are 50,000 single homeless in London and more than 2,000 sleeping on the streets, a 10 per cent. increase on a year ago and a fivefold increase on five years ago? Is it not about time money was provided to local authorities to buy and build so that families can grow up in decent accommodation rather than suffering the indignity of bed and breakfast accommodation, and public resources were put where they are needed to provide decent homes for the people of this city rather than building empty office blocks for speculative gain?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman neglected to mention the number of empty houses either in his own local authority's stock or in that of many local authorities. Liverpool, Hackney, Burnley, Manchester, Salford and North Tyneside all have a very bad record on empty properties.

When my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing or I next meet representatives of the homeless we shall be able

to tell them that recent figures show a continuing decline in the number of families in bed and breakfast accommodation, nationally by 23 per cent. and by 30 per cent. in London and the south-east. I shall be able to remind them of the £750 million housing package announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the autumn statement. That will further reduce the numbers in bed and breakfast. I might also remind them of the £100 million scheme for sleeping rough which has been amazingly successful.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the things that the British people expect from the Conservative Government is tough action on law and order *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order.

Mr. Riddick: Does the Prime Minister share my concern about the increasing problem of persistent young offenders carrying out crimes such as car crime, burglaries and joy riding? Will he confirm that the Government will take tough action to combat those problems—unlike the Labour party, which is soft on crime?

The Prime Minister: I will take scoffing from the Labour party on law and order when they begin to support the prevention of terrorism Acts—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: The House must come to order to hear what the Prime Minister has to say—*[Interruption.]* All parts of the House, for that matter.

The Prime Minister: On the assumption that Members of the House did not hear what I said a moment ago, I shall repeat it for their benefit. I will take words from the Opposition on law and order when they stop opposing the prevention of terrorism Acts.

I certainly agree with my hon. Friend about law and order. I certainly share his concern about the persistent offending of so many young people. I have therefore asked my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to look urgently at the existing arrangements for dealing with juvenile offenders and to consider what new measures it is sensible to introduce. This is one of the areas of greatest concern in the growth of crime statistics and one with which we are determined to deal.

Q5. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Prime Minister agree that the biggest problem facing this country at present is the scourge of mass unemployment? Is he aware that it is costing £9,000 for the taxpayer to finance somebody out of work? That is a total cost of £30 billion out of a public sector borrowing requirement of £37 billion. If the Prime Minister tackled that problem, he would be tackling the economy's problems as well. He has the fate of 100,000 people in his hands—30,000 of them miners—in the course of the next few weeks. He could resolve the problem easily. If he will give a subsidy of only half that which is given to nuclear power he will be able to save all 31 pits and 100,000 jobs, export coal to every continent in the world and resolve some of the balance of payments problems as well. Will the Prime Minister stop dithering and do it?

The Prime Minister: I certainly agree with the hon. Gentleman about the scourge of unemployment. The difference between him and me would be the right method with which to deal with it and to ensure that there are long-term jobs subsequently available. I note what he says about the problem of the pits, but I have no intention of anticipating the coal review, which will be brought before the House as speedily as possible. While the hon. Gentleman continues to support policies such as a payroll tax on jobs, the social chapter, and a national minimum wage, he is not in the best position to lecture us about job losses.

Q6. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nicholls: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to consider the wider implications of the rundown or closure of Devonport dockyards? Does he appreciate that the continuing uncertainty is causing unhappiness not just in the city of Plymouth but throughout the west country? I appreciate that he cannot announce a decision today, but will he at least assure the people of Devon and Cornwall that when the time comes for that decision to be made he will have their concerns very much in the forefront of his mind?

The Prime Minister: I appreciate the great concern in the minds of the people of Devon—and, indeed, of those of near Rosyth—concerning the decisions that need to be taken about the dockyards. I know that that uncertainty is worrying people. The Secretary of State for Defence will announce our proposals as soon as he can. I assure my hon. Friend that there will be no undue delay.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

ELECTORAL AREAS (NORTHERN IRELAND)

That the draft District Electoral Areas (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

CONTRACTED-OUT PRISONS

That the draft Criminal Justice Act 1991 (Contracted-out Prisons) (No. 2) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

SEAT BELTS

That the draft Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) Regulations 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Question agreed to.

Resettlement Unit (Stormy Down)

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your advice about a notice that appeared on a notice board in a resettlement unit at Stormy Down in my constituency. It was put up by the Resettlement Agency and I believe that it may constitute a contempt of the House. At present——

Madam Speaker: Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, and I do so only because he alleges contempt. If there is any question of contempt, he must not continue with the point he is making. It is a serious matter. He must put it in writing to me today without delay. I must ask him to do that, now that he has raised the issue.

Mr. Griffiths: I shall be happy to do that, Madam Speaker, because I regard it as a serious matter.

Madam Speaker: That is the way to proceed. I have given the hon. Member the only advice possible.

Professional Standards

3.31 pm

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require the observance of the highest professional standards; to provide for enforcement and compensation by means of a system of tribunals; to place a duty upon professions to investigate and pursue complaints against them; and for connected purposes.

I must at the outset declare my interest, as a barrister. I must also assure the media that this is not an attempt to deal with the Calcutt report at an early stage. I am talking about the traditional professions such as those of medicine, the law, architects, quantity surveyors and engineers.

My Bill seeks to deal with the fact that the traditional professions have been reluctant to deal as a matter of professional discipline with the issue of bad professional work or work below an acceptable professional standard. Professional discipline has traditionally been limited to serious misconduct, such as putting one's hand in the till or engaging in a breach of advertising regulations.

Members of the public wishing to complain about bad professional work are left to sue in the courts. That is resulting in a mounting accumulation of problems. Because the professions will not discipline their members, professional indemnity insurance premiums are rising. While that cost is being passed on in part to the public, both good and bad professionals are having to bear that burden.

Because many of the legal claims involved are settled by insurers privately, nobody knows whether the professional whom one engages has a good or poor track record. The legal aid fund is hard pressed and many just claims cannot be brought because of lack of means. The law in any event does not impose a particularly high standard when judging bad professional work—simply the minimum standard of reasonable skill which some section of the professions to which I referred says is good enough.

The time has come for the great self-regulating professions to put their affairs in order and to set up a proper system to deal professionally with substandard work and for fully compensating the public for losses occasioned by bad work.

The proposals for which I seek the approval of the House consist of several points. First, each profession should set up a tribunal with full powers to try and to determine cases of bad professional work and to award full compensation at law to members of the public where professionals are adjudged not to have carried out work to an acceptable standard. Secondly, as these tribunals would comprise the leading experts in the particular profession, the old, lax standard of "reasonable care" would be replaced in law by a new professional obligation to observe the highest professional standards according to the state of the art at the time and the professions would be required to publish regularly, for their members and the public, updated guidance with regard to the standards.

Thirdly—and this is a crucial proposal—a tribunal, when finding a case of bad work, would not only award compensation but would have a duty to discipline the offending professional. Fourthly, the composition and procedure of these tribunals should be specified and set out in detail by way of statutory instrument. However, I suggest that a number of important minimum criteria should be set down in the Bill. Each tribunal should have a member who is not a member of the particular profession and should have a legally qualified chairman. The tribunals should sit in public and their record and findings should be made public. To protect professionals against frivolous and vexatious complaints, there should be a procedure of summary dismissal of frivolous complaints. No fees should be charged for bringing a complaint before any one of these tribunals.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does this apply to Members of Parliament?

Mr. Evans: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), from a sedentary position, seems to indicate that Members of Parliament are members of a profession. That is a quaint and eccentric view of the law, but this modest measure is not intended to extend to Members of the House.

The hon. Member for Bolsover, bearing in mind the problems of his constituents, might like to contemplate my fifth proposal rather more carefully. My suggestion is that each profession should not only set up this system but also pay for its operation and for a proper system of legal representation for complainants—in other words, a scheme of preparation, investigation and presentation—and that the operation and requirements of such schemes should be set out in a code of practice, which would be laid down by the Lord Chancellor and with which the profession would have to comply.

Sixthly—and lastly—the courts of the land should have power to stay actions and to refer cases and issues in actions to the relevant professional tribunal where a breach of this new professional obligation is alleged.

The professions themselves have moved very slowly in the direction that I am suggesting. The General Medical Council, for example, has set up new performance procedures, but there is no suggestion of public hearings or of compensation. The Solicitors Complaints Bureau has been able to award compensation up to the grand sum of £1,000 in cases coming before it after 1 April 1991. These steps indicate recognition of the problem, but they are not enough. I am seeking the leave of the House to bring in a Bill to restore public confidence in the great self-regulating professions by giving them modern powers and duties to set up a system of dealing with bad professional work and of compensating members of the public fully in cases where bad work is proven. That is the purpose of the measure.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Roger Evans, Mr. Gerald Bermingham, Mr. Gyles Brandreth, Mrs. Jacqui Lait, Lady Olga Maitland, Dr. Robert Spink, Mr. Michael Stephen and Mr. Gary Streeter.

Professional Standards

Mr. Roger Evans accordingly presented a Bill to require the observance of the highest professional standards; to provide for enforcement and compensation by means of a system of tribunals; to place a duty upon professions to investigate and pursue complaints against them; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 26 February and to be printed. [Bill 109.]

Orders of the Day

Opposition Day

[8TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Rail Privatisation

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.39 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I beg to move,

That this House opposes the privatisation of the railways.

The debate comes shortly before what we may assume, according to the leaks, will be a new Bill. Perhaps the Secretary of State will speak about that. We look forward to seeing that Bill because the Government seem to suffer considerable uncertainty about what rail privatisation means. The central plank of their policy is that privatisation, and its competition, allows the pursuit of maximum profit, is eventually to the consumers' benefit, and is far better than a publicly owned utility or a public service. Bearing in mind today's reports about British Airways, such an interpretation sounds rather odd.

We have the example of British Telecom and the crisis in our energy utilities and in the bus industry, upon which it is claimed the new Bill is based. The deregulated bus industry has older buses, charges higher fares and fewer people travel. The service is also inadequate compared with the one that was provided before deregulation. If that is the forerunner to rail privatisation, it is no wonder that many people are getting extremely edgy about the Government's proposal, which Conservative Members are calling a poll tax on wheels. The recommendations and statements make that a likely possibility.

Confusion reigns and we look forward to the Secretary of State's interpretation of privatisation. I have had the dubious honour of speaking from the Dispatch Box to a number of Secretaries of State and each of them has professed that he will be introducing a Bill to privatise the railways. That has been the Government's badge of honour in Queen's Speeches and in conference speeches, but they have never been able to define privatisation and it is up to the Secretary of State to explain the White Paper and any changes and say what he intends to implement.

At the beginning of this new year the Government claimed that they would privatise the railways. The new year message by the Prime Minister changed that to semi-privatisation, and the next day the Secretary of State explained that that really meant commercialisation. Most of the press saw that as a conflict, but I say that it is a policy U-turn. The Secretary of State rushed to his constituency to announce that he was making a speech to circulate his latest interpretation of rail privatisation. It seemed to boil down to some form of privatisation and his belief that franchising the system would lead to better private involvement.

The assumption in all that is that private operation of the railways is far better than leaving it to public operation. That is almost an ideological difference between us. We believe that there can be a good publicly operated rail system. I do not suggest that that has been achieved because there are difficulties, some of which I shall address. However, matters will be made much more difficult if the railways are privatised.

What is the evidence for justifying privatisation? There is such a system in Argentina, and after a few years of operation there the passenger service is in complete collapse. Sweden is often cited as having a privatised rail system, but only 1 per cent. of its services are privatised and the track and operations remain in the public service. Track subsidies are to be maintained because of very expensive investment. The White Paper says that the track operation must be expected to give an 8 per cent. return. That is one of the factors that will give rise to considerable difficulties, even for the franchise operations. How can the Government expect the massive investment that is needed to give an 8 per cent. return?

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): The hon. Gentleman says that only 1 per cent. of Sweden's railways have been privatised. Would he give the House the benefit of his knowledge on the improvements that have been made to services, the increase in investment and the increase in passengers carried on those services that have been privatised in Sweden?

Mr. Prescott: On the 1 per cent? That is a railway system that is only a teeny-weeny bit pregnant. Such improvement of services, whether private or public, whether in the 1 per cent. or the 99 per cent., requires considerably more financial resources than we are prepared to allocate to our service. I see the hon. Gentleman nodding in agreement.

Mr. Milligan *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: I have a long speech to make and I want to get on with it.

Considerable claims have been made about the privatised Japanese service.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I apologise for intervening so early in my hon. Friend's speech, but I am provoked to do so by the intervention of the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan). Is my hon. Friend aware that when I met the chairman of SJ, the Swedish railway system, in December, he said that he had recently had discussions with the Minister for Public Transport during which he told him—he gave permission to quote his words—that he thought that the Government's proposals were insane?

Mr. Prescott: More and more people are coming to that conclusion. My hon. Friend shows his considerable experience in these matters.

In Japan we are talking not about privately owned companies but publicly owned private companies, such as a municipally-owned bus service. The service is not privately run but is owned by the state or the authorities that are running it. It is not what we understand to be a private company, privately owned. Therefore, that is not a good example.

In France, the system is basically state owned. The only private sector service between Paris and Orly collapsed a few months ago. Privatisation did not work too well there either.

Much is made of the fact that the EC is moving towards the privatisation of the railway system. It is not. It is moving towards transparency and a clear distinction between services which receive public subsidies and those to be operated as profitable services. I support that, as I have said in the House before. The transference of accounts and the capital debt structure of British Rail need to be changed so that British Rail may have access to private capital. We are not opposed to that.

The Secretary of State has often chided me for putting that case, but I think that he has now come to adopt our ideas on leasing, despite having told us, along with other Secretaries of State, that they were unacceptable. However, I shall not taunt him with that. I am glad that Network SouthEast now has 40 more trains financed by leasing.

Perhaps the Secretary of State is learning that the Opposition want a good railway system and are prepared to look at the matter in practical terms rather than getting caught up with ideology. That can be achieved equally well in a publicly owned system as in a privately owned system.

There have already been some experiments in the United Kingdom. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. First, the Government started with InterCity. It was made clear that this Administration would no longer pay a subsidy to InterCity: it would have to pay its way. The Government set a 4 per cent. rate of return, but nothing like that has been realised. It has only broken even this year.

However, InterCity has been forced to try to maximise revenue rather than services. Areas have been cut from the InterCity network simply to maximise revenue. Blackpool or Shrewsbury may be next. A number of areas may be removed from the network service. That is wrong. The railways should provide a national service. As soon as they are privatised in that way, with the emphasis on the maximum rate of revenue, there will be difficulties.

It is interesting that InterCity's timetable does not include regional services on its routes because it believes that it does not provide such services, which, under the definition of accounts or as a business operation, it does not. But why should a passenger not know that an inter-city service is being run by a regional railway? That is one example of the difficulties engendered by such a silly arrangement.

Here is another example. When an InterCity train breaks down and a freight train is available nearby, the freight company will say, "It is not our responsibility to provide a train; find your own InterCity train." That is nonsensical: profit is being put before meeting the needs of the community.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): The hon. Gentleman said at the beginning of his speech that he and his hon. Friends were ideologically opposed to privatisation, and that he believed that privatisation would damage the quality or the value of the service. Does he accept that British Airways was unprofitable at the time of its privatisation, and that it was unprofitable because it did not provide a good service in comparison with other airlines? Does he accept that, because it is now a privatised service, it is now profitable—and that it is profitable because it provides a good service in competition with other airlines?

Mr. Prescott: The hon. Gentleman had better ask Richard Branson whether he feels that British Rail is competing with his rail companies. The hon. Gentleman made one fair point, however. I concede that British Airways was able to eliminate its losses, largely because it restructured its manpower. There is no doubt about that; I asked Lord King and others, even before privatisation. Management was not particularly involved in the bringing together of British Airways and British European Airways: it made the structural changes, but it did not make further changes along the line. Lord King was able to do that, reaching agreement with the trade unions in order to provide a more effective service.

The fact that that involved lousy management does not necessarily mean that publicly owned industries have lousy management. There are many examples of private companies with lousy management. What is needed is proper and effective public management. I do not argue that the managements of publicly owned companies are superior to those of private companies; I simply want the best possible management and the best possible practices to produce the best possible service. I do not have an ideology about the matter. I want our country to have the good public railway system that France and Germany enjoy—modern, reliable and with adequate investment. All the evidence shows that that can best be achieved by a publicly owned system. It is up to the Government to make the case for privatisation.

We have already witnessed some of the results of privatisation. First, we were given Tiger Rail, along with Charterail and Freightrail. The Prime Minister launched that scheme during the election campaign. It lasted less than four months—and who had to come in and pick up the service? Good old British Rail. We were very happy that a publicly owned service could take over when the private sector had failed.

Charterail provided a good service. The trouble was that it got scared about the track costs. The Government started talking about an 8 per cent. return on track costs, and it was clearly going to be difficult to operate on that basis. That is not to say that a private service cannot work on a publicly owned system; I do not believe that an operation must be either totally private or totally public.

The next experiment, Stagecoach, was much more successful: it lasted six months. It was launched by the Minister for Public Transport, who is present today. He described it as a wonderful service—although he did not actually use it; he went into the sleeper and lay down on his bunk. It was not a new train, although it was covered in glossy new paint. There is one thing that we can expect from a privatised industry: it may not invest in new plant, but by golly, it will invest in a lot of new paint. That does not mean that it will improve the quality of its service. It looks good, but it does not necessarily feel any better.

Although Stagecoach lasted only six months, the leasing arrangement was for 12 months. What compensation did British Rail receive from Stagecoach? It did not receive any: it let it go, and negotiated a new deal. Stagecoach became a sort of holiday operator, offering some seats on British Rail. There was no through ticketing; a ticket could not be used on Stagecoach and then on British Rail.

There was a good deal of publicity for the new Virgin service. There was to be a new train running up to Scotland —or, rather, not a new train but a 125 diesel, running on the most modernised electric lines, on which publicly

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owned trains travel at 140 mph. His trains, which admittedly would have had televisions, would have run at about 120 mph—about 20 or 30 mph slower than existing fast trains. Despite all the publicity, as soon as he found out that he would not get a subsidy for the track he pulled out. We now wait to see whether the Secretary of State will propose another version.

Given the Government's belief in privatisation, one would have thought that capitalists could talk to capitalists. The authority at Heathrow was prepared to pay 80 per cent. of the Heathrow rail link; British Rail was expected to pay only 20 per cent. The Government were not prepared to allocate BR the resources to meet that 20 per cent. commitment, which would have been a good deal for the taxpayer. Instead of him having to pay 100 per cent., 80 per cent. would have been provided by the private sector and 20 per cent. by the public sector. Why did not we do that? The proposal has collapsed again because of the problem of the track cost and the commercial ideology of the Secretary of State.

The extension of the Jubilee line was an example of the Tory Government talking to bankers—their friends in the City. The extension of the line was not London's greatest priority, but it was chosen to save the face of docklands; that is what it boiled down to. It was proposed that the private sector might pay about 5 or 10 per cent. of the total cost. Despite some clever fiddling of the statistics, we still do not know what the total cost will be. However, the extension of the line was promised in the autumn statement as part of the recovery. It is another green shoot on the Jubilee line that has not materialised. That is amazing.

Yet again, negotiations about the line highlighted the incompetence of the Department of Transport and the Government. Who would have announced in negotiations that they intended to carry out the project and move civil servants from A to B as part of the recovery programme? If I were a banker offering the money, I would say, "Tell me what the deal is. You want it and you have committed yourself to it politically. I will not give you the money that I said I was going to give before." That seems to be elementary negotiating practice.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Prescott: Then why have we not got an agreement?

Mr. MacGregor: I was wondering what the hon. Gentleman was talking about when he said that we had made offers in relation to transferring civil servants from the Department of Transport. I do not know what he was talking about in that regard, because I never did.

Mr. Prescott: That is a clever little dance around the point that does not answer the issue. Why have we not got an agreement on the Jubilee line?

Mr. MacGregor: We made it absolutely clear in the autumn statement that we had made provision for the Jubilee line. Discussions are being held between London Transport and the administrator for Olympia and York. We have made the objectives clear, and it has been accepted that the discussions must be held on the basis of the arrangements that were made with Olympia and York. I very much hope that a deal between London Transport and the administrators will be completed before long.

Mr. Prescott: The same answer has been given for the past 12 months. All I am saying is that the Secretary of State has made it difficult for the Government to negotiate with the bankers, who are now likely to say, "We shall not give as much as we offered before." As an ex-trade union official, may I say that it seemed a silly negotiating position for the Government to take. None the less, we wait with bated breath to see whether we get the Jubilee line. One thing is certain: Londoners are suffering from the absence of the line.

So much for what has happened under the Government's privatisation programme. We are now told that the White Paper is the latest expression of the theory of privatisation. We wait to see whether the Bill is consistent with that. The White Paper certainly proposes the most complex machinery that we have ever seen to ensure that the market works. The cost will be phenomenal, the bureaucracy will be considerable—and simply to do what? To ensure that the market works, when there will be no competition to achieve the best service for passengers. No other country has achieved a good rail system with such stupid thinking.

I was amazed at the number of quangos to be used. I remember that in the early 1980s the Government made great play of getting rid of quangos and all bodies of civil servants which they considered to be the dead hand of bureaucracy. We now know what the bureaucracy will be because the information is contained in the White Paper. The Secretary of State informs us that there will be a regulator to control access to the tracks. We know from the advert that companies do not need experience of transport but that will be in line with the Department of Transport. There will be a franchising authority to deal with the allocation of franchises, a rail track quango with responsibility for timetabling and maintenance, and a joint industrial board to co-ordinate ticketing and information systems. There will also be a railway clearing house for the settlement of accounts between companies—we last had one of those in the 1930s.

There will be a health and safety executive, a railway advisory safety technical standards body and a central transport consultative committee to deal with timetabling and facilities but not, of course, fares. There will be an office of fair trading to ensure that it works. The passenger transport authorities will be expected to discuss section 20 grants, local authorities will be required to consult about timetables, the good old Department of Transport and all its civil servants will be responsible for a policy framework —it has not yet achieved that—and the Treasury will control the external financing limits.

That means that there will be 13 quangos to ensure that the market works properly, set up by a Government who do not like bureaucracy or quangos and who believe in the invisable hand of the market running the railway system. There is no invisible hand but 13 quangos. It is tragic that more people will be established as civil servants to run the quangos and will be paid for by the sacking of people dealing with maintenance, the manning of stations and the operation of the railway system. Civil servants and bureaucrats will take the place of professional railwaymen who are desperately trying to provide a service.

It is clear to anyone listening to the evidence given to the Select Committee that no one supports such a scheme. To be fair, however, the Secretary of State gave evidence yesterday and he supported it, but he has to. It is his real test: if he is to be the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he has to appear with flying colours in transport matters. I have not yet seen a Secretary of State do so, but we live in hope.

The White Paper refers to open access for competition. Where in the world is there open access for competition so that railways can compete with each other? I was interested to read an article by Simon Jenkins in *The Times* on 6 January. A person was appointed by the Government to be a director of British Rail and to modernise and privatise it. Mr. Jenkins went abroad and, on his return, was amazed about what was happening. He wrote:

"To want to license rival operators on each line is illiterate. Trains do not work that way."

That seems a simple enough proposition. He also wrote:

"Meanwhile that earnest Dr. Frankenstein, John MacGregor, has been working night and day to create Railtrack as the most monstrous nationalised industry ever, thus avoiding the proper rail privatisation . . ."

He advised the new private train operators

"to spend all their time lobbying for higher subsidies".

The Secretary of State has said that open access is in fact an open cheque book. He will be paying subsidies to the private and public sectors to run services, which will cost the taxpayer an awful lot more. We have yet to see what happens with the franchise system.

As for the Railtrack authority, do we believe that requiring an 8 per cent. rate of return will encourage people to run rail services on the infrastructure? That is what the Secretary of State wants to do, but an 8 per cent. return will add a heck of a mark-up for those who will operate the system. Sir James Sherwood of Sea Containers has already made it clear that he would like some of the lines but would close others because he wants only the profitable ones. He would close the coast line affecting hon. Members who travel on the Southampton and Bournemouth line who will become supporters of the publicly owned system as soon as the private cherry-pickers finish the system and meet its national requirements.

On safety, I protest to the Secretary of State. I understand that the Secretary of State is to announce that the Health and Safety Commission report on the privatisation of rail was available to us from 3.30 pm. That does not make it easy for the Opposition, who are opening the debate, to read and to digest a report on an important aspect of the privatisation of rail. There was talk about professional standards. The Department of Transport could learn a bit more about providing reports. Even if they were provided only half an hour before the debate, we could make some assessment for the debate. It is a deplorable practice. Yesterday, we did not even get a copy of the statement made in the House by the Secretary of State for Transport. That is the nature of the Department of Transport. In view of my comments, I suppose that I cannot expect a great deal of charity from the Department. If I ever get in, the Department will not expect a great deal of charity from me.

I remind the Secretary of State of what was said in the Hidden report about the safety of the railway system and about the development of a business culture in the railway system which would undermine it. I quote Maurice Holmes in the Hidden report in January 1988. He said:

"there are signs that the past high safety standards at local level achieved by giving a high priority to a 'safe railway' above other issues are starting to be eroded by the change in railway culture. If continued, this will strike at the root of our structure. I would not like a major disaster with loss of life to be the reason that forced British Rail to invest in modern safety aids."

He said that 10 months before the terrible crash at Clapham. Hidden took the point and made the following comment in his report:

"investment into safety-related projects, such as ATP, was not being progressed."

There is worry about the fact that British Rail does not have the estimate of the costs. The Secretary of State has told the Select Committee that he does not yet know the costs of the safety requirements to be implemented after the Hidden inquiry of three years ago. That is totally unacceptable. The Secretary of State only has to ask for that information for it to be provided. I have asked constantly here for that information. The fact that the information has not been given undermines the priority of safety and the recommendations made by Hidden, especially the recommendations about the automatic train protection systems.

There are matters of grave concern about safety. We have had the Newton crash and the Bellgrove crash. All the inquiries show that the pursuit of saving money, either in maintenance or in track realignment, contributed to the crashes and to the loss of life at Newton, at Bellgrove and in other incidents. It is clear that the business culture began to overtake the priority for safety in the railway system.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): I salute the hon. Gentleman for his commitment to old-fashioned socialism. This is marvellous.

The safety issue is critical. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that, with the privatisation of British Airways, safety standards were endangered? Privatisation does not go hand in hand with a lessening of safety standards. Our experience does not suggest that. The hon. Gentleman is scaremongering.

Mr. Prescott: If old-fashioned socialism means a better and safer railway system, I am happy to claim to be an old-fashioned socialist. If the hon. Gentleman studies the privatised railways of the 1930s, he will see the incidence of deaths and accidents, and the reduction in safety, because they are clear for all to see. It is one of the reasons why we nationalised the railway system, quite apart from modernising it. The evidence is there. If the hon. Gentleman cannot agree with what I have said, may I give some quotes from the grandees of the Tory party?

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: No, because I am having problems with time.

I quote Lord Ridley, speaking on the "Panorama" programme. He said:

"Clearly, I think we picked all the plums out of the privatisation pudding"

That is certainly true. Lord Ridley said that he never believed

"it was really possible to do very much, if anything, with the railways because they were basically loss making."

Lord Whitelaw, whose family had experience of chairing a railway system in the private times, said:

"The old companies made no money."

How true. Lord Whitelaw then said:

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"If privatisation was to be carried out, it would have to be a success. And if you say to me, 'am I absolutely sure it will be a success'—No, I am not."

Even Lord Young, in an article in the *Director* today—I should not have thought he would have said this—said:

"like everything else in human nature"—

he is talking about privatisation—

"the pendulum swings too far and now I begin to wonder if we aren't trying to privatise some things which basically can't or shouldn't be privatised. I wonder a bit about whether we should be thinking of privatising coal or the railways."

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Here we go again. Reference has been made to reports that are supposedly in the Vote Office. When I went yet again to ask for the report in question, I was told by the very courteous person in the Vote Office that he could not give me a copy until the Secretary of State for Transport had responded and resumed his place. I understand that the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) has a copy. Can you clarify the position for me? Where shall we be if some hon. Members receive reports while others are refused them?

Mr. MacGregor: Further to the point of order, Madam Speaker. I shall, indeed, refer in my speech to the report. It is a report which will require a great deal of study and which we shall be able to examine thoroughly on Second Reading of the privatisation Bill. As a matter of courtesy, I sent a copy in the normal way this afternoon to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and to the Chairman of the Select Committee. I shall make the report available to the whole House as soon as I have finished my speech.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: Let me tell the Secretary of State that I telephoned his office today——

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Further to the point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Prescott: I am sorry.

Mr. Redmond: The Secretary of State says that the document will be made available after he has sat down. Given that the Opposition have used one of their Supply days for today's debate, will the right hon. Gentleman guarantee that we shall be given another day to debate that document?

Madam Speaker: That question might be put to the Leader of the House at business questions. It is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Further to the point of order, Madam Speaker. We are used to the fact that, when statements are made in the House, the accompanying documents are sometimes made available when the Minister has sat down. But it strikes me that we are to hear not a statement but a speech from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. May I put it to my right hon. Friend, through you, Madam Speaker, that it might be convenient, as well as a courtesy to the House, if the report were unlocked and made available——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is trying to debate through the Chair.

I recognise the Secretary of State's courtesy in handing out two copies of the report, but I feel that, given that we are to have a major debate, it would have been courteous to the House had it been made generally available rather than being sent to only two hon. Members.

Mr. Prescott: Let me make it clear that I did not receive the document.

Sir Harold Walker (Doncaster, Central): Further to the point of order, Madam Speaker, and with the greatest respect, I very much appreciate your ruling, but would it not have been better had the Secretary of State responded to it? As I understand it, we are having a debate during the course of which there may well be reference to a document that is available but copies of which have been denied to most hon. Members. That is an intolerable state of affairs.

Madam Speaker: I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's support.

Mr. MacGregor: Further to the point of order, Madam Speaker. I am trying to oblige the House. We accelerated the production of the report so that it would be available as quickly as possible. I wish to make it clear that the debate is not just about that report, although I intended to refer to it in my speech. If it would assist the House, I should be perfectly happy to allow the report to be made available immediately and will give instructions to that effect. I was simply trying to follow normal form. As you, Madam Speaker, know—from all my time as Leader of the House—I am always happy to try to oblige the House.

Madam Speaker: I am much obliged to the right hon. Gentleman. The report should now be made available to all hon. Members.

Mr. Prescott: For the record, let me make it clear to the Secretary of State that I telephoned his Department assuming that there might be a statement on the matter. When I inquired, at 1.10 pm, whether there would be a statement on the health and safety report, I was told that there would not. I then asked whether the right hon. Gentleman's officials could provide me with a copy and was told that copies would be made available, not at the normal time of 3 pm, but when the Secretary of State had finished speaking. I explained that that made it difficult for me to assess the report in time for the debate. I have to tell the Secretary of State that my copy never arrived. I do not have it, even though I continued to make inquiries until the last minute. I do not think that the House will appreciate the way in which the Secretary of State has handled this matter, even though I am glad that he now proposes to make copies available.

I also note that the right hon. Gentleman waited until after he had given his evidence to the Select Committee that is considering the privatisation of railways. He could have been courteous enough to release the report so that the Select Committee could question him on that matter. I think that we all know what the Secretary of State is at: he does not want anybody to have access to a report that will enable him or her to make an assessment on the critical question of safety. That is the conclusion that the House is bound to draw.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: That is a slightly grudging response to the Secretary of State, who has met the wishes

of the House. Most of the hon. Gentleman's speech has been a good sign that the "Clintonisation" of the Labour party should not spoil it.

Mr. Prescott: I thought that we were debating the serious matter of what Britain will do with its railway industries. Conservative Members may think that it is a laughing matter, but it is not a laughing matter to the thousands of railway workers and passengers in the United Kingdom. The question of how politicians will play their part in improving our railway system is a serious matter. That is what people expect of us. I am seriously trying to say—not in an ideological way—how the railway system can be improved.

The 14 years of the Tory railway system has been a bad record, and it is there for people to see. The Tory Government started by thinking that they could control the whole railway system by a financial framework. Of course, that has meant that fewer resources were available to British railways. Railway systems abroad, which are of a higher quality, are paid subsidies which are two to three times the amount that our system receives.

We have gone through an obsessive amount of management changes to prepare for profit centres. The Hidden inquiry made it absolutely clear that managers were exhausted by reorganisation and should not be subjected to more. British Rail have made it clear that £1 billion is the minimum investment which is needed for the next ten years. To be honest, neither political Governments have provided enough investment in the railway system, and I have made that point constantly. We must develop a long-term plan for the railways with adequate financial investment.

The railways are not as safe as they were before, and the quality of service has deteriorated. I do not have time to quote from the report. However, I refer hon. Members to the statement that has been made by the passenger bodies today which makes it clear that there will be a serious cut back in railway services simply because inadequate financial investment is available.

I shall now look at the freight industry. In the past few years, the Government have made about £60 million available for section 8 grants to encourage freight to go from road to rail. As a result of the closure of freight by the Government, we now have a policy of forcing companies to move freight from rail to road. The latest statements from two cement manufacturers, West Country Drinks, Highland Light Oil Traffic and Privatised Steel say that the amount of traffic that is being forced on the road is the equivalent of half a million lorries. To take freight off the railways and put it on the road is not a good way to run the railway system. The requirement simply for a financial rate of return on rail freight characterises the whole nature of our railway system.

Our manufacturing industry is in collapse because we have not invested sufficiently in it. The manufacturing industry made it clear that 30,000 jobs are at stake. That is precisely the figure that we are talking about in the mining industry. We should get equally angry about the consequences for our manufacturing industry of job losses.

If hon. Members say that there is not an efficient railway system, I refer them to the *Financial Times* analysis of all the European railway systems. That report confirmed a study done ten years ago which showed that British rail has a level of efficiency—the amount of manpower as against the productivity of the service—which is as high as the two or three most efficient railways systems in Europe. That shows that British Rail has a good level of efficiency, whatever the argument.

The trouble is that we do not have enough resources to maintain the quality of the system. The British rail system has one of the highest levels of efficiency in Europe. So the argument cannot be about labour or efficiency. I hope that no one will make that argument, because, clearly, the evidence is against it. The Labour party's argument is that we need an alternative railway system.

We believe that the railway system should be publicly owned for very good reasons. First, every good, successful railway system in Europe is publicly owned. I do not see any reason why we should not be able to emulate that system. Secondly, it is necessary to maintain social services, as is recognised in Europe. The profitable services can maintain the less profitable services. It is called cross-subsidisation, and is an essential principle in transport. During the early stages of privatisation, I remember that many Conservative Members said that cross-subsidisation was nonsense. However, cross-subsidisation is an essential part of any bus, rail, or air transport system if a network service is to be maintained. A publicly owned system is better for the environment as it is in the interests of the environment to subsidise the transfer of freight from road to rail. That is what the section 8 grants were about.

The scale of investment is considerable. The investment figure for the west coast line is more than £1 billion. No private entrepreneur will be able to provide that kind of money. The channel tunnel rail link amounts to £3 billion or £4 billion. There could be a combination of public and private money. However, the private sector will not participate without some guarantee from the public sector. That is the reality of financing that kind of investment.

Safety is improved by through ticketing. The Hidden report said that there should be a strong, central chain of command for a good, safe system. If many operators are responsible for different safety aspects, that is not the way to introduce a good, safe system. Through ticketing was one of the first things to go to the wall when the bus companies were privatised.

We should also bear in mind that private companies will not want to maintain railcard provision for pensioners. Private companies will simply want to maximise revenue. They will not be interested in the bureaucratic complications of maintaining railcard systems that occur naturally in a publicly owned system.

If the Secretary of State is arguing for private involvement, he should bear in mind that there has been a history of private involvement in a publicly owned railway system in respect of consultation and joint public and private deals. Management have brought in people from the private sector.

It seems that certain routes might be the standard bearers for privatisation. If the Secretary of State wants to experiment on the Chiltern or Southend lines, I hope that he will give the public sector management a chance to compete and to show how good they are. He should at least give the public sector management a level playing field and the same finance rights and access to the market so that they can show that they can perform as well as private sector management. If, as seems to be the case, the

[Mr. Prescott]

Secretary of State wants to experiment, he should at least be fair and not condemn the public sector. We would resent that unfair ideological view.

I believe that I have established the case that public and private financing could be possible, particularly in leasing agreements in respect of parts of Network SouthEast and the bond arrangements for financing the channel tunnel link. As the Secretary of State knows, I spelt that out in my document "Moving Britain into Europe". The Department of Transport bought three copies of it at £25 a time, and I am most grateful for that. Perhaps the Secretary of State learnt from that document how to use private capital. I hope that he has sent a copy to the Treasury.

The Opposition believe that there is a need for private capital because all the money cannot come from the taxpayer. Private capital will help to produce a modern railway system. It will help with investment, and it will help our manufacturing industry. Large publicly owned companies are an important element in the manufacturing sector. The manufacturing sector may not mean much to Conservative Members, but it is crucial for growth and creating wealth. It is also crucial if we want to reduce the balance of payments deficit and to stop importing manufactured goods and instead make them here.

Ownership is not the critical issue, although we would clearly prefer public ownership. The issue is to provide adequate financial support for the railway system. There should be a long-term investment plan for the railway system and a clear identification of social service payments and the objectives for the industry. We must create confidence in the railway industry for the future.

The issue is the modernisation of our railway system, not privatisation. Privatisation will inevitably mean the doubling of fares and less investment in rolling stock and track. It will also mean a less safe railway system and more subsidy and support. It will mean greater bureaucracy, fewer rural services and a system which will not be accountable for the quality of services.

That is why we propose that a publicly owned railway system, modernised in the way that we suggest, would serve the interests of passengers better, would serve our national interests, and be better for the environment. I urge my hon. Friends to support the motion.

4.23 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'recognises that progress has recently been made in improving British Rail's services; believes that further necessary improvements for rail users can best be achieved by creating the opportunity for introducing into the railways private sector ownership, management skills and capital; and therefore supports the Government's proposals as set out in the White Paper, "New Opportunities for the Railways".'.

We have just heard the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) make one of his typical speeches. He has plenty to say, but he totally lacks consistency. For a start, he accuses us of doing a U-turn on policy and then bases most of his speech on criticising the policies in the original White Paper. I will return to that later.

Of course, I must commend the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East in one respect: he is honest to a fault. However, it is a very big fault, especially for an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman these days. Uniquely among his colleagues, at least the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is honest enough to admit that he is still a socialist. His colleagues are all moving on. They call it "Clintonisation" and my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) has also just called it that. In reality, that means abandoning all the policies that they have always stood for in order to buy votes wherever they fall.

The hon. Gentleman talked about negotiating on the Jubilee line. He negotiates his position in the Labour party and he negotiates policy in the Labour party in public, on television, all the time. But at least he has made it clear that he does not approve of this process of Clintonisation.

I wondered why we were having this debate on rail privatisation at all today given that we are about to have another full debate on the Bill. Could it be that his presence here gives him a cast-iron alibi for his absence from a meeting with the Clinton camp on which his shadow Cabinet colleagues are so keen?

It is, of course, the same old story: everyone is out of step except the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East; a horde of Clinton clones marching in one direction and Andy Capp stubbornly marching in the other. I thought that the hon. Gentleman protested too much about his ideology today.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): I thought that the debate was supposed to be about privatisation, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair at this point.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman is extremely sensitive. I have only been speaking for about 50 seconds or one minute. I will tell him very soon what the relevance of this is.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East protested a great deal about his ideology. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham suggested in his intervention, the reason is that the hon. Gentleman will not let go of his prejudices, just as he clings to clause four. He cannot begin to understand that our practical and pragmatic approach to improving our railways is the right way to get better services for the passenger, the freight customer and the taxpayer. That is because he believes that everything must be done according to the letter of the original socialist textbook—*[Interruption.]* Just let me finish. There is clearly great sensitivity on this point on the other side of the House. The hon. Gentleman refuses to see the evidence that has been before us now for more than a decade; he sticks by the letter of the socialist textbook. That evidence is that the market, whatever form it may take, produces better services for our citizens. In a great many of our industries we have demonstrated in the last decade that it produces better services, greater innovation and more competition, and at lower cost.

Mr. Snape: Will the Secretary of State accept from me that, coming from a member of the Cabinet that gave us the ERM and the poll tax, we need no reassurances about the pragmatism of his party?

Mr. MacGregor: We have a council tax which I think will prove to be an excellent form of local government finance. It has all the benefits and has taken account of

most of the lessons of the old rating system as well as the community charge. I believe that our policies are very soundly based in our principles and in our approach to the private sector and privatisation. As I shall be demonstrating, we will be introducing them gradually over a period and, I believe, in a pragmatic and practical way.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: No, I will not give way; I have already given way twice.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East believes that public utilities always are and have to be the best, because for his purposes they are the best. He has made that clear again today. He talked at one point of maximising services rather than revenue. What he meant was keeping the service running whether or not there were customers for it and absolutely independent of the cost to the taxpayer of so doing. There is a reason for that. He wants as many people as possible——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): The Secretary of State is reading this.

Mr. MacGregor: If that is the case, I must be a mind reader. I know that I claim to have mind reading as one of my hobbies and I must have been a mind reader to know that the hon. Gentleman would be talking about maximising services rather than maximising revenue, and that is exactly what I have just been referring to.

The reason is that the hon. Gentleman wants as many people as possible working in publicly owned industries, irrespective of whether such a work force is needed. He wants public employees to have security in their jobs whether or not they do them well. He wants state-owned businesses to be run in the interests of their employees, but —this is a crucial point and it underlines much of what the hon. Gentleman said—he has no regard whatever for the cost to the taxpayer who foots the bill.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned two European countries. One was Germany. He should know that there is the same anxiety to produce better services and the same concern about the monolithic nationalised industry and its cost in Germany as we have been demonstrating. That is why the German Government propose to privatise German railways——

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): It will take about 12 years.

Mr. MacGregor: I went over that point in the Select Committee last night: our time scale to complete the whole privatisation process will be about the same. I made it quite clear all the way through that we are building it up over a period, and it makes absolute sense.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East made great play of France. He may not realise that 20 per cent. of the total cost of running the French railways comes from meeting the interest payments on their debt. Frequently—or on several occasions, at least—the French Government have written off the debt because the burden was becoming so great, so the cost to the taxpayer is very high. Because of the many improvements in British Rail, to which I shall come later in my speech, the interest payment for British Rail is very much lower. I would not wish to come to the House to defend a situation in which 20 per cent. of the cost of a nationalised industry is sheer interest payment. That is something that we would certainly wish to avoid.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I am sure that my right hon. Friend would not wish to mislead the House in any way. Just for the record—and it is no use my hon. Friend's Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), grumbling at me; my intervention may be regarded as unhelpful, and I am sorry if it is, but I merely want to put the record straight —will my right hon. Friend confirm, before he compares what is happening in Germany with what is happening here, that Helmut Kohl set up a Government railway commission which had a brief to study the relationship between the railway and the state, that it took 18 months to consider its proposals, that there was thereafter a lengthy debate in the Bundestag as to whether they should proceed and which proposals should be chosen and that the 10 years thereafter, to which my right hon. Friend has rightly referred, do not in any way include proposals that bear any relationship to the specific proposals in his White Paper?

Mr. MacGregor: There are quite a number of similarities. I am not sure whether my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) has had the opportunity to do so, but I have had several discussions on rail privatisation with my opposite number, the German Minister for Transport. We have been discussing it since last July and he announced his proposals in the same week as I announced our White Paper.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch knows—and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East criticised us for this—we have discussed and debated the form of privatisation of British Rail for some considerable time. We have then produced a White Paper and we have had thorough discussions on the White Paper. We are carrying out a substantial consultation process on a large number of policy aspects and we will have a thorough scrutiny of all aspects of the Bill as it goes through both Houses. I believe, therefore, that there will be thorough scrutiny of the matter in the House. I repeat that there are many similarities.

Mrs. Dunwoody *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: No, I must get on.

I can condense much of the approach of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East along the following lines: that it would be a great business if it were not for the customers. All the way through his speech he hardly referred to the customers. He talked about public service, about obligations and about money coming from the taxpayers; I hardly heard the word "customer" on his lips. It is fortunate for the customers that the hon. Gentleman is not running the railway. In sharp contrast, our policies are all about getting a better deal for the customer, for the passenger and for the taxpayer, as we have done with all earlier privatisations.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East referred to the fact that nowhere else in the world had the kind of policy that we propose for British Rail been implemented in practice and in full. This criticism has been made of our privatisation proposals over the past decade.

[Mr. MacGregor]

It is interesting that all round the world many Governments now follow the policies that we have successfully pursued. I believe it will be the same with the railways.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: Surely the Minister is not saying that fares are not going to rise. In electricity, gas and British Telecom we have seen enormous increases in bills to customers and we are going to see the same in British Rail as well.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman knows that fares have risen under British Rail as a nationalised industry. There are a number of reasons for that, one of which is that if one is undertaking a substantial capital investment programme, as British Rail is, the cost has to be shared by the user and the taxpayer. It has been occurring in recent years in British Rail as well for the reasons that I have just given.

Mr. Connarty *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I want to get on. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East did not give way a great deal and I have already given way a lot in my first 10 minutes. When we get to Second Reading I shall again give a comprehensive description of our proposals and show how they fit into the Bill. Today, I would like to make two important announcements about two aspects of our policy.

First, I wish to restate our objectives. We have seen considerable improvements in British Rail in many parts of our country in recent years and again I pay tribute to the work of the chairman, the board, management and employees. The recent changes called "Organising for Quality" have taken British Rail further in the direction of commercialisation and have improved the efficiency of the organisation a good deal. There are currently record levels of investment in British Rail, higher than in the last three decades, and in the autumn statement we added another £239 million to the external financing limit of British Rail on top of the leasing proposals. The key difference and the key point about the leasing proposals is that it is possible to do them in anticipation of privatisation because the risk of the leases will be transferred to the private sector. Therefore, it does not break normal public sector

I have to say to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East that, had the country had the misfortune to have a Labour Government and had the hon. Gentleman tried to carry through his leasing proposals, which were based on keeping them entirely in the public sector, they would have counted against the public sector guarantee whereas ours do not. That is a fundamental difference and he has failed to understand it so far. That is why we have not been following his approach.

Mr. Foulkes: The Secretary of State is talking about investment. He will be aware that there is great concern about investment in track and rolling stock for the west coast line from Glasgow to London. Such investment is absolutely necessary. I use the line regularly and I know how increasingly inadequate it is becoming. When would the right hon. Gentleman expect British Rail to be able to make the necessary investment in that line?

Mr. MacGregor: It has started. I make two comments immediately. First, we have record levels of investment at present and it is for British Rail to decide priorities. There must be a limit to the amount of money from the taxpayer which can be put into British Rail. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East seeks to imply that he would not have a limit and would pour in unlimited sums or much larger sums than we are investing. Secondly, the prospects of faster investment will be enhanced if we can secure privatisation, or when we secure Royal Assent, because it will be possible then to seek private finance as well.

Although there are currently record levels of investment, no one could argue that the present services are perfect, that the culture—which remains that of a monopoly nationalised industry—cannot and should not be improved and that we could not get better value for the substantial taxpayers' money going into the system.

I do not find, as I go round the country or as I listen to colleagues in the House, that people are satisfied with British Rail. They clearly are not. The public also know that monolithic, old-fashioned nationalised industries are not the best way of providing services efficiently and responsibly.

Our proposals are designed to deal with these criticisms, to get that improvement in service which the customers are still demanding and to get the better value for money by breaking down the monolothic structure of the industry. Our proposals start from the belief that the private sector, spurred on by competition, is far more likely to be responsive to customers and to change the culture. The private sector can provide better and more efficient services. We have applied the philosophy successfully across the economy to many privatised industries. It is as relevant to transport as to any other part of the economy: on the roads, in the air, in our airports and in our seaports.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I think I had better move on. I have already given way a great deal.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East has a well-known tendency to say the first thing that comes into his head without pausing to reflect whether it might be remotely right or not. He has been doing it again today and he has done it twice in the recent past. I see that he is saying that our rail proposals are dead and buried and that the Prime Minister's reference to semi-privatisation means the first U-turn of the year. The hon. Gentleman is totally wrong on both counts and I will deal with both?

Mr. Prescott: A semi U-turn?

Mr. MacGregor: It is a strange corpse that will be emerging in a week or two in substantial living form. I refer to the privatisation Bill. We have had inevitable delays while the paving measure has been going through Parliament. As soon as we get Royal Assent to that Bill, which I hope will be very soon, we shall publish the main Bill, which will be long and full. As it passes through both Houses, it will provide many opportunities to make clear our proposals in more detail than I have time for now.

At the same time, we shall be publishing a series of documents about particular aspects of the policy, as we have done in recent months. We have already had a consultation document on the franchising of passenger

services. We have had an extremely useful response and I hope to announce a list of pilot franchises in the near future. I call them pilot franchises because they are not, of course, real franchises; we cannot have real franchises operated by the public sector until we have Royal Assent and the authority to set them up. That will involve the franchising authority, the tendering process and so on. That is for 1994. But it is useful, on the basis of the responses to the consultation document on the franchising of passenger services, to structure British Rail and to set up pilot franchises so that they are ready and from which we can gain experience.

In connection with the franchising of passenger services —this bears on the remarks of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East about the existing staff of British Rail—I hope that the staff will bid for the franchises. We are positively encouraging management buy-outs and will assist them in the process. There is a clear indication that we shall have quite a number. *[Interruption.]* We shall be encouraging managers who are currently with British Rail, in the public sector, to play a full part in the franchising by bidding for the franchises. I cannot make the position clearer than that.

We have issued proposals on the British Transport police and we are considering the many responses that we have had. We have issued a paper on the rail users consultative committees, which have been broadly welcomed. We shall soon be producing important documents on charges for access to track and on the management and ownership of rolling stock in the newly shaped industry. We have been proparing, and will continue to prepare, our plans in close co-operation with the chairman of British Rail and his staff.

So it seems to be an extraordinary corpse that is "dead and buried". The movement is very much alive. We cannot implement our proposals until the legislation is passed. We shall begin in 1994 and there will be a planned programme of franchises and sales from then on.

Mr. Dalyell: What about the new health and safety regulations that are said to be necessary in relation to the transport of hazardous substances? What regulations will have to be introduced for the transportation of nuclear materials? The report says:

"In view of the potential loss of British Rail's existing tight control, it is considered necessary to introduce new health and safety regulations along the lines of those already in force for the transport of such materials by road."

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that that will involve a number of instruments coming before the House?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall deal with that document at the appropriate point in my speech because there is much more to be said about the document in general than the point raised by the hon. Gentleman.

As for the accusation of a U-turn, or even a semi U-turn, the policy remains as set out in our proposals following the publication of the White Paper. I have made it clear from the beginning that it is not possible to privatise British Rail in the classic sense of a once-and-for-all flotation through the stock exchange. For a start, much of British Rail makes losses and substantial subsidies are, and will continue to be, required. Where possible, we are selling to the private sector, and we are injecting private sector skills, management and capital, where in the foreseeable future that is not a realistic possibility. There is nothing different about that compared with what we said in the White Paper. Indeed, I said in my foreword to that document in July:

"Privatisation is one of the great success stories of this Government. It has taken different forms in different industries, but common to all privatisations has been the harnessing of the management skills, flair and entrepreneurial spirit of the private sector to provide better services to the public. The time has come to extend these benefits to the railways. This calls for a new approach. British Rail makes large losses. It cannot, therefore, be sold as a complete concern in the same way as other industries which we have privatised."

So it is absolutely clear that we are following through our original proposals. They do not represent privatisation completely, in the sense that many privatisations have been understood up to now. The passenger services are not being sold, but are being franchised and that is why it is right to refer to it as a semi-privatisation.

It means essentially that we shall be injecting the private sector into the railways. Hence, exactly as outlined in the White Paper, we shall sell what can be sold—principally the freight businesses and stations—while the passenger services will be progressively franchised. In other words, there will be contracts, won in competition with the private sector, to run services in return for subsidising where it is required, or for a fee where it is not. BR's monopoly will end.

The track and signalling will remain in public ownership, although in the long term privatisation of that is not ruled out. Railtrack will obtain its services in the private sector to the maximum possible extent through contracting out. There will be contracts between the providers of services and the operator of the track. That is the scheme that we set out in the White Paper, the scheme on which we have been working and the scheme that we shall be putting before the House. We believe it to be the most practicable way of getting private sector disciplines and competition into the railway industry.

I have explained our proposals and I hope that Opposition Members will agree that there is not a shred of a policy that is dead and buried. Nor is there a shred of a U-turn in what we are doing. As I said, I shall be setting out again our proposals in full on Second Reading, but today I shall deal with some of the criticisms of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East and some of the concerns that have been expressed in recent weeks.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): In referring to franchising, my right hon. Friend has not dealt with an aspect that is of particular importance to my constituents. One section of the railway which, by common consent, will never attract any franchise interest is local commuter services, which are vital to my area. Ministerial statements have been made about the protection of subsidies going to those services. Will my right hon. Friend explain what mechanism will be provided to assure me and others like me that that subsidy and those services will continue?

Mr. MacGregor: I can make two points to reassure my hon. Friend. The first is that it will be eligible for franchising—not for sale—and I believe that many commuter lines will benefit from franchised services. The second is that, as we have made clear throughout, for socially necessary lines, which include a large number of commuter lines, subsidy will continue. An element of the competition is that franchisees will be able to bid for the subsidy and in that way we shall ensure that we get the best

[Mr. MacGregor]

competitive element into the subsidy. But the subsidy will continue and the franchisees will have to guarantee to provide certain services in the contract with the franchising authority. My hon. Friend can reassure his constituents entirely on that score.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I am anxious to make progress and I must insist on the hon. Gentleman being the last to intervene.

Mr. Wilson: It will interest the people of Cheadle and elsewhere to know whether the right hon. Gentleman is giving an assurance that the track of 11,000 miles will be maintained. Such an assurance from him will relieve many worries among hon. Members in all parts of the House.

Mr. MacGregor: I had intended to deal with that issue later, but I will deal with it now. We have made clear throughout—there is no change—that we expect most, or a very high proportion, of the national network to continue—*[Interruption.]* Let me be absolutely clear about it. One cannot give a guarantee for all time. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman would not wish to give such a guarantee. Were he to give a guarantee for all time, he would not be taking account of economic and commercial realities.

There may be cases where the economic demand has changed, where there is little demand for a service and where proposals can be put forward for the closure of that service. That has happened in the past 10 years, when demand has fallen away, and it could happen in the next 10. If it does, we shall follow very closely the existing system and the statutory procedures for dealing with closures. They must be followed closely. There must be some adjustments to deal with the new system.

However, when the Bill comes out it will be seen that it is very much on all fours with what has existed in the past. The existing procedures will continue. There is absolutely nothing wrong or hidden. We expect the vast majority of services to continue for a long period—*[Interruption.]* I am being very precise about this. There may be occasions on which, as in the past 10 years, there is agreement that there is no longer a demand for a service. In those circumstances, there may be proposals for closure. If so, the statutory procedure will apply in the usual way. The socially necessary lines to which I have referred include commuter and rural services. In those cases the subsidies will continue, as we have made absolutely clear.

I turn now to the question of safety.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I really must move on. In any case, I could not have been more explicit. I have made it absolutely clear that, in all cases of social necessity, subsidies will continue.

On the question of safety, it will probably be for the convenience of the House if I refer to the report that I am publishing this afternoon. It was my intention to publish it later in the week, but the process has been accelerated. Publication of the report and of the Government's response has been a very fast process. Far from trying to conceal the report, I am only too delighted to have this opportunity to say something about it.

Throughout, I have stressed the paramount importance that has been given to safety matters in our privatisation proposals. That was emphasised in the White Paper that we published in July 1992. I utterly reject the accusations about safety that have been made. What my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) said in his intervention was absolutely right: British Airways simply cannot be accused of ignoring safety requirements in the event of privatisation. Indeed, the situation is quite the reverse. It would be commercially disastrous for companies such as British Airways or for franchise passenger services to acquire a bad reputation in respect of safety. Of course, such undertakings will attach paramount importance to the question of safety, as will the Government. That must be made absolutely clear.

I am grateful for the opportunity to refer to the definitive report of the Health and Safety Commission on the appropriate future safety arrangements for the railways. *[Interruption.]* Given his interest in safety, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, instead of shouting across the Chamber, might listen to what I have to say about this extremely important matter. Over the next few months there will be ample opportunity to discuss the report.

The House will be aware that the Health and Safety Commission is the independent authority responsible for safety on the railways. Its report, which was foreshadowed last July in the White Paper, in which we asked for a detailed and thorough study of our proposals, contains 38 detailed recommendations, including proposals for new regulations under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, which would provide the statutory framework for the new arrangements. I am pleased to tell the House that the Government accept the commission's recommendations in full. I am satisfied that the commission's proposals will provide a robust and practical framework for ensuring that the benefits that privatisation will bring to the railways will in no way diminish the safety of passengers using or of employees working on the railways.

It is very important that it is the Health and Safety Commission, which is independent and which I am sure the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull would never criticise in that respect, that has produced this report and I have said that its proposals will provide a satisfactory framework. In particular, the Government accept that considerable care will have to be taken—this point is made in the report—to set up systems to ensure that new operators are properly equipped and organised so that they may give confidence that risk will be effectively controlled right from the start and that important matters will not fall between the safety arrangements of the various parties.

We also agree that it is vital that the process be properly planned and managed, having full regard to the capabilities and morale of staff who have to make it happen, and that it is essential that British Rail's specialist expertise be retained to ensure proper validation of the new organisations. The proposals are designed to achieve those ends and that is why they have our full commitment and support.

Mr. Prescott: This is disgusting.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East says, "This is disgusting." What he really means is that he is extremely disappointed that I have been able

to come to the House this afternoon and say that we have a report providing an assurance in respect of safety and that all the recommendations will be implemented in full. I hope the hon. Gentleman agrees that this is a major issue and that it is right that I should devote attention to it. If I had not done so, the hon. Gentleman would have spent the afternoon levelling safety accusations against me. In fact, he is disappointed that I have been able to say that we accept in full the recommendations contained in the report.

Mr. Prescott: What the Secretary of State has said is absolutely outrageous. We have protested about the fact that the document was not available. We have not been able to make our judgment, but I am sure that the Health and Safety Commission will say a number of things and enter a number of qualifications. The report says:

"The consequences of failing to achieve adequate systems of control will be seen in increased risk on the railway system and in the likelihood of an increase in the numbers and severity of accidents."

Presumably it goes on to justify the stated opinion concerning safety. It is not fair for the Secretary of State to criticise the Opposition when we have not had access to the report. A document as important as this one should have been the subject of a statement to the House. We should have been able to subject this report to proper critical analysis. The Secretary of State should at least be courteous enough to recognise that we have not had an opportunity to read the report. It is totally unacceptable that he should characterise our protests as being outrageous. If only for the sake of decency, perhaps he would like to withdraw that remark.

Mr. MacGregor: It is hardly appropriate for the hon. Gentleman to use the word "disgusting" when I am telling the House about the report and its recommendations on this crucial matter. I have emphasised that, as the Bill goes through the House, there will be endless opportunities to discuss the details. The report is very detailed and there will be full parliamentary debate.

The report sets out the guiding principles, which the Government accept in full. The commission's central recommendation is that there should be a "cascade model" of safety validation for railway operators. In layman's language, this means a system that properly establishes the different levels of responsibility. It is proposed that each railway undertaking should produce a railway safety case, which would set out the undertaking's safety policy, risk assessment, safety management system and maintenance and operational arrangements insofar as they relate to health and safety issues.

These railway safety cases would be validated by the infrastructure controller—that is, Railtrack. At the top of the cascade, the Health and Safety Executive would validate Railtrack's railway safety case, including Railtrack's system for validating operators' safety cases. British Rail's safety organisation will be maintained as a unit and will be transferred to Railtrack.

I am aware that some people have criticsed the number of bodies that will be involved in our privatisation proposals. The Health and Safety Commission, as the independent safety authority, is, of course, one of those bodies. I wish to emphasise that the commission is already, under current circumstances, the safety authority. Thus, we are not adding a new body; we are ensuring that we have the full machinery that we need to fulfil all safety commitments. I do not believe that anyone in the House would wish otherwise.

The report has been fully discussed with British Rail and I myself have had a meeting with the chairmen of the Health and Safety Commission and British Rail for the purpose of going over the key issues. I can tell the House that Sir Bob Reid is fully satisfied and that this afternoon he is welcoming the report and endorsing the proposals. I am today asking the chairmen of the Health and Safety Commission and of British Rail to press ahead with implementation of the commission's proposals.

Clearly, I do not have time this afternoon to go into any of the detailed recommendations, but the House needs to know that the report concludes:

"It is considered that the recommendations in this report, if implemented, will provide the necessary assurances for the public and the work force."

As I have said, we have accepted the regulations and agreed them with British Rail and will implement them. The regulations will replace British Rail's internal rules for the carriage of dangerous substances. It is accepted that the carriage of such substances should be subject to statutory regulation, especially with new operators entering the field, and that will be done.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the Secretary of State accept that there is a special case for the carriage of nuclear substances?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already said that we shall be implementing the recommendations in full by way of regulations.

I express my warm appreciation to the Health and Safety Commission for its skill and hard work in carrying out such a detailed and thorough study. The way in which it has carried out its task has been exemplary and ensures that our safety regime has been thoroughly validated at professional and expert level and has been agreed by all concerned. That was a major priority in our privatisation proposals and it has now been successfully accomplished. We shall now proceed with the implementation.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East accused me of trying to conceal the report. On the contrary, I wanted it to get as much attention as possible.

When I last spoke to the House, I said that I had had meetings with the major rail unions about our proposals. The issue on which they most pressed me, and an issue on which they all felt strongly, was pensions. I have made clear to them that I fully understand the importance that they attach to the pension arrangements. It has been raised by a number of hon. Members in the House and many right hon. and hon. Members have written to me and to my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport about pension matters.

The union pressed two views on me: that the BR pension funds should be secure, and that for the future some form of joint industry arrangement should be developed from the present pension funds. I shall be publishing a paper on pensions within the next two weeks, but I am able to say now that the Government agree that there should be a joint industry pension scheme to succeed the present BR scheme; that there should be arrangements to ensure that pensions to which railway staff are now entitled are safeguarded; and that their future pension benefits should be no less favourable than in the present BR scheme.

[Mr. MacGregor]

We do not think that participation in the joint scheme should be compulsory for future employers in the industry for all time. We consider that those employers should be compelled to protect the accrued pension rights of those in the industry. The paper will explain the sort of joint industry scheme that we have in mind.

I wish to deal separately with the rights of railway pensioners. The industry is not to be privatised as one. That is why a joint industry scheme is necessary. It would be impractical to allocate to new parts of the industry all the people who have retired or deferred their pensions. Therefore, we propose one of two options. The first is that the appropriate part of the existing fund should be set aside and administered separately for the pensioners. The fund would not be guaranteed, so the pensioners would depend on the skill of the fund managers for their benefits. Alternatively, part of the fund could be taken over by the Government who would undertake to pay index-linked pensions. That option would provide a firm guarantee, but the benefits would not improve in real terms as they might under the first option. We want to hear the views of the BR trustees, whom we shall consult closely on these matters, and the pensioners themselves about those options.

I cannot in this speech go into such an important topic in depth. The paper will deal with such matters as how the new scheme should be governed. We shall, of course, study the comments of the industry when it has considered the paper. It is likely that amendments will be required to the Bill, particularly in order to procure future arrangements for pensioners. Amendment will obviously depend on the responses, but it seemed to us better to consult first rather than be too prescriptive. I hope that what I have said will reassure the members of the pension schemes. I am also able to tell the House that I have discussed the proposals with the chairman of BR and that he is broadly content.

The House will know that the pension law review committee chaired by Professor Goode is due to report by June. I hope that we shall be able to take account of its thinking in establishing the joint industry scheme.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East accused us of producing complex proposals and spoke about quangos, ignoring the fact that some already exist. The vast majority of the organisations about which he spoke are in being and would certainly exist under any scheme that he would propose. I have never suggested that the reforms would be simple, because British Rail is already a large and complex organisation. This process of radical change is bound to be complex, but it is certainly not over-complex and there are good reasons for all the proposals that the hon. Gentleman criticised.

In other areas of transport we do not generally expect the provider of services to run the infrastructure as well. Therefore, the split between Railtrack and rail services is well precedented. The simple arrangement of private sector operators running services on track provided by Railtrack and the public sector providing the infrastructure is at the heart of our proposals. Obviously, that means the setting up of Railtrack. Other supporting organisations will make the system work.

We currently pay subsidies of £1 billion a year to British Rail. In future, subsidy will be paid to franchisees. That should assure my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day). There must be someone to specify the service, to nominate funds and to ensure value for money. That is what the franchising authority will do, but in public. All that activity takes place now, but behind closed doors within British Rail. One of the strangest criticisms of the setting up of the franchising authority is that the public must not know how much subsidy goes to some lines lest people be shocked. Our proposals are a positive advantage in terms of open government and open discussion about where taxpayers' money is spent.

The regulator will protect consumers' interests, prevent anti-competitive behaviour and ensure that operators have equitable access to the railway. All privatised industries with any element of monopoly have a regulator to provide such protection and the railway should be no exception. Some people have even criticised the establishment of rail users consultative committees as adding another layer of bureaucracy, quite ignoring the point that such committees already exist. To ensure that there are as few different bodies as possible, I have proposed that those committees should report to the regulator, who will, after all, be the guardian of the consumers' interests.

I have already dealt with the safety authority. It cannot remotely be criticised for being a separate body, because it is that already. Our proposals do not amount to the great bureaucracy which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East accused us of creating. I should like to nail one or two other canards, although I have already dealt with some in answer to questions. It has been said that there will be widespread closures of passenger services. I have said repeatedly and say it again that we shall subsidise socially necessary services. As I have said, subsidy will continue to be paid through the franchising director to franchisees who will bid for it for lines that cannot operate without it.

One of our main aims is to get better value for money over time. The franchise contractors will deal with fares. Where there is an element of monopoly power, as there is on the London commuter routes, the franchise contracts will fix the fares. The regulator will control the fares of open access operators with monopoly powers. Elsewhere the franchising director will need to consider the proposals of potential operators when judging their bids to run franchised services. A fixed formula might be incorporated in the franchise contract to limit fare increases. We shall be able to debate all those issues later, but I have made the position clear about closure of lines, franchises and subsidies.

As I have said, we shall maintain the formal statutory closure procedure, offering no less a safeguard on proposals for closure than the existing one. Plainly, there will need to be some changes to the existing procedure to reflect the changed structure of the railway, and the details of the scheme will be set out in the Bill.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East spoke about the timetable. A few days ago the old railway traditions of interest from the clergy were observed when Canon Hugh Montefiore suggested that there could be no national timetable. There will be such a timetable and Railtrack will be responsible for providing it. Some critics say that it will not be possible to buy a through ticket, but that criticism is answered in the White Paper because such tickets will be available and the Bill will provide for them. Those are just a few of the misunderstandings that I have sought to correct. I hope that they will not be repeated in the House or outside.

Shortly, on Second Reading of the main privatisation Bill, we shall be able to debate all these matters again. I

believe that we have got the structure right and I am absolutely convinced that in order to bring about further improvements in British Rail passenger and freight services it is right to introduce more competition and choice and inject private sector management skills and capital.

As the Bill goes through Parliament we shall be able to discuss all the issues and make adjustments where we consider that they are justified. But the clear message is that privatisation is necessary to inject private sector discipline into the railway industry. It will happen, but not in a great unseemly and ill-thought-out rush. We are making our preparations steadily and deliberately. There is no U-turn. I look forward to introducing the Bill to the House and to getting on with it and that is why I support the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friends.

5.9 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): One should have sympathy for the Secretary of State. He reminds me of a person in a glass maze in a funfair, eternally seeking a way through but always bumping his nose on another piece of glass. He took over an incredible dog's breakfast of a product and he is finding it impossible to organise a sensible or even acceptable policy to move towards privatisation.

Britain's railway system, which grew up in an age when rail was a new form of transport and able to attract great investment, went through a period when private industry was no longer able to produce a profit. Any railway system anywhere in the world will demonstrate only too clearly that we need a state railway system, subsidised by taxpayers, integrated and planned on the basis of people being able to move easily from one form of transport to another and providing a service. I was struck by the fact that the Secretary of State believed that, somehow or other, it was wrong to maximise service. Surely the main function of a railway system is the transportation of people and goods in a manner which is convenient and useful to them. When it ceases to perform that function, it is an anachronism.

I am sorry to say that the proposed privatisation of British Rail is an unalloyed disaster because it has not been thought out. No one has produced, either today or on any other occasion, an adequate reason—certainly no adequate economic reason—why the proposed changes will improve the service. It is clear that any transport system must have money from the taxpayer if it is to operate efficiently. The Secretary of State congratulated himself on the time he had taken to bring the changes about, but at no point did he explain why he was not prepared to publish a Green Paper, consult widely with private and state industry and produce a proper workable plan.

We are rushing ahead with a Bill which answers none of the basic questions. Already the uncertainty created by the risk of privatisation is leading to a flight away from the carriage of freight within the industry and causing the private firms which provide the rolling stock openly to declare that they are facing a long period of industrial blight and cannot look forward to order books with even adequate amounts of work. The Railway Industry Association went public with the information that 75 per cent. of its private firms are working at only 75 per cent. of their capacity now, expect almost empty order books in 1994 and will be unable to provide within a reasonable time either work or rolling stock for any new system, privatised or non-privatised.

We now have the worst of all worlds. The Government are committed to privatisation but have not thought it out. They cannot provide an economic argument or even produce a practical plan for supporting the existing system. British Rail, whose reorganisation has already led to enormous uproar and which is facing real problems of morale, is being told that it must nevertheless face yet another period of uncertainty. All the men and women who work in the industry, who in the past five years have experienced enormous changes and have responded with enormous alacrity and great good will to the demands made upon them by the British Rail management, are now told that, regardless of how much better their productivity is or how much effort they have put into improving it, they are to be subjected to yet another period of violent change. Some will be told that they will lose their jobs or that their pensions are at risk, and the majority will look forward to a period of uncertainty and change which is not justified on political or economic grounds but only on grounds of pure dogma.

It is no accident that increasing numbers of ex-Conservative Members of the House are voicing real worries about the future of the railway system. They know that, there is a direct link between the support of the electorate and the provision of a proper transport system. They understand that, without a transport system which enables people to go to work safely and to give a good service, the Conservative party will pay in terms of votes and political support. Those arguments have so far been completely ignored, not just by the Secretary of State but by the Government, who should know better.

I am not surprised that the report "Ensuring Safety on Britain's Railways" has been dealt with in the slightly cackhanded manner that we have seen today. One has only to look rapidly at some of the things that it says to realise why there are real worries about privatisation. The report says:

> "BR will specify to any potential new operator the safety-related conditions of access".

It goes on to lay down various pieces of machinery. On page 22, paragraph 3.7, it says:

> "At present BR is obliged to control and is responsible for all aspects of railway safety; it controls the infrastructure and operates all services. In any scenario which divides this control by introducing new independent operators the body which controls the infrastructure will continue to hold a dominant position."

Whatever is introduced, the report lays down the need for machinery which will respond to the real safety needs of the passenger.

The Secretary of State has a responsibility to explain why a fragmented system will produce a better service for the passenger, but he has never once done so. He has told us that subsidies will continue because he knows that any private operator who comes in will look immediately for a good return on capital invested. A private operator will want property, facilities and all the things that can be taken out of the existing system without necessarily putting back the expensive services which are at present the function of British Rail. Whatever the Secretary of State says, private operators will not rush into buying new trains and providing new services. Private operators will not want the difficult bits of Network SouthEast or the

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

commuter lines around Manchester. They will know all too well that those are difficult and expensive services with many problems.

The Secretary of State should be prepared to say that, whether one is talking about safety, subsidy, investment or an integrated planned transport system, privatisation is not the answer. British Rail does not do all that we want it to do, but instead of accepting that some of its problems arise from lack of investment, the Government come here and say that it would be much better if it were sold off in bits to any private franchisee wishing to take on the service. That is totally irresponsible, as I believe many Conservative Members know. Many hon. Members at all levels understand the importance to their constituents of a transport system which delivers people, safely and at a reasonable price, to the place where they want to go. People want clean, safe railways which do not just deliver them to certain mainline stations, but provide subsidiary local services at the desired times and places. All those facilities could be available if the Secretary of State were prepared to tell the Treasury, "The only thing basically wrong with the existing system is lack of investment and support."

I ask the Secretary of State in all sincerity not to think of our transport system as an ideological ball to be tossed in the air to show how much more Conservative the Government are than any of their predecessors. Destroying the present integrated system will not produce a better result for the passenger or for the economy—it will simply pile confusion on confusion and hazard on hazard. Unless the Secretary of State asks the Cabinet to think again, it will not be only Opposition Members who find themselves in grave difficulty when the Bill is presented. All Members who generally want to protect their constituents' interests will have to ask themselves a simple question—whether the Bill will improve the transport system or make it worse; and if it will make the system worse, we can surely all unite in defeating it in no uncertain manner.

5.21 pm

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): There is something of an enigma in the Opposition's attitude to British Rail. They have spent the past 10 years lambasting its management; now they oppose the most effective way of lifting it into the 20th century.

Yet British Rail is not so very bad. Britain runs more trains at over 100 mph than any other EC country; BR has the fastest fleet of commercial diesels in the world; and in InterCity it has the world's only profitable main line railway. Privatisation will provide many opportunities for BR to build on those achievements and to improve passenger services. Of course that will mean change, and change means fears and uncertainties, but I think that we can draw some confidence from what has happened in other public services when the private sector has been introduced.

I hope that Railtrack will draw on the experience of local government, which has made a great success of contracting out. Local government is taking on the role of enabler rather than that of doer, and huge benefits have resulted. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm that he proposes such action, for private contractors will be able to invest in the most modern machinery, outside Treasury control.

In local government, contracting out has led to changed working methods, more modern equipment, higher productivity, larger pay packets and lower costs. I should like an assurance that Railtrack will not perpetuate British Rail's current institutionalised position as doer rather than enabler. We need a culture change, and I believe that that is the way to achieve it.

On the subject of franchising, large subsidies have been made available—£300 million for London Commuter Services and £700 million for Regional Railways. We can learn from the example of the bus industry, which was given subsidies on condition that it tendered competitively to the county or metropolitan councils first. That saved £40 million per year. I believe that similar benefits can be gained from franchising with competitive bids, for the minimum public subsidy.

Investment is a vital aspect. I find myself in a minor alliance with the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) in that I fear that there is a danger that BR will not invest in rolling stock because it does not know whether it will hold the franchise, and the franchise companies will not invest yet because they do not know whether they will have it either. There is a danger of a gap in the flow of orders to the railway manufacturers. I believe that the best solution would be for the manufacturing industry, or the City financing institutions, to set up leasing companies to build new rolling stock which they expect a future operator to acquire—whether that operator is BR or a franchise company.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to take the initiative, and to see that such an operation is set up, so that the manufacturing industry does not experience a continuation of the current drying up of orders. It is likely that orders will run out in 1994. Such an arrangement would also make new rolling stock available to a future operator when it is needed.

I wish to make two points about freight. First, BR appears currently to be preparing the freight sector for privatisation by making its existing operation leaner, fitter and more viable—and hence more attractive to private sector bidders or a management buy-out. It is achieving that by pricing off non-viable freight traffic. However, as the Government's whole case for privatisation is that the skills of the private sector, its productivity, its capital and its lower costs all mean that it can win more traffic off the roads and get it on to the railways, surely there is a case for introducing open access now. I fear that the traffic now being priced off is the very traffic which ought to be and would be retained on rail in a private sector operation.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister believes that transferring more freight on to rail will provide substantial benefits, including environmental benefits. If those benefits are to result from private sector involvement, we should surely allow open access now so that the private sector can bid for the services which BR is currently pricing off and not making available to the private sector. I hope that my hon. Friend will announce this week that he will require BR to provide open access to freight operators immediately, rather than waiting until a future time when a significant part of rail freight will have been transferred back to the roads. That would be a very bad start to a major opportunity for the private sector to extend its activities on the railway.

Secondly, the extent to which freight is carried by rail depends chiefly on the charges made for the use of track. What will be the basis of those charges? It used to be the marginal or extra costs, with the main sector user carrying the structural costs. Will that still apply? As privatisation and franchising are introduced, every user will attempt to offload the costs to other users. I am expressing the anxiety that there will be a tendency to try to shift costs on to freight which previously were borne by the main sector operator. Will my hon. Friend the Minister publish the criteria on which freight will be charged for the use of the railways and ensure that there is an appeal procedure against overcharging? Otherwise, I fear that far too much freight will be priced off the railways because the costs being attributed to freight are disproportionate to that which they should be.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will reply to those points when he replies to the debate.

5.30 pm

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): The Secretary of State said that he could not understand why we were holding this debate today. His press department must have given him the recent cuttings and he must be aware that, whether it is privatisation, semi-privatisation or commercialisation, the Government's policy is wrong.

As the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said, this proposal has been on the agenda for some time. It has exercised the Secretary of State's predecessors, who have contemplated it, tussled with it, thought better of it and discarded it. There has naturally been some speculation that perhaps the right hon. Gentleman would do the same. He has confirmed today that he intends to press ahead very much along the lines of the White Paper published last summer. In doing so, he is setting about something quite new and he is right to say that it is nearly privatisation. It does not compare with anything that we have seen before in this country or with another train regime in the world.

We have not heard to my satisfaction any clear statement of the benefits for passengers. I think that the Secretary of State said that BR managers would be allowed to bid in the franchising operation. If I am right, that is new and not what I have understood him to say before. Will he go one step further and confirm that BR, as an entity, will be able to bid in the franchise process? That single factor would give some credibility to the project.

The Secretary of State placed different emphasis today on the time scale. I welcome the suggestion that the process might take as long as the German process, which took 12 years. In a previous debate the Secretary of State said that it was his aspiration to get the majority of the network into the hands of private operators within the lifetime of this Parliament. On another occasion he said that private sector interest in these opportunities was such that he was holding back the floodgates until the spring of 1994. I welcome the change of emphasis which I believe that I detected today in suggesting that the timetable might be more relaxed.

In whatever form it finally happens, and at whatever time, the problem is that privatisation is happening after years of underfunding by consecutive Governments, as even the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) acknowledged. The confusion and delay of the past five years have prevented forward planning. There has been a hiatus in investment by British Rail, any possible private players in the rail system and local authorities.

The question that I ask is whether the proposals that have been made, which were restated today, are practical and possible to implement. It is difficult to find anyone outside the House who knows anything about the rail system and is prepared to express confidence in the arrangements. I sincerely doubt whether the proposals can create a national rail network capable of meeting and providing a socially necessary service.

The Secretary of State is charging pig-headedly onward in the face of opposition not only from Opposition Members but from leading Conservative luminaries who have held his post in the past, from the chairman of British Rail and from the majority of members of the Transport Select Committee. If the Government proceed at full steam, they will stoke up a heap of trouble in suburban and rural areas, where voters are predominantly Conservative. The comment of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich that there will be a high electoral price to pay for this will prove correct.

Mr. Milligan: The hon. Gentleman's stinging attack on the Government's policies is bizarre as his party supported at the last election the principle of franchising the railways.

Mr. Harvey: My party has had a lengthy debate on these issues, which is probably more than can be said for the Conservative party. We would have been perfectly willing to entertain any sensible suggestions—we have no ideological objection to private involvement in the railways and we would have liked the Government to make believable or credible proposals—but the White Paper is a recipe for chaos and anarchy on the railways, which we cannot possibly support.

It is perhaps a pity that more notice was not taken of those who urged a sensible approach which would have enabled private operators to be involved. No doubt entrepreneurs will snap up the profitable routes. They may be able to improve some services because they will get access to the capital markets and will be freer of the Treasury rules. My concern is for the majority of rail passengers who use lines which need some subsidy but which will continue to lose money even after privatisation. Such lines, even with some subsidy, will prove pretty unattrative to the private sector. Despite the Secretary of State's refernce to holding back the floodgates, there is no real evidence that there is a market.

It will require substantial funding to keep those services operating to the standards that the public demands. The catch-22 is that if franchisees take on routes and begin to improve their performance and financial returns, the Government will gradually reduce and withdraw the subsidy. Is that not a disincentive to anyone who might be interested in making a go of those lines? If the Government proceed with the proposal to franchise whole geographical areas, might not the new operators of those zones or areas start wanting to cut the loss-making services?

The Government have said vaguely that they will safeguard socially necessary services and have restated that again today, but we have not had a clear definition of a socially necessary service. The fear must be that more and more services would be cut and replaced by inferior bus services. The Secretary of State squirmed over

[Mr. Harvey]

guarantees and safeguards. He said at one point that the majority of lines would be safeguarded, and at another point that almost all of them would be. If Government support to the non-economic franchisees is strictly cash limited, there may be pressure on the franchising authority to decide that various services are no longer socially necessary.

One can foresee the pressures which would build up against some of those lines. The new transparency will mean that the full costs will be exposed, making some of them more vulnerable. The cross-subsidy will disappear, at least in the form in which we know it. The cost of upgrading lines to the new, tougher safety standards will be higher. The infrastructure costs in general are higher in rural areas because more is spent on avoiding hills and on tunnelling and bridges. There has been a decline in standards in many rural areas for many years as British Rail has been forced to tighten its financial belt and has been starved of vital resources.

One of the main concerns about the Government's proposals is the requirement for Railtrack—the new quango—to make a return on the system, which will make the future viability of some of the branch lines especially suspect. It is a matter of considerable interest to me as I come from the south-west which has a number of small rural services.

In 1981, my predecessor steered on to the statute book private Member's legislation which enabled British Rail to reopen on an experimental basis some of the rural lines which had been lost in earlier rounds of cuts. The White Paper states that the franchising authority will be allowed to decide whether those routes should be franchised. If they cannot be shown to be profitable, it is unlikely that there will be any prospect of their being franchised. At the moment those lines are not subject to statutory closure procedures, but they have proved their point. At the point of the privatisation of British Rail, which is seemingly to happen in the next few months, the Government should now safeguard those lines and subject them to the same closure procedures as all other socially necessary lines.

The regulator and franchising authority will be the bodies to provide and qualify what the safeguards will mean. There is also concern that they will be much more centralised than the current responsibilities exercised by British Rail. At least since the organising for quality arrangements, British Rail's set-up has placed management decision making and accountability at a more local level for passengers. So far as I am aware, there is no provision under the new arrangements for local authorities to take on more responsibilities.

Mr. Snape: Just the opposite.

Mr. Harvey: Yes, just the opposite—there is no provision for them to take on any more responsibility for service planning.

The track authority and the regulator are not even required to consult local authorities. In view of local authorities' scant budgets and the difficulties under which they operate, it is unclear how they would be able to play a part in that work. Even the role of the passenger transport authorities in the provincial conurbations may be threatened by the proposals.

We welcome the confirmation that there will continue to be statutory national and regional committees for rail users' interests, but we want them to be independent of the regulator. Let us consider the example of another privatised industry. The Gas Consumers Council is independent of the regulator and its work is much more effective than that of organisations trying to act under the wing of the regulator. Crucially, we want passenger bodies to be able to comment on franchising specifications; otherwise, it is almost pointless for them to exist.

I welcome the Secretary of State's stronger comments today about keeping network benefits such as through ticketing and timetabling. May we hope that they will be incorporated into the legislation as a requirement on any operator rather than being something that the regulator is merely invited to consider? May we hope that they will be referred to in the awarding of franchises?

The Prime Minister has harked back to the golden age of steam—I imagine that he has his copy of Bradshaw's timetable next to his collection of Wisden—but I wonder whether he really hankers after the time when people were able to operate their brightly coloured trains, fiercely competing against each other. Has he considered the possibility of trying to get from Huntingdon to Holyhead in such circumstances because he would find it very difficult? Unless operators are required to work to a common timetable instead of being left to their own devices, we shall have a recipe for utter chaos. The White Paper recognised the principle of a network—we heard more about that today—but it should be incorporated into the legislation as a requirement on operators.

We have not heard what will happen to the discounts enjoyed by various passengers. What will happen to student cards, pensioners' cards and any concessions for the disabled? Will the operators of the new franchised services be compelled to recognise those discounts, or will it be left to the operators' discretion and commercial judgment?

The proposals cause much concern, and I have outlined those which are of especial concern to people in rural areas. The proposals have serious environmental implications, and I fear that there will be less passenger and freight traffic on the railway. As a result, the environmental assistance that the railway could potentially bring to our national life could be lost.

We need a coherent national rail strategy. We must decide what role the railway can play in our economic and social life and in our environmental policies. We have not had such a debate, but it should have taken place before we embarked on the process that we are discussing. Rail must be given a level playing field with the rest of the transport network. My party has continually argued for that. We welcome the fact that cost benefit analysis will now be used in assessing rail investment, but could it not be extended to the awarding of franchises and to the principle of charges to be levied on operators when they use the track?

Just before Christmas I and members of two other parties were privileged to visit the new light rail set-up in Singapore. We saw an example of a Government having embarked on a major programme of investment, having built a service to the community and then offering private operators the opportunity to run it on a franchise basis. What a large contrast there is between that and what is now being proposed here.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Is the hon. Gentleman not aware that every light rail system being built in this country is virtually 100 per cent. supported by public money, either directly or through guaranteeing the amount of money that local authorities borrow and on which they pay interest, through the revenue support grant? The hon. Gentleman said that the Government have not taken the correct approach with light rail, but that is untrue: all such schemes are being handed to private organisations which will run them.

Mr. Harvey: I did not say that. My point was that it would be helpful to the future of the rail network if that approach were extended to the rest of the network. It would be more credible to expect private operators to want to run rail services if they did not have to pay for the many years of underinvestment in the rail network and to pay for what is likely to prove a most unattractive—even prohibitive—charge for using the track. It contrasts completely with the example that I gave where the infrastructure was built and provided free of charge and on which the operator was to make a return.

There might have been circumstances in which my party could have supported a Bill on railway private operations—we have no ideological objection to private operators using the rail network—but there is no such Bill. As the Secretary of State rightly said, this is not a classic privatisation. In fact, it is a classic miscalculation—one which the Government make at their peril and which will haunt them for many years to come.

5.48 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): The House has heard a thoughtful speech from the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey). Indeed, he was gracious in mentioning his predecessor's interest in rail matters. I spoke twice in Barnstaple during the general election, which may account for the fact that the hon. Gentleman is here. Both speeches were about matters of public transport rather than party politics, which was rather the theme of the hon. Gentleman's speech. I mention, in a friendly way, that I happen to have here the Register of Members' Interests and I notice that the hon. Gentleman has not yet registered his visit to Singapore. He had better put it in the register before some unpleasant journalist picks up the point and makes trouble for him.

I have had discussions with the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on the subject. It is fair to say, as the hon. Member for North Devon has said, that his party is not dogmatic about the future of the railways. I hope that I am not dogmatic either. I am bound to say to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) that to hear his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) accuse my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of being dogmatic and then to look at the single-line Opposition motion makes one realise that it is rather like the pot calling the kettle black.

I say equally to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that the Government amendment and everything that he says makes one underlying assumption—that, whatever the state of the railways at the moment, things can only get better. I have grave doubts about that proposition. The Government amendment

"recognises that progress has recently been made in improving British Rail's services".

I start my remarks with a point I have boringly made many times before in the House. In my view, party politics and public transport policy are very uneasy bedfellows. The railways are a vital part of the nation's transport infrastructure. If my right hon. and hon. Friends regard my enthusiasm for the railways as a crime, I plead guilty. However, when the party political shouting across the Chamber dies down and scrutiny of the Government's proposals begins, many more questions will be asked and will need to be answered than we have even touched on this afternoon.

Few would say that British Rail is perfect. I have never heard anybody say that it is perfect, so the proposition that there should never be any change to its structure or even partial ownership is an unwise position to take. However, I believe that we must have an analysis of the problem first.

That was why I intervened in my right hon. Friend's speech and mentioned Helmut Kohl's Government railway commission. I did so to make the point that if the Government are seriously trying to improve part of the nation's transport infrastructure, they have a duty first to analyse the problem. Is it caused by levels of investment? Is it caused by fluctuations in the public service obligation grant? Could taxation policy be used to advantage the railways and to forward a policy of transferring traffic from road to rail? Is there a level playing field? Are the Department's current road and rail investment criteria satisfactory in a country that is overcrowded and in which congestion and pollution are serious factors? None of those issues has even been discussed. They are not mentioned in the White Paper in any detail, nor, I suspect, will they even be touched on in the Bill.

The Labour party says no to any sort of privatisation. My right hon. Friend, if I may say so, reminds me of a schoolmaster at Uppingham, the late V.T. Saunders. When one entered his classroom for the first time, he said, "In this classroom, there are three ways of doing things: the right way, the wrong way and my way, and here you do things my way."

I commend yet again to my right hon. Friend the example of other members of the Cabinet recently. The Secretary of State for National Heritage produced a Green Paper on the future of the BBC. It was a very green paper. It was open-minded, it showed a willingness to listen, it was undogmatic and it allows plenty of time for consultation. Just before Christmas, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade produced another very Green Paper on the abuse of market power. Those are important documents. They need to be considered outwith the clamour of party politics. I regret very much that my right hon. Friend's proposals for the railways are being handled totally differently in the House from the way in which some of his Cabinet colleagues are going about discharging their ministerial duties.

The White Paper is a wholly inadequate basis for legislation. We have had the franchise document, which is a monument to Whitehall jargon. I suspect that the quangos that are mentioned therein would give Philip Holland nightmares, as those of us who have had the pleasure of serving in the House with him know.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport will tell me whether I am right when he replies, but I think that I am correct in saying that we were promised eight consultation documents—*[Interruption.]*

[Mr. Robert Adley]

May I have a glass of water? I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells). Will he please put a napkin over his left wrist?!

We were promised eight consultation documents. We have had two so far. Am I to understand that six more consultation documents are to come forward? Will the documents be produced in the next two weeks before the Bill appears? If so, do my right hon. and hon. Friends really feel that they are doing justice to the House by introducing major legislation when six of the eight documents that we were promised have not yet been produced?

I have no intention of peppering my speech with endless quotations. However, I received this morning from the Freight Transport Association a single sheet of paper which, I imagine, hon. Members interested in the subject will also have received. The opening sentence reads:

"Infrastructure charging is the factor likely to influence most the success of any privatisation or open access regime for rail freight."

Nobody has any detailed information on what the charges will be to run trains. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) made that crucial point.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), as those of us on the Select Committee on Transport know, mentioned the state of British manufacturing industry. That is private sector industry. David Gillan, the director of the Railway Industry Association, has said that his members are

"staring annihilation in the face."

That is not a happy situation for a Conservative Government to bring about.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West has rightly referred to the haemorrhage of freight from rail to road. What is going on? Letters have obviously passed between the Secretary of State and the chairman of British Rail. The end product is nothing less than a haemorrhage of traffic from rail to road in contradistinction to the Government's stated policy. The Government want to transfer traffic from road to rail, but what is happening at the moment is that the traffic is moving in reverse. The Government cannot be happy with that. What are they doing about it?

I now turn to the question of passenger franchises. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will not ultimately prove guilty, in Harold Macmillan's famous phrase, of selling off the family silver. Granting franchises only on lines that have been subjected to substantial public sector investment will not do. My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport kindly took me with him as part of his baggage to York recently. He made a very good speech and during the course of it—he will tell me if I am misquoting him—he said that on the Chiltern line, about which he used to receive endless complaints from passengers, he is now receiving accolades. That is excellent.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Adley: My hon. Friend nods his head and I am grateful to him.

That example surely shows two things quite simply. First, if one puts investment into the railways, one improves the service. Secondly, the ownership is totally irrelevant to the satisfactory or unsatisfactory level of services. If that is the case, what are we doing with the Bill? How can we be sure that we shall actually provide a better railway for our constituents?

I again agree with the hon. Member for North Devon. He and I have made this point before. Excluding British Rail from quoting or bidding to run trains is just plain daft. Those at British Rail are the only people in this country who have experience of running trains. It is rather like suggesting that we shall reorganise the health service and the hospitals with doctors being excluded from providing patient care.

It is interesting to consider Sweden. Although there are very few analogies between what the Government propose and what the Swedes are doing, what has happened there is that SJ, to which the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) referred earlier, is being allowed, of course, to quote for the running of services. It has kept 99 per cent. of those services itself, but it has achieved a 30 per cent. reduction in costs, so the passenger has benefited and the Swedish taxpayer has benefited. SJ is running virtually the entire railway system, but its rail track is being heavily subsidised and only one third of track costs, as opposed to 100 per cent. of costs under the Government's current proposals, are required to be paid by the train operators.

I urge my right hon. Friend to take a serious look at what is happening in other countries and to consider the effect of his proposals before he continually lambasts me and any Conservative Member who dares to criticise what he proposes. In my view—and I think that it is a view shared by many people, especially those with current knowledge of railway operations—the separation of the responsibilities for the control of track and signalling on the one hand and for operating trains on the other is a potential disaster. Leaving aside all the organisational problems that will arise, that is a fundamental flaw in the Government's proposals. They really must reconsider.

We have been given a political timetable based purely on electoral considerations—on the desire to get some paint on trains by the end of 1994 so that we can say, "We're doing jolly well, aren't we?" If that is done, it will be irrelevant to the operation of the vast majority of railway services; and if it is done at the cost of undermining the integrity of the network, the Conservative party will pay a heavy price.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced to the Select Committee yesterday that, over the next three years, £150 million would be available to British Rail for leasing. He told us this afternoon that leasing could only be introduced in the autumn statement because it would be for the benefit of private sector companies and would not affect the public sector borrowing requirement. But if leasing money is available to British Rail now, the PSBR is presumably affected. The fact of the matter is that the unwillingness to allow leasing to take place has been a piece of Treasury dogma and has acted against the interests of our railways.

Let me ask my right hon. Friend to nod when I ask him this question: does he recall that he and I had a telephone conversation a few weeks ago, at the end of which he said, "Okay. Will you put forward some alternative proposals?"? He is not nodding. We had the conversation, however, and that is what I agreed to do. I put forward my alternative proposals but, frankly, my right hon. Friend did not have the courtesy to respond personally to my letter. So for the benefit of my hon. Friends, let me——

The Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household (Mr. David Lightbown): It was a private discussion.

Mr. Adley: My hon. Friend says——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The Whip is not in the Chamber.

Mr. Adley: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But it was not a confidential discussion to which I cannot refer. It was perfectly fair for the Secretary of State to say, "Okay. Put forward your proposals", and I have done so and shall do so now—very briefly, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The first point that I made in my letter to my right hon. Friend was the same as that made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West: we should end the freight monopoly now. Then we can end the passenger monopoly and allow private sector operators the right to operate trains on our existing railway system. Then we can go on to create integrated railway operating companies based either on British Rail's current sectorisation or on geography—the lines on which some of the older companies were organised. That is a detail that can be worked out, but we must have integrated companies. The fourth stage—the ultimate stage—would be to bring in private sector capital and management, if that was appropriate and if it could be done.

That is the way in which I should like the Government to go about bringing in the private sector initiative, energy, ambition and imagination that all Conservative Members recognise are missing from the railway system at present —although, in defence of the present railway management, I must say that there has been much improvement in that regard. The hon. Member for North Devon has said that that was the Prime Minister's known preference. It was widely reported as such and nothing causes me to deny that the hon. Gentleman's belief and those reports were incorrect.

A moment ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you chided me for responding to a sedentary intervention from a Whip who was not technically in the Chamber. Any competent Chief Whip who can command a majority of 65 over the main Opposition party can drive legislation on to the statute book; that is not in doubt. But what will happen then? I think that I can claim to have invented the phrase, "the poll tax on wheels". I voted against the poll tax because it always smelt wrong to me. Someone—Lady Thatcher—said, "We've got to do something about those left-wing councils and reorganise local government finance." Many people told her that her plans were unworkable or unfair, but, in the end, it was a case of, "Eyes and ears closed, head down and charge!" We are getting precious near to that position with the Government's proposals for the railways.

At the moment, there is just a hint of unease among some of my hon. Friends—a small cloud, no larger than a man's hand. Shrewsbury, Cleethorpes and Blackpool have lost their direct services to London already——

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Not yet.

Mr. Adley: It is only a matter of time, although I know that the hon. Gentleman has been fighting hard. There is one train left, I think.

Mr. Mitchell: Yes.

Mr. Adley: It will be Penzance, Middlesbrough and Swansea next—and large swathes of Cornwall, Scotland and Wales. Do people really imagine that through trains to Penzance will continue indefinitely, even if there are connecting services from Plymouth? Those through services, which are an essential feature of the rail system, will inevitably be placed at risk if the franchising proposals take effect.

At 4.49 pm, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made an important statement on the question of line closures. He said that railway services would continue subject only to "economic and commercial realities". Those were the words that he used. He did not mention social need. He never mentioned environmental or congestion factors. He added later to his remarks——

Mr. MacGregor: I referred to socially necessary services several times during my speech. My hon. Friend must not distort what I said. I made it clear that, as economic conditions change, and if there is no demand for a service, closure proposals may come forward and will be considered in the normal way. I want to make it absolutely clear that nothing in what we propose is different from what has happened in railway practice for a very long time. That is what I said.

I also referred to socially necessary subsidies which are proposed on a substantial scale and I have talked about environmental issues on other occasions—indeed, on the question of level playing fields, we had quite a discussion about that in the Select Committee last night. I am perfectly prepared to have endless discussions with my hon. Friend, but I hope he will not distort my comments on the position regarding closures.

Mr. Adley: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, but I noted that, at 4.49 pm, the phrase that he used was "economic and commercial realities". He added to it later. I think that the record will show that that is what I said in the first place.

When electricity was being privatised, we in the south-west were told that our fears about increased regional charges were totally unreal—that the Government would see to it that they did not materialise. But when an industry is nationalised—for better or for worse——

Mrs. Dunwoody: Privatised.

Mr. Adley: No, nationalised. When an industry is nationalised, the Government have some control and can give instructions to ensure that the things that they want done are done. Let us compare that state of affairs with that pertaining in the privatised electricity industry. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is like an inverted harlot—he has responsibility for the coal industry but no power. That is what happens, and the brave and kind words of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport may become wholly irrelevant if, in 10 years' time, the vast majority of the railway passenger services in Britain are no longer operated by the nationalised industry—*[Interruption.]*

Several Hon. Members: The Whip is going.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Clump, clump, clump.

Mr. Adley: Yes. I think that I have made my point.

Previous speakers have referred to the activities of the Select Committee. I should like to congratulate the Government on one thing: they have created some remarkable alliances. The Select Committee received a

[Mr. Adley]

joint delegation from the railway unions and the CBI, because when we looked at the written evidence that they had supplied, we found that it was very similar.

Those who understand most the complexity of railway operations have the gravest doubts about the practicality —not the politics—of the Government's proposals. Surely we on this side of the House must all be concerned when Lords Ridley and Whitelaw are singing the same song down the Corridor. We must all remember that, when we talk about British Rail's passengers, we are actually talking about our constituents, and that, unlike the electricity and water industries, British Rail is neither a monopoly nor a profitable operation but part of the nation's transport infrastructure. It may be too late; I do not know. I can only plead once again with my right hon. Friend not to stop the discussions on alternative methods of introducing private sector capital and incentives. I am in favour of the introduction of such an incentive, provided we end up with a practical, workable proposition that produces a better railway.

Much play was made earlier this afternoon about the document on safety. I shall read the first sentence of the conclusion, and ask my hon. Friend a specific question. The report says:

> "New regulatory controls and new arrangements within the railway industry will be needed if safety standards are to be maintained through the period of implementation of the Government's policy on liberalisation and privatisation, and afterwards into the future."

Who will pay for that? Will it be paid for entirely by Railtrack or by the operators? If it is to be paid for by the operators, what thought has been given to the effect that it will have on the economics of their objectives? We do not yet even have a Railtrack charging regime.

This afternoon the Government announced the acceptance of the Health and Safety Commission's report. What will be the effect of that on those commercial organisations which might want to run trains? As I said earlier, I have no doubt that a few painted coaches can be introduced on to our railways by 1994. If, however, they are bought at the cost of a totally undermined network, that will be too high a price to pay.

I know that my right hon. Friend finds some of my criticisms irksome. When he finds them particularly irksome, he descends to ridicule. He is a member of the Magic Circle. I am sure that Tommy Cooper would have liked the Government's proposals. My concern is not with the Magic Circle or with laughs and jokes, or even with magicians. I simply want to ensure that at the end of the privatisation process the Conservative party, the Government and the nation do not end up in tears rather than with laughter. On that basis, I plead with my right hon. Friend to consider alternative means of achieving his proper and sensible objectives, which I support.

6.12 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): First, I should like to declare an interest as a member of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union. I worked in the railway industry until I left my desk at Preston to fight the 1974 general election campaign. I understand that my desk is still waiting for me if things go awry in the future. If the railway industry is privatised, I fear that my employment prospects will not be too good. As the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) said, if privatisation of the railway goes ahead, it will prove to be a political disaster and have severe electoral repercussions for the Conservative party at the next general election.

The hon. Member for Christchurch is enthusiastic and extremely knowledgeable about the railway industry. He should not worry too much about the ridicule that comes from some of his hon. Friends. Many of them seem to be more concerned about their prospects for advancement than about the future of the railway industry. The hon. Gentleman should not worry about the Whips Office. I say that having spent a few years in that particular office. Regardless of the size of the Whips, the hon. Gentleman should be aware that their bark is invariably much worse than their bite.

The Whips' job is to steamroller Government legislation through the House, no matter how stupid or contradictory it is to the legislation which they steamrollered through the House in the previous 12 months. Let the Whips get on with it. The hon. Gentleman should stick to his view—I know that he will stick to it —about the future of the railway industry. However, I disagree with the hon. Gentleman on a couple of matters, and I shall come to those in a moment.

I should like to refer to the vexed question of investment. Over the years, I have sat through or participated in—and sometimes both—every railway debate. I am heartily fed up with the whole argument about investment and the yahoo philosophy which we have heard from successive Conservative Ministers. They pick a particular year and say, "But we are"—they keep saying I—"investing more money in the railway industry than we have ever done before." Of course, that means that all those who use the railways, the taxpayers generally, make a regular investment in a particular year.

More often than not, especially in the past 14 years since this Government were elected, investment in the railway industry has failed to keep pace with the needs of the railway industry. I shall give a graphic illustration of that. Early in my railway career I worked in some signal boxes in the Stockport area in Greater Manchester. I worked on parts of the west coast main line to which one of my hon. Friends referred earlier. The signal boxes were constructed by the London and North Western Railway in 1888.

I still travel to and from Stockport from time to time. I have a habit of watching, with some degree of privacy, Stockport County, which is not something that one boasts about too often. The signal boxes are still there. The only difference between now and their construction is that, instead of operating semaphore signals which were lit by oil lights, the levers operate coloured light signals which have been cut off halfway down to stop the signalmen forgetting that and ending up through the back of the signal box window. That is the only difference that has resulted from all those years of modernisation and investment.

I will not use the phrase "level playing field", which the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) widely used, because it is one of the most overworked clichés in political life. The situation on the west coast main line is the equivalent of travelling north on the M6 motorway. One arrives in south Manchester to find that the motorway ends and the road network reverts to the turn of the century with a policeman on point duty every 50 yards. That is the effect of the chronic lack of investment in one

extremely busy British Rail main line. The same effect is repeated in other parts of the country, especially on routes that are not so busy.

Let us have no nonsense about the railways being stuffed full of investment. Traditionally, investments have fallen behind, especially in the past 14 years. To illustrate that, I remind the House and the Conservative party that the past major countrywide investment in the railway industry resulted from the 1955 modernisation plan. It took about 15 years to implement that plan and was concluded in the early 1970s. The problem now is that much of that investment was made in life-expired equipment.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Snape: I shall give way when I have finished making my point.

Signalling projects which were installed in the 1960s come up for renewal about now. Locomotives which were purchased from different private sector operators—some of them were built by the former British Rail Engineering Ltd.—also come up for renewal now because they have run many millions of miles. However, that equipment is not being renewed; it is being patched up. The results of that patching up can be seen in the delays and dislocations to services that exist from one end of the country to the other.

Mr. Stephen: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that a few weeks ago I visited the signal box that controls traffic from Victoria and Waterloo stations in London? I saw an extremely modern signalling system which enables the signalmen to control a huge volume of traffic in and out of London stations every day. That signalling system is probably one of the best in the world.

Mr. Snape: The problem is that the hon. Gentleman has just walked in, so he has not been listening to the debate.

Mr. Stephen: I listened to both Front Bench speeches.

Mr. Snape: The London Bridge signal box to which the hon. Gentleman refers, and to which I have paid various visits over the years, is fairly modern. It is not a particularly modern design. It is part of what is known as the NX system, the entrance/exit system, by which the signalman operates the signals by switches on the panel. The system has been superseded in the past decade by a much more modern and sophisticated one. I readily concede that the London Bridge signal box, which was installed in the late 1970s, about 1978—I will not be dogmatic about the exact year—uses technology which has been superseded. That is not to say that there is anything wrong with it or that it is unreliable. However, the hon. Gentleman has picked on a comparatively modern powered signalling installation.

I am not simply concerned about the legacy of the London and North Western Railway to which I have referred. A little further south on the west coast main line there is a very modern installation at Crewe. However, within five miles of that installation is a signal box called Basford Hall junction which, again, was installed by the London and North Western Railway in the late 1880s. My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) will be familiar with that signal box. The piecemeal, patchwork quilt modernisation is the direct result of a lack of investment in the railway industry, particularly over the past decade or so.

Will the Government's proposals find any friends among those who are interested in railway matters, use the railway industry and believe in public and private sector operations? The answer is that they will find no favour among those people. As the hon. Member for Christchurch reminded us, organisations as diverse as the Confederation of British Industry and the Railway Development Society, of which, like other hon. Members, I have the honour to be a vice-president, have already expressed their concerns and opposition to the Government's proposals.

Seventy user groups have banded together under the umbrella organisation Platform to express to the Government, even at this late stage, their fears and concerns about the future of the railway industry. The Select Committee on Transport, which has done the industry and the House a great service so far, has had to advertise in the well-known railway publication "Modern Railways" for those in favour of the Government's proposals to come and give evidence to the Committee. I understand that the Committee has not exactly been overwhelmed by the rush. Extra catering has not been laid on as a result of the appeal. As I understand it, no one has yet come forward to support the proposals that the Government say that they will set before the House in the next few weeks.

According to the press, certain individuals have given evidence to the Select Committee to the effect that they might like to participate in the newly privatised industry. I understand that Mr. Richard Branson is going to offer incentives to drivers to go faster to reach their destinations on time. That should terrify my old mates in the signal boxes to which I have just referred. However, it is an interesting concept.

Before Mr. Branson's aeroplanes leave New York, I wonder whether the pilots are given a memo from the chairman saying, "When you arrive over the United Kingdom, you are to ignore the aircraft of competitors that are stacked over Epsom and head straight for runway 28 north at Heathrow." To say the least, that would cause one or two raised eyebrows among the air traffic control staff. That is the level of debate conducted by the supporters of the nonsensical proposals before the Select Committee.

Mr. Branson goes further. He has said that he wants to lease trains from British Rail, although, of course, at his price and not an economic price. When one negotiates with a nationalised industry and it asks an economic price, it is holding one to ransom. If it does not ask such a price, it is giving the country's assets away. Such industries can never win so far as the Conservative party is concerned.

Initially, Mr. Branson proposed to take some 17 or 18-year-old high speed trains which have covered a considerable number of millions of miles in service. As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said, Mr. Branson intended to give them a quick refurbishment and install new seats. He does that with his aeroplanes. They are also quite old, although he does not normally boast about that aspect of his operation. He will give those trains a respray and refit their interiors so that they look nice. He will then unleash his high speed trains on the east coast main line.

[Mr. Snape]

As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East reminded the House earlier, the nation has spent millions of pounds electrifying and updating the east coast main line so that it can be used by electric trains. I hope that my railway experience does not give me the right to sound remotely patronising, but the accelerative potential of diesel trains is not quite the same as that of electric trains. As a former signalman, I must tell the Minister that slipping a couple of albeit brightly painted diesel trains into the middle of a rather intensive electric service is not conducive to good punctuality or productivity.

Such a prospect is already being viewed with horror by those responsible for planning timetables and the diagramming of the east coast main line. However, Conservative Members will promptly denounce those people as unfit to participate in the debate because, as we have already heard, the main qualification for a job to administer the proposals is not to know anything about the railway industry in the first place.

Mrs. Dunwoody: My hon. Friend has forgotten the basic difference between Mr. Branson's proposals and those of British Rail. Mr. Branson has promised us young ladies with short skirts and television.

Mr. Snape: In the Labour party it is safe only for my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich to say such things. Such a thought would never cross my mind and such words would never fall from my lips. However, my hon. Friend's comments show the depths of the stupidity involved.

Mr. Branson is not alone. Mr. James Sherwood has given evidence to the Select Committee. Those of us with rail experience know a little about Mr. Sherwood. I seem to remember that he sailed off with Sealink some years ago to Bermuda to equip the ships with a quick flag of convenience before demonstrating his patriotism elsewhere.

Mr. Sherwood wants to run double-decker coaches on British Rail. That is not a new idea. The much-maligned Southern region of British Rail ran double-decker coaches in the 1950s. However, the problem is that we have a comparatively small loading gate in Britain. That is what comes of being the first in the world to run a railway system. It became a little cramped upstairs on those double-decker coaches. Indeed, someone with a head like Mr. Sherwood would have had difficulty getting downstairs.

There was another operating difficulty with double-decker coaches on the inner suburban services of the former Southern region. As they were rather cramped, it was not possible to install an adequate number of doors in the coaches. Therefore, loading and unloading was difficult. The advantages of cramming people into double-decker coaches were dissipated by the amount of time that those trains had to stand at station platforms. I do not suggest that such difficulties are insurmountable. However, I doubt whether they have even crossed the minds of the two captains of industry who have already given evidence to the Select Committee.

Much mention has been made of the freight business. The hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell), a former Transport Minister, gave us the benefit of his views about rail freight. He was not a bad Minister at the Department of Transport—at least, not in comparison to the low standards of the present Administration. However, he showed why he was not a particularly good Minister. He said that the remedy for the loss of freight from British Rail was to throw open the freight market to all and sundry and so allow private operators to run the trains.

The Government have been in power for 14 years, although it seems a lot longer. During that time they have appointed all the current members of the British Rail board, including the present chairman and his namesake and predecessor. The Government have laid down the policies and parameters under which the board and chairman have operated. The Government now claim that what is wrong with British Rail is that it is in the public sector.

It does not seem to matter that the Government appointed the people who have run BR. Presumably the Government's appointees would be twice as good if the responsibility for running a public operation was taken from them and they were thrust into the embrace and climate of the private sector. That is the myth that was perpetrated once more this afternoon.

Ministers and civil servants who believe that they can second-guess managers in the public sector caused the public sector to get things wrong in the first place. The ownership of Railfreight is not the problem. The problem is that in the midst of the longest recession that the country has ever seen, Railfreight still has a legal obligation under this Administration to make an 8 per cent. return on its assets. Therefore, it has had to shed much of its traffic. If one owns a small haulage company and runs a lorry from Southampton to Glasgow, one would cut someone's throat for a return load. Yet British Rail has to charge 8 per cent. on that return load—Railfreight is forbidden by law to make a loss—so of course the traffic has been filched from the railway. There has been no recognition by the Government of the economic problems that they have caused. It is a similar story to that of the passenger train. They now blame British Rail and its various sectors for losing money, yet the recession means that fewer and fewer people travel.

With regard to the railway industry as a whole, we have seen under this Administration change for the sake of change. It started off under Sir Bob Reid mark I with sectorisation. That has some advantages, but it also has some drawbacks. It identifies profit and loss-making services as a general concept, but it makes it easier for the Government of the day to subsidise those services which they regard as socially necessary, such as the bulk of the services, operated by Regional Railways.

The problem about identifying those costs, as we have seen in so many other industries, is that if responsibility for running the trains is divided between two organisations, those costs have to be identified and people have to be employed to pay the other organisations for the cost of operating those services and to calculate that cost. Under sectorisation, despite the lack of money for investment, the various sectors are employing accountants and others——

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Just like the health service.

Mr. Snape: Yes, like the health service. They are employing these people to make the calculations so that

one sector can pay another sector. Peterborough is a case in point. I have forgotten the exact price, but one of the platforms at Peterborough is owned by Network SouthEast. Derby is a similar case, but I will use the example of Peterborough. If an InterCity train uses a Network SouthEast platform at Peterborough a sum of money not far off £50 is paid by one sector to another. Imagine that multiplied umpteen times during the day in umpteen different localities and imagine the number of people who have to be hired to make those calculations —at the expense, of course, of those operating the railway system.

We can no longer afford a comprehensive railway network in many parts of the country because railway employees have been redeployed or made redundant so that railways on a fixed or falling budget can employ people to do these sums.

That was very soon superseded. Having got that system in place, we came along with "organising for quality"—O for Q, as it is called. One has to be careful how one says that because if one says it quickly it gives the impression that one is giving the Government's view of the railway industry. Organising for quality means that the earlier system, a great deal of the nation's money having been spent on it, was virtually superseded. And we are now about to supersede the O for Q system by privatising—I beg the Minister of State's pardon; semi-privatising. That will be another upheaval.

Do not the Government and the Conservative party stop to think sometimes about the damage that constant, non-stop change does to an industry such as the railways? Do they not stop to think that, whether or not Mr. Branson offers them incentives, most drivers want to get to their destination on time? Although many of the younger Conservative Members were brought up at a time when their mums used to terrify them by warning them that they would be thrown into a trade union branch meeting if they did not behave themselves, let me assure them that most drivers really do want to get to their destination on time without any incentive from Mr. Branson or anyone else.

In the face of this chopping and changing with regard to the railway industry, is it any wonder that morale from top to bottom is at the lowest ebb that I have ever seen it in the 30-odd years since I started to work in the railway industry?

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I have been listening very attentively to what the hon. Gentleman has been saying. He has said nothing whatsoever about the present quality of service. He should ask my constituent commuters if he wants to find out what a wonderful railway British Rail is at present operating. The North Kent line offers misery to every person who travels into London each day on Kent link and Kent coast. I hope that he will say something about how he would like to see British Rail improve its present services to those commuters who suffer daily in my constituency.

Mr. Snape: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's intervention will look marvellous in the Kent Bugle, or whatever his local newspaper is. His party has been in power for 14 years. If the railway service in North Kent is lousy, is not that partly as a result of 14 years of mismanagement by the present Administration, of which he is a loyal member, I know, and a would-be Minister, no doubt? Does he never stop to think, as a supporter of a Government who have appointed every member of the British Railways Board and the last two chairmen, that his own Administration might bear some responsibility? Does he agree with me that the lack of investment to which I referred in the north-west and the west midlands could also apply to the North Kent line?

I do not know it particularly well, but I know that the North Kent line was modernised as part of the 1955 modernisation plan, to which I have already referred. Of course, many of the assets have time-expired. If one is operating signal boxes that are even 30 years old, let alone over 100 years old like the ones to which I have referred, one will get unreliability, failures, and problems which cause delays to trains. If one operates trains which are 25 or 30 years old, some of them built from bits and pieces of other trains that were 70 or 80 years old, one can expect them to go wrong from time to time.

If the hon. Gentleman were driving a 25-year-old motor car between his constituency and the House, he would not be surprised if he had to ring the Automobile Association from time to time to tow him up here. Yet he presumably expects the much-maligned, currently publicly owned British Rail to run an immaculate service on the North Kent line. I will hazard a guess that once the first real snows of winter arrive his constituents will be queuing up to use the North Kent line, because the roads on which millions of pounds of public money are spent under every Government each and every year will very soon become impassable. There will be a lot more complaints then and if the train is five minutes late the driver will be soundly cursed. The fact that the company car is in the garage because it cannot be used never crosses the minds of people who criticise British Rail and its staff.

Money has not been made and is not being made available in sufficient quantity to enable lines such as the one to which the hon. Gentleman referred to be properly modernised. If he thinks that Richard Branson or James Sherwood, or anyone else, will come along with a pocket full of gold in order to buy up those trains that run on the North Kent line and modernise the signalling, he is living in a dream world.

Mr. Stephen *rose*——

Mr. Snape: No, I am not giving way to the hon. Gentleman. I have given way to him once, even though he has not been here most of the time. He has been on his train for long enough.

If the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) believes that someone other than the taxpayer will pay to modernise that line, he is living in cloud-cuckoo-land.

I turn now to local rail services, particularly in my own part of the world and the west midlands. Will the Minister of State tell us when he replies to the debate whether, if the passenger transport authorities are to be the franchising authorities, that will be their only role, or whether they will be allowed to bid for services in their own area and to operate those services directly on behalf of the people whom they represent?

I remind the Minister of State that passenger transport authorities, such as Centro, consist of elected local authority members from his party as well as from mine and from minority parties. Are they deemed to be suitable people to acquire these assets should they wish to do so? After all, something like 60,000 passengers per day are carried on Centro-supported services in the west midlands.

[Mr. Snape]

There are 770 of those services and the passenger transport authority has invested £100 million in them over the past 20 years. Does that investment, that confidence, in the local rail services in the west midlands not entitle them, as elected councillors, to some say in the west midlands railway industry of the future?

Let me conclude—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Conservative Members say "Hear, hear." I look forward to hearing some of those eager young Turks, anxious as ever to get to the Front Bench, making any sort of case, intellectual or otherwise, for the privatisation of British Rail. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East was criticised for proposing a one-line motion today, but it is quite a simple debate. Earlier the Secretary of State talked about value for money for the taxpayer. Neither I nor anyone else who knows anything about the railway industry believes that the taxpayer will be given value for his money as a result of proposals based entirely on the ideological prejudices of the Conservative party and not at all on the future needs of the British railway industry.

6.40 pm

Mr. Matthew Banks (Southport): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape). I hope that my contribution to the debate will not be too great a contrast to his particular style. He was right to draw attention to the motion on the Order Paper,

"That this House opposes the privatisation of the railways.

This is not a classic privatisation. Nor, in my view, is it even a semi-privatisation. It is a deliberate and gradual introduction of private sector competition into the railways. It has my wholehearted support, and I am certain that it has the overwhelming support of Members on the Government side of the House.

I should like to comment particularly on the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell). I agree entirely with his remarks about Railfreight, and I look forward to hearing the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister of State when he replies to the debate.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes)—who, sadly, is no longer in the Chamber—and the hon. Member for West Bromwhich, East referred to the west coast main line, a line which is vital to my constituents going both north and south. I recognise the enormous investment required in that line, not to mention others, to bring it up to the standard that I should like to see. I travel to my constituency in Southport not just by rail but also by road and air. Unfortunately, I have to report to the House that when I travel by rail to Preston I am consistently late, sometimes by up to an hour. I fully recognise that there are many reasons for that—one of them being, particularly in Cheshire, that many of the signal boxes and other parts of the infrastructure are Victorian and in need of replacement. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier, a great deal of work is already being undertaken. In the current year, out of a record investment of £2 billion, some £1 billion is being spent on this kind of investment.

I referred to the proposals contained in the White Paper as a deliberate and gradual introduction of private sector competition. It is particularly important to make that point. As I listen to the contributions of Opposition Members, I sometimes think that they are concerned more about the railway and some of the vested interests in it than about the interests of their constituents and of the travelling public. That, too, is a vital point to make in such an important debate.

Although it might have been possible for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to bring forward a Green Paper some time ago, the fact that he has brought forward a White Paper and a genuinely consultative franchising document emphasises to me the importance that he attaches to pressing ahead with the task in hand. I very much welcome his comments of a few days ago, when he said that the introduction of private sector competition would go full steam ahead. Recently, Opposition Front Bench spokesmen have referred publicly to their agreement with the White Paper's analysis of what is required for Britain's railways. Where we seem to part company is in that they disagree with the market-place structure proposed. In my view, a market-based structure is vitally important and the Government should press ahead with what they intend to do.

I am particularly concerned that there has recently been enormous misrepresentation in the media about the so-called concerns of Conservative Members. As I look around the Chamber today, and as I talk to my colleagues, with one or two sincere and honourable exceptions, I find widespread support for what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is undertaking. As a member of the Select Committee on Transport, I am particularly concerned that throughout the Committee's investigation a number of obstacles have consistently been put in our way. I regret that the Select Committee has not always taken the opportunity to come forward with constructive questions and criticisms in the way in which it might have done. We have heard much about British Rail putting obstacles in the way of those who wish to run private services on its tracks. When the Select Committee visited Crewe, we were presented with the most complicated of graphs, designed to show us how difficult it was to run extra services into Birmingham New Street at peak times. No doubt there are enormous obstacles, but obstacles have been encountered in every privatisation that the Government have initiated and succeeded in pushing through. There are obstacles in these proposals, and they have been overcome.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Banks: I intend to make a short contribution. The hon. Gentleman will have plenty of time in his winding up speech—far more time than I have.

The obstacles put forward at that particular time demonstrate that many of the managers in British Rail are trying to prevaricate and to prevent a proper investigation by the Select Committee; they are getting in the way of my right hon. Friend's pressing ahead with the principles of introducing private sector competition, as I very much hope that he will. I look forward to seeing a Bill introduced in the next few weeks. I also look forward to the announcement in the next few weeks of the first shadow franchises.

I spoke earlier of the limited introduction of competition, which indeed this is. Talk of privatisation is way off the mark. I mentioned the media and I would like

specifically to comment on that aspect. Last week I was asked to do a radio interview. When I called the BBC back as requested, after leaving a meeting, I was told that I was not needed as they had enough comment. When I left the Select Committee yesterday, I rang the "Today" programme as requested but was told that they needed no comment from me as they had spoken to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley). With the greatest respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch, with whom I enjoy the best of relations, I do not believe that his views are representative of the views on the Government side of the House, and it is important that I make the point in this debate.

Mr. Adley: The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) has just walked into the Chamber. Does he agree with my views on this? Does he share them?

Mr. Banks: With respect, I did not give way to the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who has only just walked into the Chamber. I have no idea what his particular interest in transport may be. He has only just arrived and it is 10 minutes to seven. Had he wished to contribute to the debate, he would no doubt have been here earlier. Of course I wish to give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch, but I do not think that it is his place to suggest what he has suggested. The media have recently given completely the wrong impression of what the Government are trying to do. It is a sensible, pragmatic, step-by-step approach—an approach which I wholeheartedly support and which has enormous support on this side of the House.

We often hear far too much about the railways and people who work in them, but I hope that we shall see franchising operations in 1994-95 even though we may see only one or two of them. I made the point in the debate on the White Paper that it did not concern me if only one or two private companies were running services at that time. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already made it clear in this debate that we are looking at a period of 12 or even more years to make sure that over a period of time the opportunity exists for private sector operators to come in.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East and others mentioned that few people seemed to have come to the Select Committee and said anything positive. No mention was made of the positive remarks by Sea Containers, Central Railways and the Virgin Group.

I mentioned obstruction by British Rail.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Banks: The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) is fairly new to the Front Bench and he ought to listen. If he listens, he might learn what I am going to say. I am not giving way.

Central Railways has been trying to run services from Coventry to the channel tunnel for some time, but every step of the way people from British Rail have been putting obstacles in its path. That is a classic example of people with vested interests trying to scupper the proposals. I have news for them: it will not work. There is widespread support for what the Government are attempting to undertake and it does not matter if it takes a number of years to see the proposals come to fruition. The fact is that they will, and ultimately they will benefit the consumer —the travelling public.

The hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey), for whom I have great respect, mentioned a number of very sensible proposals. The difficulty with Liberal Democrat proposals is that, while their Front Bench spokesmen here may say one thing, the Liberal Democrat conference voted down what the hon. Member was suggesting. Representing Southport and knowing the Liberal Democrats as I do, that situation is not new to me.

There are a number of obstacles which need to be overcome. I have mentioned rail freight charges and I very much hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, when he comes to reply, will comment on the future of the Railtrack authority. My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat), who is momentarily not in the Chamber, spoke eloquently in the debate on the White Paper and made it clear that in his view any rail track authority should be completely independent. I do not believe that the proposals being put forward by the Secretary of State will work as well as they might unless and until an independent rail track authority is proposed.

Bearing in mind the enormous spending constraints that British Rail is at present under, I believe that these limited proposals are a step in the right direction. To draw a comparison with the benefits of private competition in the water industry, until that industry was privatised our beaches in Southport failed to meet EC bathing standards. Since North West Water went into the private sector, outside the constraints of Government spending, it has been able to find the £85 million needed to invest in a new pumping station and now the Southport and Formby beaches meet EC standards.

This is the right way forward. The proposals have enormous support on the Conservative Benches and I have no hesitation in supporting them.

6.54 pm

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): I think that I am the first speaker for some time to follow an hon. Member like the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Banks), who has shown support for the Government's proposals. I am sorry that the "Today" programme did not give him the opportunity to demonstrate his support and I hope that they will arrange a debate between the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) and the hon. Member for Southport on this matter and on the findings of the Select Committee.

What characterised the speech of the hon. Member for Christchurch was the fact that he showed an enormous knowledge of the railway system, which we know he has, and he also showed care for the system. We know that the whole railway world respects his knowledge on the subject. In dealing with these proposals, I have not come across anyone who cares about the system and also supports the proposals. Nor have I come across anyone who is particularly knowledgeable about the railway proposals and supports the privatisation proposals as they stand. They must be examined seriously, and I hope that the message to think again on them will be taken today.

I want to raise the question of investment in a specific way. If I am going into my constituency from the centre of Leeds, one of the major routes that I might follow is that which would take me past the old Hunslet Engine Company, a distinguished company, some of whose products, dating back a very long time, are still to be found in operation on railways in the developing world. Some are

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to be found in museums in a variety of places. I am glad to say that the company is again producing material for railway transport. It is producing rolling stock, and would wish to continue producing rolling stock. When I was the leader of West Yorkshire council, I was responsible for some £250,000 of investment to ensure that the road system around the company was adequate to its needs and those of other users. When I was a member of the Leeds development corporation, I was involved in securing city grants for that company when it was putting in new lines for the construction of rolling stock.

I have recently received a letter from the chairman of the holding company, Telfos Holdings, which owns the engine company. It is worth referring to the letter. He writes:

"May I raise with you briefly the threat to the continuing employment of the majority of the employees at our Jack Lane, Hunslet facility, better known to you as the Hunslet Engine Company, due to the inability of the West Yorkshire PTA to clearly establish with Government their, (i.e., Government) policy with regard to enforcing future franchises under rail privatisation, to take over rolling stock purchased, or in particular, leased over a long period by PTAs or British Rail.

West Yorkshire wish to obtain from Hunslet some 39 additional passenger cars (Model 323) to those currently being built by Hunslet for various PTAs, including West Yorkshire. They wish to lease these cars and the finance is available subject to the clarification of continuity of use of leased rolling stock by any future franchisees on the relevant routes to ensure revenue to pay the lease costs which otherwise would fall on the local tax payer/authority.

This particular order, plus some in the pipe-line (subject to franchisee obligations as above) would fill a void in Hunslet's order book; without these orders the future is bleak with the very survival of the plant in question."

In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) yesterday, the Secretary of State referred to the £150 million which is being made available to British Rail for leasing purposes. It has been referred to several times in the debate. It is far from clear to the company whether that leasing arrangement will apply to PTA rolling stock. A reply from the Minister about that would be appreciated.

But even if those orders are saved, there is still great uncertainty about the future of investment in the rail network. As has been said, industry leaders are particularly concerned about the shortfall of investment for the future. A company named Steer, Davies and Gleave, having made a study of likely rail investment in the future, has produced a graph depicting a dropping off of investment, so that by the end of 1993 there will be no investment in track work, that by the end of 1994 there will be no investment in signalling and telecom work and that after 1995 there will most likely be no investment in railway engineering companies.

The House will appreciate that, representing a Yorkshire constituency, I have great interest in the subject. There are in the region four companies with important roles to play in railway engineering. I have referred to Telfos Holdings. We have ABB in York, RFS in Doncaster and Procor in Wakefield. All depend for their future on investment in the railways. Only by such investment will their employees have any security. The future looks bleak for them.

British Rail estimated that it needed £13 billion investment by the year 2000. It is clear, following the autumn statement, that that will not be forthcoming. Indeed, not only is there great uncertainty about the investment that will be available to British Rail, but the privatisation proposals do not give the railway engineering industry confidence for the future. Unless greater certainty can be engendered in the industry, more jobs will be lost in the companies to which I have referred and in others throughout the country.

That, in turn, will result in the skill of the work force being diminished. Let us face the fact that should the Government's current proposals turn out to be successful, the franchisees in need of rolling stock will have to look overseas, for our skilled force will have been lost. I hope that the Government will heed our warnings and appreciate how low are the order books in the industry now, let alone what the position will be in the future.

The industry must be given confidence by the Government that it will be able to operate under the privatisation proposals and that it is worth its while preparing to become franchisees. We are not convinced, from the evidence presented to the Select Committee, that companies capable of operating the system will want to become franchisees. Unless the Government can engender confidence and certainty, a worrying prospect lies ahead for the railway engineering industry.

There are other serious consequences from the proposals. It will be difficult for Britain to compete in the single European market if our railways are not up to European standards. Huge investment has gone into the European rail network, while United Kingdom investment in our railways has been minimal. In the United Kingdom 12 per cent. of costs are met by the public purse, compared with about 60 per cent. of costs in other European countries such as France. That has resulted in the quality and extent of our railway network being much lower than theirs.

So it is difficult to see how British companies relying on rail to serve the European market will be able to compete. Pressure on the roads will continue, and it is not surprising that firms which today intend to play a full part in the single European market are considering means of transport other than rail.

Mr. Stephen: The hon. Gentleman may agree that the present state of our railways, despite huge public investment, is due more than anything else to the fact that all nationalised industries under any Government are bound to suffer from political interference. They are always having to look over their shoulder at the man from the Ministry, who sometimes says no but who more often than not will not say anything, making it impossible for management to manage effectively. So the hon. Gentleman should welcome the Government's proposals to bring an element of private competition and enterprise into the railway system.

Mr. Gunnell: It should be clear from what my hon. Friends and I have said that we are not opposed to the use of private capital in the development of the railway system. The constraints that Government have placed on British Rail in the past have made it difficult for BR to operate. Many of the complaints that have been voiced about BR have arisen because of those constraints. The need to provide an 8 per cent. return—maintained and extended to Railtrack—does not exist elsewhere in Europe.

That is another reason why our channel tunnel proposals fall far short of what is needed. I may be accused of being parochial, but the level of service on the east coast main line, despite its being the most modern line capable of taking high speed trains, does not include a passenger service to west Yorkshire. There is nothing planned for such a service. We anticipate there being only a skeleton service on the east coast main line.

Until we can be assured of through trains on the east and west coast main lines to the channel tunnel, we shall be handicapping companies wishing to use rail. How can they have equality in the single market without equality of rail services? Our prospects in Europe are being handicapped by the lack of rail investment, and I fear that the Government's latest set of proposals will not help, and may even hinder, the process, making it even more difficult for our companies to compete in Europe.

In any event, will the private sector want to invest to bring channel tunnel trains direct to the north? Many have forecast that, once the channel tunnel is open and in use, sufficient traffic will be generated from London and the south-east to fill the tunnel's capacity. Should that happen, what incentive would the private sector have to make sure that firms in the north had direct access to the tunnel? A second tunnel might be needed. The present set-up has not provided, and the proposals that are before us will not result in the provision of, the investment that is needed to ensure for the regions, particularly the northern region, equal access to the European market.

Why is there so much opposition to the privatisation proposals? Why are former Conservative Members such as Lord Ridley and Lord Young so sceptical about them? Lord Ridley is clearly a case in point. No doubt he had the job of examining the proposals. The hon. Member for Southport does not share my view that many distinguished Conservatives are concerned about these proposals. When I was a member of the Audit Commission I sat alongside Sir Robert Wall, a distinguished Conservative in Bristol, where he is a leading member of the party. Like the hon. Member for Christchurch, Sir Robert believed passionately in the railway system. Indeed, he credited his earlier discussions with people having helped to prevent railway privatisation from becoming a serious proposal when the Thatcher Government were in power. Conservative Members should listen to those who care about the railway system.

We should also take note of this comment of the Confederation of British Industry:

"The overriding concern of CBI members is not primarily one of ownership but of how the quality and level of railway services can be improved . . . Far from encouraging private sector interests, there is a real danger that privatisation will be a blueprint for bureaucracy. We urge the Government to think hard before moving ahead with the legislation."

It seems to me that that is characteristic of the views of those who wish to use the railway system. It is certainly characteristic of the views of rail users who have expressed their opinions on the proposals.

These are complex proposals. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) drew attention to the number of bureaucratic bodies that will be established under the privatisation legislation. It seems to me that market forces are being created artificially through the interaction of bodies that the Government are setting up under their privatisation proposals.

What we have here is a gamble. No one can say that what is proposed will work. Obviously the Government hope that it will work. We on the other hand hope that they will listen. Many of us believe that this is a gamble the nation cannot afford. People's concern about the cost of the railway system is understandable.

I should like to close with a comment about the situation in west Yorkshire, where I was as leader of the council very concerned about the question of value for money. We looked very carefully at the cost of the subsidies that we were providing for railway services between Leeds and Ilkley. We recognised that by replacing the rail service with a bus service we could have saved a very great deal. Indeed, that applied to every rail service in west Yorkshire. Taking into account the number of passengers carried, the rail subsidy was enormously higher than a bus subsidy would have been, but we knew that other factors made it extremely important that the railway service be retained. Our policy was to develop the rail network—to open new stations, to invest in the railways —so that more passengers would be provided with a service. The railway subsidy was still greater than that which would be required for a bus service, but it resulted in the maintenance of a network for the future. As a result, the number of commuters using already-congested roads was kept down. Indeed, the roads have become even more congested since then.

We must recognise that the gamble with the railway system that these proposals represent may well lead to fewer services. Indeed, that has already been acknowledged. More congestion on the roads will lead to more road accidents, including deaths, and to more destruction of the countryside. Is this a gamble that we should take? I urge the Government to think again.

7.16 pm

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Following the Labour party's electoral experience of last April, when it realised what the public was not prepared to risk, I would expect Labour Members to know about gambles that people should not take.

One of the interesting aspects of this debate is the not-too-subtle criticism of anybody who might support the Government's policy. The suggestion is that nobody who knows anything about the railways could possibly be in favour of what the Government are putting forward. That indicates a degree of intellectual arrogance. Those who criticise Government policy are always more vocal than those who agree with it. The latter expect the Government to stand up and make their own case.

One problem that has been highlighted this afternoon is the lack of forward orders for wagons and so on. Indeed, that problem confronts the bus industry, too. We are in a recession. People are not looking forward and investing enough. That is not just because of the Government's proposals, and the argument that it is is false.

I have been a Member of the House for a long time and I think that some people forget the background against which this debate and, indeed, the situation of British Rail must be considered. Over the years I have sat on Committees under Governments of both colours and have seen millions and millions of pounds of taxpayers' money spent in writing off debts incurred by British Rail. Hon. Members know that British Rail has a difficult financial past, and that it has had to struggle with debts that it could not repay. The British Railways Board brought forward plan after plan, but not one of them was ever taken to a

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successful conclusion. Despite the enormous improvement that we have seen in British Rail's management in recent years, the enormous subsidy has risen again, the public service obligation grant having reached £1 billion.

It is pointless for the Labour party, or anybody else who opposes the Government's proposals, not to accept that something has to be done. Any Government would have a responsibility to determine whether there was a better system of ownership or management.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), who is no longer in the Chamber, made a point about not allowing British Rail to try to secure any of the franchises. He drew an analogy by saying that it was like preventing doctors from being able to bid for work in the health service. That is quite wrong because individual managements and groups of managements will be able to tender. I remind my hon. Friend that trusts in the health service and health authority tenders provide health care more efficiently. The argument that somehow British Rail management is being disfranchised and rendered unable to get a franchise is totally wrong and is an inaccurate reading of the Government's proposals.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was particularly scathing about private sector attempts to run road-rail freight. The hon. Gentleman has a short memory. British Rail never ran a successful road-rail freight operation in my political lifetime. In 1968 the Secretary of State for Transport did away with the lorries owned by British Rail because BR was so inefficient and incompetent. Since then BR has never had an effective road-rail operation. The only way forward is by continual experiment and we hope that the private sector will find a solution.

One cannot deny that there is some concern over what is loosely called rail privatisation. The debate and the Government's publications make it clear that it is not privatisation in the classic sense: it is what I would call creeping privatisation. However, there would be no argument about the matter if British Rail was profitable. People worry that unprofitable services will go, but if they do not taxpayers will have to continue to foot the bill.

Spending public money is not always a guarantee of a good rail system. A few years ago when I was on a Select Committee we visited Canada and discovered that each time a person boarded a train there the taxpayer paid $70. The Canadian Government drew the inevitable conclusion that they had to reorganise the system and reduce subsidies. Much has been said about the German railways. The speeds of German trains cannot match those of British Rail. German rail finances are disastrous and the subsidies are enormous. One of the ways in which the German system survives is to have a veto over the use of coach competition. Thank goodness there is no such veto here.

Some people ask whether privatisation will make more lines profitable. The obvious answer is that an improved management will be able to tackle overmanning and will have the freedom to raise capital and to borrow on the open market. As in other privatised industries, such measures will undoubtedly help.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In almost every other privatisation more investment has been anticipated and experienced. The one phrase that is missing from the first paragraph of the White Paper is "greater investment". Was that deliberate?

Mr. Fry: Perhaps it was cautious, which is a change for the Government. I do not necessarily assume that there will not be investment, but it is important gradually to create an environment in which there can be. At the moment there is not a great queue of people who want to invest in British Rail as it is, but the aim of the Government's policy is to introduce a regime which could well attract investment.

The railways, in common with other forms of public transport, contain an element of social service and there is a real worry that that may be reduced. Many people who speak about a social service mean that those who pay for it will not be the people who use it. That has bedevilled public services in this country. It is difficult to quantify and to allow for social service in public transport, especially in British Rail. I shall give an example. Some commuters in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport and in mine use InterCity, which does not receive any subsidy or public service obligation payment because the trains run on InterCity track. However, many people who live in London and the south-east and who work alongside our constituents have their fares subsidised by the PSO payment.

Some years ago a Select Committee looked at that matter and suggested that an alternative system of paying PSO might be required. As that does not seem possible under the present system, I would welcome any change that would benefit my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Minister. Such a change might make it possible for commuters who do not use their cars to receive the same subsidy regardless of what part of the country they come from.

The core of the Government's policy is franchising. I gave a somewhat wry smile when I heard about that because during the passage of the Bill that led to the Transport Act 1985 I moved an amendment which suggested that franchising was one of the ways forward in privatising the bus industry. However, the Government and the Opposition violently opposed the idea. Not much later franchising came into being in London. It has operated excellently and has introduced competition to the only industry that the Government have nationalised—London Transport. I am satisfied to note that the Government have gone some way towards sharing my opinion of eight or nine years ago.

We need franchising because there will be no way forward unless we can offer security of tenure on some routes for some years at least. As the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) said, if that is not done there will be no investment. Investment can be encouraged only if the operator feels that he has a future and the possibility of a profit, or at least sufficient income to make his investment worth while.

The crucial decision will be how long the franchise is to operate and whether the bid is to be positive or negative—that is, whether any PSO will still be needed. Surely it is right that any PSO payment should relate to individual routes and services and should not be the generalised payment that it is at the moment. Under an individual route system one could see exactly where support is needed and how much it should be. That would allow local

authorities and passenger transport authorities to determine the needs of their own areas and decide whether to contribute.

Local authorities should have a role in running public transport. Why should I and other British taxpayers be expected to pay fairly large subsidies to services that are used by comparatively few, perhaps in a remote part of the country? Such subsidies should be localised and we should attempt to bring local authorities into play and see what contribution they can make. A franchising system that concentrates on specific services and routes will make the subsidy more transparent and it will be much easier to maintain a service if those who are involved locally can see the true situation. Section 20 grants could be extended to cover services passing through several local authorities or PTAs and some services could well be improved by the new financing regime.

Essential to the success of those plans is the establishment of a true and fair assessment of the cost of using the permanent way. In that respect, I welcome again the Government's change of mind in relation to splitting British Rail into two parts—the maintenance of the infrastructure, track and signalling, and the operational side.

In the 1970s, when there was a Labour Government, the transport policy group advocated the split-up of the operation of rail services from the maintenance of the track. Here again, perhaps belatedly, the Government have come round to the view that some of us have expressed for many years. Perhaps even more surprising, the Department of Transport has come round to that view. On several occasions some of us tested that idea on officials from the Department of Transport, who said that it was completely impractical. Therefore, I congratulate the Government on their belated conversion in another area.

I have mentioned two areas where the Department of Transport has accepted points of view and policies that some of us have been putting forward for many years. May I suggest one more? I have already said that the local authorities and the PTAs can play a good role in the new system that will be established. There is one exceedingly important area of the country where it is difficult to put that idea into practice, and that is the south-east.

My hon. Friend should look at the first report ever published by the Select Committee on Transport on London's future transport policy. There is a need for an overall transport authority for the Greater London area and the counties that adjoin it. The kind of planning that is needed to provide the right co-ordination will be even more necessary under the new rail regime that the Government are putting forward. Having been converted on two points, I hope that conversion on the third is possible before too long.

I do not underestimate the problems that the Government will have in putting their ideas and policies into effect. One of the most important things is that they must get them right. It is no good the early franchises proving to be a failure because that will discredit the policy and undermine confidence in the future. The Government must go fairly slowly in order to ensure that the franchises will be a success. Therefore, I was pleased to hear what the Secretary of State had to say this afternoon about going slowly. That is the most sensible approach and should be generally welcomed.

Because there are many problems, I am not surprised that it will take up to 12 years for the Government to achieve the full potential of the policies before us. But those who criticise the Government must ask themselves whether they are satisfied with the present situation. The present level of British Rail services is not universally bad. In many areas it is good. But British Rail's history has been dogged by financial problems such as those that I listed earlier. They have been compounded by British Rail's position within the public sector.

The House should give understanding and sympathetic support to the Government's attempt to evolve a new system to enable our rail services to get away from the constant crises of increasing fares, having to take off trains and having problems with their borrowing requirement. Therefore, instead of being negative, we should give the Government support and accept that they will not rush ahead wildly in the hope that eventually we will solve the complex problems that British Rail has given to successive Governments ever since its nationalisation.

7.34 pm

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): This has been an interesting debate and, apart from the first hour and a half of speeches from the Front Benches, quite a gentle one.

The privatisation or part-privatisation of the rail network is based on the false premise that privatisation, competition or free market forces must be better, but there is no proof of that.

Looking at the history of the railway system from the day the railways were constructed, it is apparent that they have always been subsidised in one form or another. In the early days they were subsidised because many of the people who bought shares in them ended up bankrupt and the concern which had been built or partly built was gobbled up by a larger company at a cut price and operated on that basis.

In 1921, more than 120 private companies had to be amalgamated into four companies because they were not providing the kind of service the Government thought that the country should have. The problem was all too obvious. In those days there was too much competition. It was not uncommon for two, three or four railways to serve the same district. When the railways were finally nationalised in 1948, there were many rationalisations and closures as a result of that excess in services.

Ever since the time of Sir Brian Robertson and the modernisation carried out in 1955, no matter what Government have held office, the House has never valued Britain's railways in the way it should have done. They were the cradle of the industrial revolution, providing tremendous wealth. In the 1930s they came into competition with roads in a fairly primitive form. As time went on, things became difficult. By the 1950s, there was great concern at the amount of money that was being lost and the word "subsidy" began to be bandied about as though it were a dirty word.

It is as well that the public should be aware what subsidy means in the context of the railways. It means the amount of money needed to provide a service that the Government think is required by the nation. It should not be a dirty word or something of which we should be ashamed. If we are getting the sort of service that is required, the cost—provided that it is within reason—should be accepted. If, instead of some of the doctrinaire statements that we have heard over the years about

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nationalisation being a bad thing, people had been prepared to accept that the service had to be paid for—all services have to be paid for in one form or another—we might not have had the hostility from the public against nationalised industries that we have had on many occasions.

Whether the railways are nationalised or privatised, the problems will be the same. Part-privatised, nationalised, or totally privatised, the service will still have to be paid for. I accept what has been said by one or two hon. Members in different forms in the debate. It does not matter whether the railways are nationalised or privatised—what matters is the quality of management, the amount of investment in the industry, and the industrial relations and employment practices within the industry. I hope that both sides of the House will accept that, all things being equal, a nationalised industry with good management and good relations is better than a private industry with bad management—and vice versa.

It is interesting that all the pundits of the great advantages of privatisation never refer to the fact that when most of the great public utilities were nationalised in the years after the war the same management was often kept on. That happened in the coal and electricity industries. That was the case almost everywhere. Those people did not suddenly become good or bad depending on whether their industry was privately or publicly owned. They were what they were and they did not change. I certainly do not accept that the partial denationalisation of the railway system will improve it.

Following the putting out to tender of local government services, the public have complained on a massive scale about the deterioration of standards of cleanliness in schools and hospitals, and about refuse collection. Aiming for the so-called goal of privatisation has not improved the service to the public. It was supposed to solve all the problems, but it has solved nothing. The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) had the effrontery to cite the success of the denationalisation that has taken place so far. I have observed no improvement in British Telecom, the water service or the electricity service and neither has anyone else—nor have those services become any cheaper.

Mr. Matthew Banks *rose——*

Mr. Etherington: I refuse to give way—not out of churlishness or for any personal reason, but because I intend to speak for no longer than 10 minutes or so. Many hon. Members have taken 20 or 25 minutes, largely due to interruptions.

There is no proof that privatisation works any better than nationalisation; in fact, the opposite seems to be the case. After 30 or 40 years of nationalisation, it is difficult to argue with the claim that privatisation might be an improvement. I am too young to remember what the great utilities were like when they were privately owned, although I have heard a good deal about it. It has even been claimed that private health insurance worked satisfactorily before the establishment of the national health service, though not many people have accepted that in my hearing.

The Government are proposing to return to a concept which failed. Between 1921 and 1948, only one of the four big railway companies ever made a return to its shareholders. When the Government had to take over the railway system during the war, they put a good deal of money into it, but they used the people who had been managing it before. By degrees, we are returning to that arrangement.

I am no expert on the railways. I cannot hold a candle to the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), for instance. I have read much of his work over the years, and it is obvious that an understanding of railways is in his soul. My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) has worked on the railways and knows a lot about them. Nevertheless, I know that over the years many people have not valued the railways properly, and I believe that hon. Members do not value them properly. That feeds into the public perception. I also know that if the south-eastern service, which serves London so well, had to run on the basis that it would be closed if it did not pay, the country would grind to a halt. Far too much has been spent on the road network. It is clear that we shall not get the full benefit of the channel tunnel, which will mean unloading goods from trains on to wagons in the south-east and then sending them to places such as Inverness. What we need is an integrated transport system, rather than experimenting in the way proposed by the Government.

I issue a challenge to the Government: if franchising —which really means sub-contracting—is such a good idea, why has it never been considered before? I know the answer. When it was the responsibility of the railways to carry traffic in privately owned wagons, it was a disaster. The principle is exactly the same in this case. Hon. Members have mentioned safety. In industries which sub-contract—for instance, the building and coal industries—the accident rate is always higher. That is not a matter of opinion—it is a matter of fact, based on statistics, and there can be no argument about it. Naturally, the public have a great fear of accidents. The record of the railways before they were nationalised in 1948 left a good deal to be desired; it has improved greatly since then.

If you believe in equity and in real competition, as you claim, why do you not give the nationalised railways the same right as the private investor to put in for the franchise?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that he is addressing me.

Mr. Etherington: I am sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. It was force of habit: I am more used to addressing open meetings.

If the Government really believe in equity and free competition, why do they not give British Rail the same opportunity as the private entrepreneur to put in for the franchise, and then let the public decide who offers the best service?

7.45 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): The challenge issued by the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) tempts me to launch a wide-ranging defence of privatisation, but I shall content myself with saying that I do not agree with him about its effect on organisations such as British Telecom. I think that it has brought about a remarkable improvement. Before privatisation, I would have had to wait until the year 2010 for my local exchange

to be modernised; this week, I was informed that the work would be done during 1993. That shows the benefits of the increased investment that has followed privatisation.

Let me remind the House of the interest that I declared in the Register of Members' Interests, although I do not intend to talk about freight.

I am disappointed that the Opposition managed only a one-line motion rejecting BR's privatisation; there is some scope for argument about whether the Government's proposals merit that description. I should have thought that the Opposition would take the opportunity to add a few more lines about how they would approach the matter. We are left with the impression that all is for the best—or almost for the best—in this best of all possible worlds, except what £10 billion or £20 billion would improve. The Opposition have advanced no constructive suggestions in the debate; they have simply attempted to knock the Government's proposals.

It appears that most Opposition Members—and, possibly, my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley)—do not understand the current state of those proposals. The style of the opening remarks of the hon. Member for Sunderland, North suggested that he does not understand them; he did not even take on board what my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) had said only a few minutes earlier, although that came much nearer to describing them.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport must recognise, as the rest of us do, that there is no gratitude in politics. A cut-and-dried plan for the sale of the railways would have represented a clear policy, but anyone advancing such a plan would have been accused of being dogmatic, peremptory and over-eager. Because the Government have been prepared to pace it rather more slowly, to consult, listen to ideas and adjust their proposals accordingly, they are being criticised for an apparent lack of clarity and purpose. Their approach has been well considered and they have listened to the arguments.

I am becoming impatient about the amount of misinformation on the subject. The Opposition have selected the wrong target. We have heard talk of breaking up the network, but, as the White Paper made clear, the Government do not propose to break up the system. The knockabout performance of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) showed that the Opposition are attacking targets that are no longer there and that the policies of the Government have matured.

The debate is all about the method that will be used to try to improve our rail system. The Government have decided that it is better to separate the maintenance of track and signalling from the operations of the railway. Responsibility for track and signalling will be vested in Railtrack. I am in two minds about Railtrack. Much concern has been expressed by people in the industry about whether a railway can be operated effectively without control over track and signalling. However, it seems possible to meet that concern.

If people are interested in running the rail system on a franchise basis, it rather gives the lie to the suggestion that there is apparently no interest. I sense that quite a number of people are interested, many of whom are employed by British Rail and want to take advantage of the opportunity of a management buy-out. If track and signalling is vested in Railtrack, there is no reason why care and maintenance cannot be delegated to a franchisee, just as a highways authority delegates care and maintenance to district councils. Under such an arrangement, it would be possible for franchisees to have the vertical franchise for which many of them have argued. It is possible to maintain this separation—I can see the reasons for the separation—and meet some of the concerns that might hold back the enthusiasm of people who would like to become franchisees.

We must ensure that Railtrack has the necessary investment. Hon. Members have expressed concern about the need to ensure that our railway improves. The Government have plainly stated in the White Paper their commitment to ensuring that improvement. My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), in an intervention in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough, said that it did not appear in the first line of the document. That is so. But in paragraph 43 the Government state that they want to see more investment and that capital grants will be made to Railtrack. The more the Government can underline that point, the more reassuring it will be to people who are concerned for the future of our railway system.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The hon. Gentleman is advocating that the Government should make grants to ensure that track is maintained in good condition, but why do not the Government do that now? We desperately need such money on the west coast main line. If the Government did so, they could then sell other parts of the network more easily.

Mr. Haselhurst: The Government do not propose to sell the railway. They are talking about keeping Railtrack in the public sector for the foreseeable future and about franchising operations, neither of which amounts to selling the railway. Under the system that the Government envisage, there will be liberalisation of the terms on which money can be obtained for investment in the rail system. I welcome and pin some hope on that. We all want more money to be allocated to improving our rail system.

There is scope for questioning whether there should be few or many franchising arrangements under the new system. The number of franchises that one might ideally seek will depend to some extent on what view is finally taken about the relationship between the franchise operators and Railtrack. As the Government are emphasising—this should be welcomed in many quarters—that they will proceed cautiously and carefully over a period of years and that there may be only six, seven or eight pilot franchises, perhaps we should stick to the number of business centres that emerged from the Organising for Quality campaign. It might reinforce the confidence of many British Rail employees who are considering becoming franchise operators if they can stay within the pattern that has become familiar to them as a result of the reorganisation that has taken place in British Rail.

That would ease the transition from the public sector to the new private regime and would not preclude the possibility of certain business areas being merged if that seemed the better way forward. For example, it would be possible to franchise the west Anglia and great northern division separately from the great eastern division, but equally one could take the view that all services out of Liverpool Street station should be a single franchise. I do

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not think that that needs to be determined at this stage. I would prefer to stick with the existing business centres as the basis for the franchise.

A quality threshold should be built into the franchise contract when it is devised so that we can try to ensure a commitment to the leasing or purchase of new rolling stock. Passengers will be reassured if they can see that there is a clear and more likely route to obtaining better quality rolling stock.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will consider the concept of a rolling franchise. Franchisees will have the confidence to lease new equipment if they know that, by showing that they are performing satisfactorily, their term will be extended. That may overcome the difficulty of an operator being unwilling to invest in new track because the franchise term is too short.

If the structure of the new system outlined in the White Paper can be simplified, it will encourage more people to believe that they can play their part in the new system. If, for example, there is scope for merging the franchise authority and the regulator, it would not be such a bad thing. Anything that makes matters simpler will lead to greater confidence in the system.

We are faced with a choice. Those of us who have taken an interest in the railways over the years believe either that things can be improved by staying with the present system or that they can be improved by finding another system. Of course, there are difficulties in changing what has become familiar, but one can exaggerate those difficulties to the point of arguing that there is no way to improve the system and that everything is as good as it could be. However, if one pinches oneself, one realises that that is wrong; something must be done.

The Government are right. In the foreword to the White Paper, my right hon. Friend said that the purpose was

"to improve the quality of railway services by creating many new opportunities for private sector involvement."

That is not a dogmatic but a constructive and sensible approach which should be welcomed. If we face a choice between doing something and doing nothing, I infinitely favour doing something along the lines of my right hon. Friend's proposals.

8.1 pm

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) said that the water quality on the beaches in his constituency had improved, but I do not know whether he realises that the cost involved has been passed to the consumer. In the Welsh context, I know of the vast increases in water rates. The excuse is that environmental work is being carried out, but the truth is that underinvestment over many years must now be redressed.

The Government's aim, as stated in the White Paper, is apparently to reduce bureaucracy, to improve efficiency and to lower unit costs. My respectful view is that privatisation is definitely not the answer whether it be creeping, running, rolling or any other form of privatisation. Surely the answer must be immediate investment by the proper authorities.

The White Paper was delayed and did not appear before the election. It is understood that the Cabinet was deeply divided over the issue and I trust that the divisions will in turn create an atmosphere in which coherent and constructive debate can take place because that is extremely important in this context. The hon. Member for Southport and others have today strongly protested their loyalty over this matter, which leads one to think that there is and will be a definite division between both parties.

It is supposed that the intended franchising authority will monitor the performance of franchisees, will be charged with collecting premiums from franchisees on popular franchises and will have a duty to subsidise others which are not so well off. That will be within the budgetary restraints set by the Secretary of State. The Government state that they are committed to the establishment of a general right of access to the railway network for companies which wish to provide new railway services and which can meet the necessary operational and safety standards. That means that independent train operators may also run services in addition to, and sometimes in competition with, franchised services.

The Government's proposals are extremely complex and involve various bodies frequently in competition with one another. To make the proposed system work, it will be necessary for the Secretary of State, the regulator, the franchising authority, Railtrack, the franchisees, British Rail, independent passenger operators, freight operators, passenger transport authorities, local authorities and the Health and Safety Executive, among others, to work together cohesively and constructively. That is a massively tall order.

Some of those bodies will have different objectives which will frequently bring them into conflict. In short, it is a bureaucratic nightmare of perhaps horrendous proportions. It is undoubtedly the exact opposite of the Government's stated aim of reducing bureaucracy and improving efficiency. Nothing could be further from the truth. I am not a prophet of doom, but I cannot envisage such a mass of interests working together cohesively.

The people of Wales felt the effect of Dr. Beeching's axe to a greater extent than other parts of the United Kingdom. We have very few lines currently operating, but we rely heavily on them. As we have a relatively sparse population, I foresee a rapid downgrading of the skeleton sevice now offered, so much so that it will no longer be a viable option for passengers.

My hon. Friends the Members for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) have long campaigned for the north Wales line to be electrified. It is an important gateway to Ireland and the rest of the European Community. The three of us asked the European Community to investigate the possibility of cohesion funds being made available for that purpose. To my great regret, the only recent change in the north Wales service was a cut in the number of InterCity services from Holyhead to London. I am very concerned that north Wales will languish in a backwater with such negative treatment. I am desperately worried that if the Government's proposals, which are complex and seemingly unworkable, come to fruition there will be little hope for north and mid-Wales as the lines there will appear unattractive to operators.

The Government should reconsider the schemes as it clearly behoves them to ensure that adequate investment is made now so that the infrastucture is brought up to date and that environmentally beneficial services are upgraded. Failure to do so would be but another exercise in the short-termism so frequently shown by the Government.

This is one sell-off which must be prevented because it is so fraught with problems as to be unworkable. The bureaucracy involved would soon ensure that the railways ground to an ignominious and economically disastrous halt.

The White Paper is badly lacking in any commitment or assurances for the future. For example, is the same amount of track to be retained? What will be the scale and level of passenger services? The hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) mentioned the view of the Freight Transport Association with which I agree; it is, of course, very important to ensure that the infrastructure is brought up to date. That is a major factor in the success or otherwise of the scheme outlined. I believe that the scheme is definitely unworkable, but I heard what the hon. Gentleman said and I understand his argument.

Rail freight is facing an uncertain future. Despite being environmentally sensible, there is no commitment to the maintenance of rail freight capability or to a specified percentage level of freight to travel by rail. The upshot will be more congestion on the roads and more environmental pollution, all as a direct result of the demise of rail freight.

We have only to consider the fate of Charterail to realise that the Government are truly uninterested in the freight sector. That is a damning statement in this day and age when everyone must and surely can recognise the environmental benefits of freight transport. The managing director of Charterail stated that the regime offered to his company by BR was simply uneconomic. We all know that the company has since gone into liquidation.

The Government have said that they would continue to pay subsidy for "socially necessary services". My grave concern is that there will be no socially necessary services in Wales and that, in the short term, we shall see a downgrading of services leading to cuts which will further hamper Wales's efforts to rejuvenate its economy.

It does not take a genius to work out that train operators will not queue up for the privilege of running rural services in Wales. They will aim for the more lucrative areas to the detriment of rural services. That has already been mentioned by several Opposition Members. The rural services will in the short term rely on a subsidy, but after a short time they will definitely face the axe.

There are no specific references to Wales in the White Paper. In addition, neither the White Paper nor the franchising document specifies the operating lines to be incorporated into a franchise. There are two possible outcomes. First, there may be complete freedom and flexibility for companies to come up with viable schemes, both operationally and financially and with or without grants. Secondly, there will be a situation bordering on chaos in which there will be different propositions, overlapping networks, gaps in routing and variations in ticket prices. That will result in comparisons being almost impossible.

I am absolutely opposed to franchising. If it is to take place, even in the time scale referred to, the recommendation of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs may prove useful. The Committee suggested, first, that the operation in Wales should be administered by the Welsh Office and the regulator jointly. They would have a joint responsibility to the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Transport. Thus Wales's priorities in the provision of rural railways and in urban transit policy, in Cardiff for example, would be paramount.

Secondly, under the Committee's proposals, finance for subsidy and investment assistance would be provided by the Welsh Office. Thirdly, as the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) said, local authority finance would continue—if we have local authorities in Wales in the near future. Fourthly, the rural nature of most of the Welsh network would be fully considered.

Initiatives were taken by the Government through a joint environment and transport study which examined planning regulations and policies governing land use to see whether they could be co-ordinated with transport and with infrastructure development to reduce the need for travel and to encourage modes that are less polluting than the lorry and the car. That study is to be welcomed and the approach implies that the proposals for change in the organisation, structure and control of the national railway system must be set out within the strategic approach to overall transport demands.

The Government must make a commitment to supplying adequate financial resources to allow the rail network to achieve greater use even though that may mean some continuing subsidy and funding of infrastructure and modernisation. Major infrastructure investment is needed on projects such as the Great Western line and the north Wales main line as track improvements and electrification will mean expenditure that is too substantial to be capable of being funded by new private sector investors alone.

As we know, the Government propose that the track infrastructure and the day-to-day control through signalling will remain the state's responsibility under the new body called Railtrack. The Government intend to introduce private sector passenger services through financing agreements over a period. The agreements with Railtrack will continue to provide passenger services through arm's-length operating companies. The White Paper says:

"The private sector would then compete to take over these companies for the life of the franchise."

A franchising authority would be established to supervise the programme for passenger services. Subsidies for certain passenger services in Wales would continue, but at an unspecified level. Subsidies would be made available to franchise.

The Government will establish a regulator to oversee arrangements for track access and charging, to promote competition, to prevent monopoly abuse and to promote consumer interests. Assurances have been made about the need for a national rail network with through tickets, cross-validity and a national timetable.

However, there is concern about the practical realities which are as yet undefined. The number of franchises is undefined and there will be different contract periods. There will be inherent disadvantages in terms of the fragmentation of the system across the network. The area most prone to disruption will be ticketing and timetabling, which are at the heart of passenger requirements. How do the Government intend to ensure adequate planning and implementation of railway ticketing and timetabling arrangements to ensure that mechanisms exist for the optimum network arrangements for passengers?

This morning, I received a fax message from Mencap which is obviously and rightly concerned about the proposals. I do not know whether other hon. Members received that communication. Mencap is concerned about

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[Mr. Elfyn Llwyd]

the adequacy of support for the publishing of information and national timetables. It has a specialised and valid interest which must be addressed in due course.

Numerous questions must be answered and I want to ask the Government one or two. I am greatly interested in what steps will be taken to ensure that Railtrack is stimulated to be efficient and responsive to customer demands, which will now come from the franchisees and from the freight companies. How will Railtrack adjudicate between competing demands from different operators?

Will the franchising authority itself introduce proposals for the new passenger services? What criteria will it use in determining the level of need for the publicly supported network? The new private passenger service operator will have to meet the requirements of the passengers charter. As lack of punctuality and unreliability are the most serious interruptions to service, who will now take responsibility? If signalling is faulty, will Railtrack pay compensation? If a breakdown by a franchisee causes all services to be delayed, will that franchisee be responsible for compensation and/or reimbursement of losses to other operators? It is obvious that an individual franchisee could not accept the responsibilities outlined in paragraph 29 of the White Paper.

Will the Government specify the standards that must be met in the Railtrack contract with operators and in the operators' ticketing terms with the passenger? Will child fares at 50 per cent. be guaranteed for those between five and 16? Will an ABTA-type bonding arrangement be necessary so that compensation claims are met from a central pool? What other mechanisms are there to make such compensation payments?

How will Railtrack determine access priority where paths are scarce or where various train operators share the use of infrastructure? Will it be on the basis of auctioning paths, bearing in mind the constraints of the EC directive 91/440 on open access, or will other policy considerations be applied, such as social priorities? If so, by whom? How realistic is it to expect that private operators will be prepared and able to pay from their revenue Railtrack's charges for maintenance, including safety costs and modernisation of the network? Would such a requirement lead to substantial increases in fares and a converse reduction in passenger miles?

What role will the European regional development fund and other EC structural funds—particularly important in Wales—play in continuing to support infrastructure renewal and modernisation? Will the transfer of some assets and most operations to the private sector lead to a reduction in ERDF grant both in terms of percentage and in terms of eligibility? Has the EC already started to re-examine existing ERDF grant eligibility in the light of the scheme now proposed by the Government. That question is vital to us in Wales and I am sure has a bearing throughout the United Kingdom.

Those are some of the questions which I would like answered. We shall shortly be entering the consultation period. I sincerely hope that those questions will be answered fully and positively so we at least know where we stand. I dare say that that will not change my view or that of my party on this creeping privatisation but at least we shall be able to see exactly what is on offer and what the country faces in the medium term.

Many fundamental questions remain unanswered. In my respectful submission, the privatisation of rail services simply will not work. I trust that good sense will prevail to prevent the introduction of yet another disastrous scheme driven by unthinking Tory dogma. I agree with the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) and I urge all hon. Members to consider their constituents first. After all, we are talking about our constituents and about a vital rail network. It will be no use our looking at each other in 10 years' time, when the network has been decimated. We in Wales continue to suffer because of Dr. Beeching's axe and I am sure of one thing at least: we do not intend to suffer further and will therefore resist the proposals at all costs.

Any hon. Member whose constituency contains a rural area or areas must beware of the challenges to their rail network. If hon. Members are to represent their constituents properly, they must stand up and be counted and not just pledge blind loyalty to dogma as Conservative Members have done so far.

8.22 pm

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I apologise for not having been present during some of the earlier speeches. I serve on a Select Committee which met from 5 pm until 7.15 pm and I returned as soon as I could.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) seemed to criticise the Government's proposals on the ground that they were too complex. They are, indeed, complex proposals which touch on huge undertakings and embrace reforms that Conservative Members believe are necessary. The fact that they are complex does not weaken the case to be made for them. The hon. Gentleman invited us to consider our constituents. That is the one thought that motivates me to speak tonight. Any hon. Member who represents a commuter constituency like mine cannot fail to understand the huge range of problems that the travelling public have had to face in the past 20 years or more getting to and from their home and place of work.

I was interested in the terms of the motion tabled by the Opposition, which urges:

"That this House opposes the privatisation of the railways."

The motion tells us little. It simply states an objective that the Labour party has pursued for many years. There is no surprise in that. It is rather like a bishop being against sin —although these days perhaps that is rather more surprising as so many bishops are not. The Labour party has simply stated its bald objection to the privatisation of the railways. It has not said what it would like to do instead—except to ask for more money, and more money, and perhaps a bit more money yet from the ever-suffering taxpayer. At least the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy attempted to paint a picture of life in his constituency as he sees it. In other Opposition Members' speeches, however, I have failed to see any picture, any clarity of vision or any policy except a reliance on the traditional determination to make the thing work, which is something that we have not yet seen in this country.

I listened with interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who is a flamboyant and strong speaker. His speech seemed largely to echo the "Panorama" programme that I saw a little while ago. I am therefore moved to ask whether the hon. Gentleman is writing for "Panorama" or whether

"Panorama" is writing for him. The hon. Gentleman simply restated the argument that he advanced in our debate on 29 October last.

Mr. Wilson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dunn: I have not finished my annoying attack yet. I shall give way later.

Many of the arguments advanced in that debate have simply been rehashed today. I am moved to ask what the Labour party believes in. I know that it is going through a period of Clintonisation. Everything must now be kept quiet and under wraps until a commission has reported, upon whose findings the current Leader of the Opposition can adjudicate. When the Labour party's bright young things come back from America we may find that one of the items of advice that they have received from Mr. Clinton on how to win an election is that they must endorse the freeing up of the railway system—because that is one way to get votes, especially in the south-east of England.

We are talking today about a great philosophical divide. The Labour party and, I am afraid, some of my hon. Friends believe that British Rail is like a white Mini—one has only to paint it black and one can pretend that it is a Rolls-Royce. That is simply not the case. It will not work. In his excellent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) said, "If faced with a choice of doing something or doing nothing, I would rather be doing something." That is a school of philosophy to which I belong. The Opposition have stated their views. At one time, they believed in something. They used to believe in helping people and putting people first, but now they are hidebound by advice from American politicians.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made matters quite plain. There were a number of items in his speech that the Opposition had not heard. Rail services are to be franchised—not sold—and ultimately, if standards are not met, the franchise can be withdrawn. My right hon. Friend also said that track and signalling would remain in public ownership—until such time as they may be privatised. Railtrack will still have public interest responsibilities which it will be required to meet. My right hon. Friend also said that this was not a speedy privatisation. I do not regard an evolving gradual process of privatisation over a period of 12 years as fast. Finally, my right hon. Friend said—the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) did not seem to hear him—that subsidies would continue under the arrangements that we are discussing and pass into legislation when the period of consultation is over.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy reminded us to put our constituents first. We are talking about a service to our people and the service has not been in accordance with the fare, price and tariff that they have had to pay. The railway service is a national service, but it is often delivered locally. My constituents who travel from Dartford to London and back will be delighted at the notion of privatisation: first, because it provides a degree of accountability that we have not had before; secondly, because it will free up the proper application of private sector rigour to be applied to the railway service. We have heard that a number of management groups within British Rail may wish to buy out or into a form of service. The management would transfer from one area to another, but at least it would be able to do it for itself. That essential freedom, which I believe British Rail needs, will be there for all our constituents to enjoy.

I wholeheartedly welcome the Government's proposals. The Labour party has not demonstrated its belief in the motion that it has tabled—a sad, pathetic motion doing no more than to oppose privatisation of the railways. I wish to give some advice not only to the Opposition but to my right hon. Friends Lords Ridley, Whitelaw and Young. They are pretty free with their advice. I do not blame the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East for using whatever evidence comes his way; I would do the same. I should like to issue a challenge to Lord Whitelaw, Lord Ridley, and Lord Young. For a period of 28 days they should travel from Dartford station at 7.30 in the morning and return in the rush hour at 6 o'clock at night. If they did that, I wonder whether they would express the same views as they expressed recently about the privatisation of British Rail. I make that challenge most carefully because I admire those great men who have had a past.

Mr. Prescott: They certainly have.

Mr. Dunn: I want to talk about that later. It is essential for the noble Lords to see life in the raw—the life of my constituents who have no option but to use British Rail.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Will my hon. Friend add to the challenge that he has made to the noble Lords and ask them to travel from Hertford, East to Liverpool Street daily? Perhaps they could divide their attention between the line to Dartford and the line to Hertford, East, and possibly even to Southend. If the noble Lords did that, they might possibly experience greater inconvenience than they have ever experienced before.

Mr. Dunn: Perhaps my hon. Friend could write to the noble Lords and make that suggestion in his own inimitable way.

In conclusion, I welcome the proposals. They are balanced, essential, and right. Because the proposals are gradual, they can be seen to be working and assimilated properly. I thank the House for listening to me so warmly.

8.33 pm

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Like the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), I, as a Member who is sponsored by the rail union ASLEF, have the honour to represent a London constituency. I do not welcome the Government's proposals to privatise, or, rather, commercialise, British Railways. Anyone who has ever used the railways on the commuter network surrounding London and the south-east will have a horror story that concentrates on the old, cold, often dirty and invariably overcrowded railway carriage in a train that arrives all too often late and, on occasions, refuses to arrive at all.

In some cases people have had their job applications turned down simply because their journey to work would involve travelling on some of the most notoriously inefficient lines. Therefore, I am sure that most hon. Members would agree that the question to be answered is not whether our railways are in urgent need of modernisation, but how best that modernisation can be achieved and how standards can be maintained in subsequent years.

[Ms. Glenda Jackson]

Initially, I had written the word privatisation. However, after hearing the Minister's remarks this afternoon, I have opted for semi-privatisation. According to Ministers, semi-privatisation is the only sensible option. They have argued that semi-privatisation will introduce competition and vital new managerial expertise from the private sector. As the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) so saliently said this afternoon, the only people on these islands who have any experience in managing a railway are those who manage British Rail at present. The Government argue that privatisation is the option that is being chosen by our European partners and our major competitors such as Sweden, Germany and Japan.

The Minister referred to British Rail as a public monopoly. He argued that the monopoly is causing British Rail's problems and implied that what was needed was a short, sharp shock of competition. However, that simply is not the case. For example, InterCity is in direct competition with private cars, company cars, buses and even airlines. It has a market share of 8 per cent. Rail Freight Distribution has only 7 per cent. of the market share. Despite the Minister's reference to the monopoly that British Rail exercises over commuter traffic, Network SouthEast carries less than half of such traffic into inner London.

British Rail already operates in a highly competitive market. It will be to the benefit of no one if rail is forced to compete against itself in addition to its other competitors. It is a grave mistake for the Government to view British Rail in terms of nothing other than profit and loss. British Rail is not merely a business; it is vital in social, environmental and broad economic terms which go well beyond whether the Chingford to Liverpool Street line is showing a positive return.

The energy consumption of cars is six times greater than that of rail. Cars emit 200 times more nitrogen than trains and 500 times more carbon monoxide. I well remember with some chagrin my first visit to the United States when I stood and gazed in arrogant disbelief at weather forecasts which regularly carried something called breatheability air levels. In my arrogance I believed that such a situation could never arise in these islands. However, our weather reports regularly contain reports on the breatheability of our air.

What value will private enterprise place on a clean, breatheable environment? Will business men who are fighting against tight profit margins be content to see a greener Britain as an adequate return on their investment? What about the social dimension? Many regional railways already run services as infrequently as four times a day. Such lines are not attractive to investors, but they are vital to those who use them. If privatisation or commercialisation becomes a reality, the only incentive to maintain such services will be a guarantee of Government subsidy. Since 1983, the Government have cut British Rail's subsidy by half.

There is a broader economic picture. Our railways are vital to the economy of the nation as a whole. The Confederation of British Industry has estimated that road congestion costs our nation £15 billion per year. Sir John Banham has predicted that Britain will

"enter the 21st century with the worst transport infrastructure in Western Europe".

It is imperative that Britain has a co-ordinated and integrated transport network. It is not feasible that such a network can evolve in an environment in which myriad individual companies struggle to capture lines, passengers and subsidies from each other.

If a train breaks down mid-route, in the present network a replacement can be dispatched from the nearest depot. In a privatised network, how willing will a company be to send one of its highly prized investments to the aid of one of its competitors?

I have said before that Ministers use the example of rail networks in Sweden and Japan, and the proposed privatisation of the German rail network, as justification for their scheme. I wonder how closely Ministers have examined the schemes which they praise so highly. The privatisation of Swedish railways resulted in the loss of 15,000 jobs, although it was done in co-ordination with the Swedish bus network. In Britain, the buses are being deregulated. Of the 25 networks that were opened up to competition, private contractors won contracts to operate only two.

In Germany, privatisation will be accompanied by a car tax, which is an environmental initiative to cut transport pollution by 30 per cent., and investment of DM108 billion in the railway infrastructure. The Japanese Government set up a headquarters to deal with the retraining and redeployment of 93,000 former railway employees and introduced legislation which gave it authority to recruit private enterprises to re-employ surplus personnel. In Japan, a corporation was set up to manage the debts of the former companies and shoulder the burden of pension payments. I have no doubt that the Minister's statements today about pension payments to British Rail employees will be welcomed. I hope that the Government's pension proposals were not simply a matter of take it or leave it.

How many of the proposals that I have set out will be found in the Government's privatisation plans? Will the Government introduce a car tax? Will it promise investment of £43 billion? Will it give guarantees on jobs and retraining?

There are reasons why British Rail is a nationalised industry. As I said, it is not a business which could or should be judged solely in terms of the profit that it provides for its investors. It is not sheltered from competition or devoid of incentive. As the nation's industry, it is driven by an incentive to do the things that it is not possible for a company in the private sector to do. As the nation's industry, it is able to provide services to those parts of the nation that are isolated and unattractive to the private investor.

What value can there be in leaving the infrastructure and the service which are so vital to our nation's future to the hurly burly and often less than honourable competition of the private sector? British Rail, as the nation's industry, can implement safety improvements in an integrated way throughout the entire network in a way that would be impossible for a small company with limited capital and a limited length of franchise. As the nation's industry, it has an incentive to provide a service that benefits the nation as a whole and fulfils long-term aims rather than the aims of a company which is obliged to show a quick return and to maximise its profits.

If the privatisation proposals are implemented, that commitment to the nation's service will be lost. That will be of absolutely no benefit to anyone.

8.40 pm

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): The Opposition and the railways have one thing in common: they both run on fixed tracks. We have heard a succession of speeches the gist of which is that the only way to improve the quality of our railway services is to spend more money and give greater subsidies.

Today, as always, there are limitations on the amount of public money that is available. I believe that there are also new ways to improve the quality of our railway services. I represent a railway constituency in which more than 2,000 people work on the railways. My constituents have a strong interest in the greater use of the railways and in transferring traffic from road to rail.

However, it is not enough to say, as do some people—including the Leader of the Opposition—that more people should travel by railways. Indeed, I understand that the Leader of the Opposition constantly travels to and from his constituency by plane. It is very easy to say that other people should travel by railway. If we are to encourage more people to use the railways, we must improve the quality of the service.

Many hon. Members have said, quite correctly, that BR has become much more efficient over the past 10 years. I pay tribute to the improvements that have been made on the railways through more efficient management. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said that it is possible to have more efficient public sector management. British Rail has achieved that.

Mr. Prescott: British Rail did that 10 years ago.

Mr. Milligan: It has improved over the last 10 years. British Rail now carries 49 per cent. more traffic per employee than the west European average at one sixth of the subsidy. That is a considerable achievement. However, we have exhausted the limits of improvement simply as a result of better public sector management. We must consider other methods to encourage improvement.

I believe that two aspects are important. The first is to try to give better service to the customer. Nationalised industries, which tend to be oriented towards output, are not so well geared to look after customers. The second point is to encourage innovation. Again nationalised industries do not have a good record on innovation. They tend to continue to produce what they have already produced.

It is not possible to privatise the entire railway network for reasons that are already well known. However, there are signs that experiments with privatisation on limited services have been a success. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East referred to Charterail, which went bust, and to Tiger Rail. However, he did not refer to Foster Yeoman, a west country quarrying company, which has a great interest in cheap transport costs.

Mr. Prescott: It is in the public sector.

Mr. Milligan: Foster Yeoman is not in the public sector. It is a private company.

Foster Yeoman wanted to use British Rail to transport aggregates for building work in the south-east. Transport costs were critical to that company if the aggregates were to be transported by rail rather than by road. Its experience was that BR could not do the job at the price the company wanted.

Foster Yeoman offered to provide a privatised service by buying its own locomotives with bigger trains and less maintenance. As a result, it runs a very efficient service with BR personnel. Goods have been taken off the roads and now are moved by rail. There is a similar experience, although in a minor way, in respect of private tourist services such as the Orient Express and the Royal Scot which have found niche markets which BR did not find.

Many hon. Members have referred to the foreign experience. That experience is the most significant factor. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East referred to Japan. I hope that he will forgive me when I say that I believe that he is slightly muddled about what is happening in Japan. He said that it was a question, not of privatisation in Japan, but of some kind of nationalised industry.

Roughly half the railways in Japan are already privatised. They have been in private hands for a very long time. Incidentally, they have as good a safety record as the railways in the public sector. Japanese railways in the public sector have been divided into six separate companies which operate independently and which, in time, will be floated on the stock market. They have not been floated yet because, as hon. Members may have noticed, the Japanese stock market has been in a pretty bad way. However, they will be floated and they have already gained considerable benefits by being independent of the national railways.

Mr. Enomoto, a managing director of the East Japan Railway, has said

"The railways in Japan are now in excellent condition."

With regard to the new arrangement, he stressed the improvement in employee morale. Such an improvement could be significant in this country. Using rather quaint Japanese terms in English translation, he said that one of the notable things now about the staff on Japanese railways is that they give "polite greetings" and "kind directions" to people who use the railways. We would very much appreciate that approach in this country.

We should also consider what has happened in Sweden. It has been said that only 1 per cent. of Swedish railways has been privatised. However, the part of the Swedish railways which has been put out to private tender has achieved enormous improvements. Fares have been halved and passenger usage has been greatly increased, by about 40 per cent. My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) mentioned the improvements across the Swedish railways where costs have been cut by about 30 per cent. That has occurred partly as a result of imitation of the improvements achieved by private companies.

It is interesting that the Swedish Government are considering extending tendering, which until now has been confined to branch lines, to all main lines. Privatisation and franchising in Sweden have reduced costs and encouraged the use of the railways. Hon. Members on both sides of the House would like to see that.

Although the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East railed against privatisation at one point, he said that he did not think that ownership was critical. I hope that he will accept that it is possible to have a mixed system of ownership on the railways and that a degree of competition and of private enterprise can bring great improvements to the quality of the service.

We are entering new territory and it is right that the franchises should be experimental in the first phase. That

[Mr. Milligan]

is why I believe that it is right not to sell off the track and the assets. After five or six years it may be clear that the experience has not been good.

Our message to the people of this country should be, "You are fed up with the quality of the railway services in this country so we are now going to give private companies the chance to improve the quality of the service through innovation and new methods." That message would be widely welcomed.

The Opposition's negative approach is characteristic of them. They are not interested in new ideas to improve the railways or in privatisation. Since 1979 the Opposition have opposed every privatisation—privatisation that has been emulated around the world. We should not be surprised by the Opposition's motion and I hope that the House will reject it tonight.

8.50 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): First, I should remind the House that I am sponsored by the rail union RMT.

I wish to focus on something that the Secretary of State has stressed throughout the debate on rail privatisation, ever since the publication of the White Paper some months ago—his view that safety is paramount. If safety is his paramount consideration, a good test of whether privatisation will be a success should be whether it will make Britain's railways safer or less safe. Will it mean that we shall have more rail accidents, followed by Clapham and Cannon Street type inquiries, or will there be fewer of them?

Like other hon. Members, only earlier this afternoon did I receive the Department of Transport's latest report, "Ensuring safety on Britain's Railways", so I cannot claim to have read it in detail, but I have read the section headed "Preventing Fatigue—Controlling Hours of Work and Rest", and I am concerned by what I see there. The report says:

> "It is likely that there will be considerable public and Parliamentary pressure to apply limits to hours of work and rest periods for train drivers at least."

That is an understatement. It is not only likely that there will be such disquiet and such protests; it is absolutely certain. And why should the concern apply only to drivers? We should not forget that the Clapham crash, in which 35 people died, was caused, according to the Hidden inquiry, by a signal wiring fault, which was blamed on excessive overtime being worked by the person who did that bit of wiring.

The Department of Transport report which came out earlier today makes comparisons of the maximum permitted working hours of rail employees in Britain and in other European countries. All the countries in the report have an almost wholly, and in most cases a wholly, public sector railway system. One has to go a long way to find a private system.

In the autumn I went to the United States and met managers of Amtrak, who stressed to me the absolute importance in a mixed private-public rail system of having statutory regulation of railway employees' hours. I have been sent a copy of the American Hours of Service Act 1982, which stipulates in federal American law a general provision that no rail employee should work more than 14 hours, and more stringent conditions for some other types of staff. For operators and train despatchers—in English, signal men and women—the maximum is a nine-hour shift. For signals installation staff, like the man involved in the Clapham wiring, the maximum period of duty is 12 hours. There is no statutory limit in Britain, but since the Hidden report British Rail has operated a non-statutory 12-hour maximum in a 24-hour period.

Will the Minister, in replying, undertake to examine the United States Act and to consider bringing in similar statutory protection for rail workers and the travelling public here in Britain?

8.52 pm

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): My concern in analysing the Government's proposals for privatisation is to ensure a better service for passengers. Part of that, in my view, is to ensure that there is greater opportunity for the disciplines of the private sector, because it is a facet of corporate monopolies in the public sector that they encourage the worst traditions of bureaucratic indolence and sloppy standards. Despite the substantial progress that has been made in British Rail in recent years, which I recognise and welcome, and despite the very large and ever increasing amounts, well ahead of inflation, which the Government have put into rail investment over the past few years—there has been well over £1 billion of investment this year alone, an increase in real terms of more than 50 per cent. since 1980—there are still very substantial difficulties.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Hawkins: Time is short and I am afraid that I cannot accept interventions.

The problems that passengers in my constituency of Blackpool, South and throughout the country face as a result of inadequate standards have to be addressed. The negative nature of the Opposition motion and the air of unreality that has pervaded pretty well all the speeches from the Opposition Benches are quite staggering. To hear Opposition Members talk, one would think that none of them ever heard complaints about rail services in their surgeries and constituency correspondence.

Only this morning I received a six-page letter, including a copy of a complaint form to British Rail, from a pensioner constituent of mine, and it is fairly typical. She and her husband were making a journey recently from my constituency to London and back. They had pre-booked their seats, as British Rail asks customers to do. Their train to London was over two hours late; their train coming back from London was over two hours late. The state of the toilets in the stations and on the trains was unspeakably disgusting, and the overcrowding was appalling. This, I am afraid, is the experience of far too many people.

There are many dedicated British Rail staff who do their best to minimise the difficulties, and there has been a massive improvement in British Rail services. They are vastly better today than they were in the bad old days of the 1960s and 1970s, when Labour Governments consistently underfunded British Rail, when there was no imaginative management, when there were none of the improvements that the Government have introduced in recent years. But there is so much more that can be done, and only by involving private sector capital can we ensure that we have a rail system to be proud of.

The benefits of rail privatisation are that passengers will get a better deal from a service in which management and employees will have a stronger incentive then ever before to provide high-quality service which responds to the customer's needs. Competition will provide a further incentive to improve and expand services. Safety will remain at the top of the Government's priorities, as it always has to and as the Health and Safety Commission has confirmed in today's report. Rail management will be able to concentrate on running services free from the constraints of the public sector spending round and without Government involvement in day-to-day matters.

There will be many opportunities to improve efficiency and quality as local management takes on greater responsibilities and works more and more closely with the public that it serves. The franchising authority will set clear standards which will be written into franchisees' contracts. Only when those standards are introduced and the disciplines of the private sector are seen to operate will the morale of the staff really be improved and will there be opportunities to have the kind of rail system of which the public can be justly proud.

I very much hope and expect that the House will rightly reject the Opposition motion, which is so negative and has nothing constructive to offer, and will support the Government's proposals wholeheartedly, as I do.

8.56 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I will endeavour to be brief—indeed, I am under instructions to be brief, so I will deal with the substantive point in a moment.

I cannot think of a more sloppy and disgraceful way of dealing with this matter than the Government's method of publishing relevant documents on a gradual basis whilst at the same time promising us a major Bill in the next few weeks. The minimum that we should expect is that the Minister should use his good offices with the Leader of the House to see if we can have two days for the Second Reading debate. There is much that needs to be scrutinised and we are incapable of doing that because we have not yet had the necessary documentation.

What we are about to embark upon as the legislation goes through the House can only be described as a political mortal sin. The criteria for a mortal sin are full knowledge, full consent and grave matter. The Government have full knowledge of, and fully consent to embarking on, something that will subsequently prove to be extremely reckless. They have had counsel from the media, from the industry, from the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), from Members of the other place who used to be until recently on the Treasury Bench; all have told the Government that it will not work. There are even prospective commercialisers who have made it abundantly clear that the franchising basis on which the Government are embarking will not work. I refer, in particular, to Sir James Sherwood, who gave evidence to the Select Committee on Transport. Unfortunately, the media were more preoccupied with Richard Branson's pullover on that day and failed to give sufficient attention to the valuable evidence of Sir James Sherwood, who indicated that he was not interested in the idea of the Railtrack authority and did not believe that it would work.

There has been reference to Foster Yeoman. We received considerable evidence from freight industry witnesses—and I think that Foster Yeoman was included in this particular point—who made it abundantly clear that, if the pricing regime of the track were to be based on what they understood the Government's proposals to be, they would have to look to moving their traffic from rail to road; it simply was "not on" to continue to run freight on the basis of that which we understand to be the Government's proposition. I use the phrase "we understand" because we do not know. This sloppy Government have not produced, at this critical stage, a document setting out the pricing regime for the use of the track. It is an absurd situation and one that they need to remedy before we have the Bill, in the interests of both the House itself and also of their parliamentary colleagues who, once they have seen what is proposed, will, I think, change their attitude to the Bill dramatically. They will have much less enthusiasm for it than has been demonstrated tonight.

I want to make one comment about the hon. Member for Christchurch. I have not been a Member of the House long, but I doubt whether there has been in recent times a more devasting speech by a Government Back-Bencher on a proposal of the Government than that which we heard from the hon. Gentleman. I commend his courage. I also commend his precision and his knowledge of how railways can and should work. His motive in speaking was not only to be a diligent Member but also, I suspect, to save the Government he supports from a disaster such as they experienced with the poll tax. The hon. Member has referred to the proposals as a poll tax on wheels.

As someone who represents a commuting constituency, I am concerned that my constituents will have no benefit from this very costly and lengthy legislation upon which we are about to embark. Others have spoken about the parlous state of British Rail at present, including the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) and the hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins), who referred to the complaints that he had received in his constituency mail. Of course, we all receive complaints. They are an indication of how our important rail network has been run down by the Conservative Government over the past 14 years.

The remedy is not this franchising proposal. My great anxiety is that we are about to rush into changes which will lead eventually to a closure of lines, peak-hour only facilities in many areas, high costs to commuters and rail travellers and a continuing haemorrhage of freight from rail with no appreciable improvement of the service for people who live in and around London and those who wish to commute from other parts of the country.

There are many other of the Government's rail proposals that one would like to probe. There is no time tonight, but I hope that, at the very least, the Government will take on board the rights of hon. Members on both sides of the House so that when the legislation is introduced they will ensure, not only in Committee but on Second Reading, that we have an opportunity to develop our thoughts and our questions to a much greater extent than we are able to do today, both because of time constraints and because we have had insufficient detailed documentation on the intentions and effects of the Government's proposals.

9.2 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Nothing has been more pathetic or revealing in this debate today than to hear Tory Members, particularly in the last few speeches, denigrating and berating British Rail services as they affect their constituents without acknowledging one iota of responsibility for this state of affairs and for under-investment in British Rail. They have had 14 years of power, but still lack the guts to accept any of the responsibility for what has resulted from it as regards either the railways or anything else. I would refer them, in particular, to a quotation from an article in *The Independent* by Christian Wolmar from the day on which the representatives of the French, Swedish and German railways gave evidence to the Select Committee on Transport. Mr. Wolmar summed things up like this:

"Their answers will send a shiver down the spines of all rail users as they both said"—

the French and Swedish representatives—that, as a result of what the Government were proposing to do,

"there would be line closures, a transfer of freight and passengers to rail and competition on some well used lines. But even these services might become more unreliable because of under-investment in the infrastructure."

The core problem they identified was the years of under-investment in the United Kingdom network. As Mr. Lundberg, the director of corporate planning with Swedish railways, said:

"You must first invest, then you can privatise."

So even according to their own standards and by their own lights the Government are hoist on the petard of their own folly—of their failure to invest in the railways over the past 13 years. They have rendered the railways incapable of responding to the political ideology which they now wish to impose upon them.

Let us be in no doubt about what the indictment is tonight and will be in the weeks ahead as the debate develops. Rail privatisation would mean more bureaucracy, fewer services, more freight on the roads, substantial job losses and greater safety risks. The British public will agree that there is not a great deal in that offer for them. There is nothing in rail privatisation—nothing positive, nothing worth while, nothing creative, nothing to improve the environment or the economy for the passenger or the taxpayer. There will be more bureaucracy, fewer services, more freight on the roads, substantial job losses and greater safety risks: a poor agenda to offer the travelling public and the taxpayer alike.

I shall deal first with safety because that should always be dealt with first in these matters. The Health and Safety Commission report was the dog that was not meant to bark today. We had expected a statement on it. The statement disappeared. I believe that the reason why the statement disappeared and the whole thing became a bit of a mishmash in the course of the Secretary of State's speech was that the Government had been denied the opportunity to news-manage this document because the true thrust of the report was revealed in advance. However, what it did say cannot be avoided. I will not allow Tory Members to avoid the realities of what that report actually says as opposed to the gloss that the Secretary of State tried to put on it. I ask each hon. Member to note this because one day they will be held to account for this by their constituents. The report says under "Privatisation":

"Companies with little or no previous experience of operating on the railway and managers with limited experience of railway safety issues will enter the railway industry as the BR is broken. Many changes in traditional working arrangements may be proposed. Control of railway operations will be divided between many different organisations and this will generate a need to define the extent of the responsibilities of each party and to ensure effective management of safety . . .

Unless considerable care is taken to set up systems to ensure that new operators are properly equipped and organised there can be no confidence that risk will be effectively controlled right from the start and that important matters do not fall between the safety arrangements of the various parties."

I ask Tory Members, including the most glib and most sycophantic in supporting these proposals, to note the following words:

"The consequences of failing to achieve adequate systems of control will be seen in increased risk on the railway system and the likelihood of an increase in the numbers, and possibly also the severity, of accidents."

That is what the report says and the warning that it gives. Of course it goes on to set out a long list of measures to counter the threat and of course the Government accept those recommendations. It would be extremely odd if they did not, given that they are the political masters of the situation and they are the ones who are driving it. The Health and Safety Commission is telling the Government that they are putting in place a more dangerous system and unless they control it very carefully there will be more accidents and more serious accidents. That is what the Health and Safety Commission is saying.

I ask every Tory Back Bencher, where is the demand coming from to put in place that more dangerous system? That document is crucial and the message is, of course, that if you throw money and bureaucracy at them, every one of the risks can be countered in a more and more convoluted way. But who wants to create the danger just so that it must be met through such convoluted systems? That applies to only the few, the handful on the Government Benches, who have been dragooned into speaking in the debate. They have more loyalty to their party than to their constituents.

That might apply to those few here, but every witness before the Select Committee said, in effect, "We see no sense or advantage in it. We want a decent railway system, and this is not the way to achieve it." But because the Conservatives are driven by ideological and dogmatic insistence, they will press on with their proposals and the first price to be paid will be the certainty that the public are travelling on the safest possible railway system.

The hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) probably has copyright on the phrase "poll tax on wheels." It started as something of a slogan, but the comparison continues to build to the point at which it becomes compelling. In recent years the Conservatives have introduced many measures which we have found unattractive and have opposed. However, the true analogy between the poll tax and rail privatisation lies not in its malevolence, but, first, in its intellectual absurdity and, secondly, in its unworkability. It lies in the contrived complexity of the mechanisms which must be devised to meet the objections. It lies in the increasing unease of those who are asked to support the policy, matched only by the increasing obsessiveness of those promoting the policy.

There was a compelling analogy with the poll tax last week when the Secretary of State for Transport, broadcasting to the nation, said that the whole problem was due not to the legislation and what was proposed but to the fact that people did not properly understand it. Lord

Ridley, Lord Young, Lord Whitelaw and the leader writer of *The Daily Telegraph* did not understand it. The whole world, including the hon. Member for Christchurch, did not understand it. If only they understood it, they would support it, the right hon. Gentleman claimed. It was as though he was retreating into the asylum shouting, "I'm not mad. It's just that the whole world doesn't understand."

I shall go through the objections one by one, the first being the future of passenger services. I regret that there are not many more Members in the House tonight. The situation is analogous with the poll tax; it takes a long time for matters such as this to build up, but build up this issue will as the Committee stage proceeds, as the debates continue and as the articles appear. Warnings will continue to come from consumer groups. Objections from local authorities of all complexions will be put forward. We shall have one debate after another on this subject in the coming two or three years and then the Benches will be fuller as Members begin to realise what the message is from their constituents.

I shall be proven correct in saying that Tory Back Benchers will have to get used to the idea that privatisation will mean the closure of railway lines, stations and services. Loss-making, and particularly rural services, need the protection of cross-subsidy within an integrated system. There is no escaping the fact that if we disintegrate the system, we threaten the weaker lines. Anybody wanting proof of that need only have seen the reaction of the Secretary of State this afternoon to my question about the future of the 11,000-mile network. "Shifty" would be too modest a description.

The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Banks), in what I thought was a notably naive and sycophantic speech, called in aid Mr. James Sherwood as a witness who had gone to the Select Committee to greet the proposals as good news. I do not think anybody else would have put that interpretation on Mr. Sherwood's evidence. The hon. Gentleman and Mr. Sherwood should go along the south coast of England to each of the stations that will lose the services that Mr. Sherwood said he would close as part of his interest in privatisation. While Mr. Sherwood's evidence might have been good news in Southport, it was not good for the coastal lines, which he has already said he will close if he ever gets his hands on them.

The figure is 11,000 miles, and the Secretary of State says that the great majority of them will survive. He must know that 7,000 miles is a great majority of 11,000. So is 8,000. Can he put a figure on it? We can, because there has been a figure on it for the last 20 years under Governments of both complexions. The figure is 11,000 miles. But today, in his evasions, the right hon. Gentleman confirmed that the expectation and reality must be the substantial closure of railway lines throughout the country and in particular rural lines which exist for a social as well as a communications purpose.

Nobody need be in any doubt about this. One has only to read the submissions from the would-be operators, such as the proposals of Sherwood. Already Sherwood knows what he is going to close. One has only to read about what the Badger Line wants to do about the Newquay branch in Cornwall, where it is already talking about bus substitution. One has only to read about what Grampian Transport wants to do. It wants to concrete over the rails and create busways. The same thing applies in the Isle of Wight, where the Invecta bus company operates.

About half the external expressions of interest in rail privatisation and franchising has come from bus companies. Can the Secretary of State for Transport seriously tell us that bus companies will compete against themselves? Can he tell us that when, in a year or two, they say that it would be more economic to take the trains off and put the passengers on their buses, he will say, "No, that is not cricket. You cannot do that. You will have to run the train services and bus services side by side". I hope very much that the Office of Fair Trading, which has expressed an interest in the creation of these local monopolies, with bus companies bidding for the franchises, will pursue the matter to the limit and say that it will not tolerate such a situation.

Every hon. Member knows in his heart of hearts that loss-making rural services will not stand the privatisation process.

Mr. Matthew Banks *rose*——

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Member for Southport declined to extend to me the courtesy of giving way. However, I shall give way to him.

Mr. Banks: The fact that the hon. Gentleman has made not one but successive comments about this matter indicates either that he has not listened at all since 3.30 this afternoon or that he is deliberately misrepresenting what the Government are trying to do.

Mr. Wilson: That is a sweeping statement, but the hon. Gentleman will have more success in sweeping Southport than in sweeping the House with it. I am dealing in specifics; he is dealing in pious hopes. Since I, too, have a majority of just 3,000 I, too, would hope that my rail services would not be taken away.

Of course, rural and loss making services will be more exposed. There is an argument for specifying how much each service loses. I understand that argument and it could be applied to any other system. However, with regard to this regime, if one were to start with the view that losses on specific local services should be set out, within months—certainly within years—the case that it would be reasonable to withdraw such routes would be built up. The case would be made that it is absurd to have only 10 people using a service that costs £X per person per user in subsidy. How ridiculous, it would be said. This is what is protected under the cross-subsidy system when it is run by people who believe in the railways as a national network. However, it does not take a soothsayer to predict that once the per capita cost of operating these services is known the Government will withdraw the subsidy and accept the overtures of the private operators for withdrawal, particularly if, in the meantime, they have managed to get rid of everyone else who uses the lines—the freight operators, who at present share the costs.

Mr. Snape: Is my hon. Friend aware that the identification of individual lines in terms of profit and loss is an idea that has been tried before? Indeed, it is one beloved of the Treasury, which has always believed that somewhere in there is the core of a profitable railway system. Is my hon. Friend aware that such a system was dropped as a result of the Railways Act 1974 because it was felt that, in order to bring British Rail's accounting into line with that in the rest of the European Community,

[Mr. Snape]

we needed to get away from such an approach? So far as the Government are concerned, it is another case of back to the future.

Mr. Wilson: I am grateful for the fact that, in respect of these matters, my hon. Friend goes back much further than I do. What he says is entirely right. If we believe in a national railway we must resist the philosophy of the core railway. But the core railway is the logical progression of the privatised system, especially when operated by a Government who, at heart, as we have heard many times tonight, do not believe in the principle of subsidy on social or any other grounds.

What about passenger transport authorities and the services that they provide? The hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins), a cheerful proponent of breaking up the railways although that process has led to the loss of the InterCity service to Blackpool, spoke about the bags of mail that hon. Members receive about the inadequacy of local rail services. I do not receive such mail: my local rail services are extremely good because of the intelligent co-operation between Strathclyde regional council and British Rail through Strathclyde passenger transport executive. That is why the west of Scotland has excellent electrified services and why £100 million has been invested in passenger transport services in the west midlands.

My hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) spoke about the experience in west Yorkshire. Innovations are prevented by restrictions imposed by the Department of Transport. Throughout the country, passenger transport authorities do an excellent job and strive to do a better one within the limits of the resources that are available to them. They are to be boxed out of this altogether. Local taxpayers' money will go into systems over which there is no democratic accountability through local authority representatives on the PTAs. How can that be justified? Their sole job, according to the Government, will be to administer on behalf of the private operators.

Is it seriously suggested that that is how local taxpayers' money should be used, or will the whole system simply collapse along with so much else? A creative public transport commitment is needed to carry out the work that the PTAs are doing and the Government are prepared to throw that work away to pursue the daft dogma of rail privatisation.

The certainty of rail privatisation is that it will drive more freight on to the roads. That is important to people outside even if it is not important to some hon. Members. There is no need to look into the crystal ball to see that because it is already happening on a large scale.

It would be unfair to Tory Members to say that they do not care. I have sat through debates in which many of them appeared to care. They care about their constituencies, about the roads of Kent, for instance, but they care in a localised, short-sighted, myopic way. They wonder whether in their areas something could be done to get more freight on to the railways. They fail to understand that while the Government pursue policies that are specifically directed towards the other trend, that will not happen. In order to reduce rail freight to a core business British Rail is working under conditions and towards objectives that nobody could reach and still maintain freight on the railways.

Mr. Hawkins: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wilson: No.

Why is British Rail still operating under financial objectives that were laid down by Cecil Parkinson in December 1989 when he was Secretary of State for Transport? Those objectives were a profit of £50 million and an 8 per cent. return on investment. Can the Minister name one road haulage firm in the country that aims for an 8 per cent. return on investment in the present economic climate? Why was a letter sent from the Department of Transport last July to British Rail saying that there was to be no new investment in rail freight except for that directed towards the channel tunnel? Why was that done? If there is any desire to get freight on to the railways, why is not BR allowed to work to realistic objectives?

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): In his capacity as the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, will the hon. Gentleman say what sum his party would cite as a reasonable objective? To what extent would he subsidise freight transport and the business of trying to transfer freight from the roads? The hon. Gentleman is speaking in abstract terms, but perhaps he would put a figure on the subsidy that his party would provide for freight transport.

Mr. Wilson: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to the debate. I hope that he was here to listen to what I said about the prospect for services in Cornwall. Subsidy is another term for "nothing else to lose". If freight can be carried on the railways without additional cost to the infrastructure, any sensible society would opt for that because it has social and economic advantages.

Mr. Harris: Without subsidy?

Mr. Wilson: That seems to be roughly equivalent to zero. If goods can be carried without cost to the infrastructure, it makes sense to do so. In contrast, British Rail is forced to work under those objectives and that is why contracts are being thrown away.

Mr. Harris: The hon. Gentleman is dodging.

Mr. Wilson: I am not dodging anything. All the contracts that are being thrown away because of those objectives as part of the pre-privatisation aim of getting Railfreight down to a rump operation are exactly those that any sensible person would say should be carried on the railways—cement, oil, bitumens, chemicals and forestry products. Every time a 100,000-tonne contract is lost by British Rail it means another 4,000 lorries on our roads.

Let Tory Back Benchers who support rail privatisation go to their constituents with the slogan "More freight on the roads". One cement contract lost, not because it was unprofitable but because it was not profitable enough, will put another 200,000 tonnes of freight on to the roads. That is the reality of what is happening as a result of the run-up to privatisation. Conservative Members should not tell their constituents that they want more freight on the railways because everything that they and Ministers are doing in order to slim down the freight operation is having precisely the opposite effect.

Many people work on building trains, rolling stock and everything else that is needed for the railways. It is an important industry with a good tradition and many skills. But what does that matter to people who have destroyed so many other industries with great traditions and skills?

The Railway Industry Association warned the Select Committee on Transport, and thereby the House, that 30,000 jobs are at risk in the railway industries already because of the blight which the threat of privatisation has placed on investment in the railways. For the first time ever, InterCity plans no new investment in rolling stock. No one will invest in rolling stock or rail equipment when it is not known who will be running the trains in a few years' time. If Conservative Members check with railway suppliers in their constituencies they will find that their order books are empty.

The Railway Industry Association, which I suspect is not a great ideological friend of the Opposition, has warned that 30,000 jobs are at stake. On the railways the attrition is already on to slim down, with 5,000 redundancies scattered around the country, and that is only the start.

The bureaucracies that will be created in order to pursue the worthy aims of dividing up fares among half a dozen different companies and reviving the clearing house at Euston will result in the creation of white collar jobs while the people on whom the safety and efficiency of the railways depends are being got rid of. To take an example from my area, in the west of Scotland 131 track maintenance posts are to be done away with. The managers responsible for the crews which will be reduced in that way say:

"It is our view that . . . we have already reached the bottom line as far as manpower cuts are concerned and that any further reductions in staff will cause a sharp decline in track quality and compromise the safe running of trains."

That is what the managers in that region wrote to the British Rail management.

As similar job cuts are made throughout the country in order to complete the slimming down operation, that is the sort of message that will go to every region of British Rail and that, too, will filter back to Tory Members of Parliament.

The key to all the proposals is the separation of Railtrack from the operators of the trains; to say that not only will Railtrack be unsubsidised, but that it too has to give an 8 per cent. return on investment.

We have heard some nonsense today about comparisons with other systems. The Swedish system has been called in aid on various occasions. One hon. Member was particularly proud of the fact that the 1 per cent. of Swedish railways that is privately operated seems to be doing a terrific job. I wish it well, but the idea that there is any comparison is absurd.

The fundamental difference is that in Sweden the rail track operators are subsidised. That is where the subsidy goes in order to allow them to provide the railway infrastructure that we all want and on which other operators could potentially work, although, as we know now, 99 per cent. is still in the public sector.

It is, however, entirely different to suggest that the Railtrack authority will be unsubsidised and must therefore obtain all its revenue from the users. That is the catch 22. If the authority sets its charges at a realistic level —which I very much hope that it would—to take account of safety requirements and all the infrastructure over and above the track for which it will be responsible, the charges to operators will be so high that the operators will be bleating from day one, or will not operate the services at all.

The unthinkable alternative is to bring in some hard men from private enterprise to run the Railtrack authority, with the primary motive of getting the costs down, thus lowering the operators' charges. I fear that such a division of responsibility, with the operators constantly pressing the authority for lower charges, is a recipe for not a safer but a more dangerous railway, and for job losses in the short rather than the long term. Such a formula will ensure that traffic, both passenger and freight, will be driven off the railways.

Mr. Milligan: The hon. Gentleman suggests that it would be much better to subsidise the infrastructure company. The Government have already made it clear that, where it is necessary to continue to pay a subsidy for a service to exist, it will subsidise the running company. Why is it better to pay the owner of the track rather than the company that runs the service on the track?

Mr. Wilson: I do not have time to answer that question, but if the hon. Gentleman seriously wishes to answer it for himself, I am prepared to assist him; he will then begin to understand the fundamental flaws in the Government's proposals.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): The 1 per cent. is very effective.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman might just be able to understand the flaws; but I am afraid that there is no hope for the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman).

I know that *The Daily Telegraph* is now regarded in Tory circles as a dangerously radical rag, so there is no point in quoting from it. I also know that the various peers who have made their views felt are now persona non grata. I was not sure where to turn for a source that was sufficiently establishment to highlight the concerns felt by 99 per cent. of the population, but I felt that "Jane's World Railways" might prove adequate.

Mr. Snape: Who's she?

Mr. Wilson: A sister of "Jane's Fighting Ships".

Tories like talking about enterprise. How does this sound?

"In Britain, it seems, entrepreneurs innocent of debt arising from the past cost of developing a high-speed Inter-City system, will be able to lease modern BR rolling stock to cream off very profitably the premium peak business on key routes. Until the rest of the Inter-City operation can be sold off, piecemeal or as an entity, this must then struggle to make ends meet on its residual less lucrative and consequently contracting services."

That is really enterprising, is it not?

On the question of whether other European countries might follow us, "Jane's World Railways" says:

"It will be astonishing . . . if any Continental European government, let alone its railway, views this as better than a dogma-driven exercise, utterly irrelevant to national need of a well-balanced multi-modal transport system, and a damper of any further technological exploration of rail transport's potential."

That is what the Tories want: another great industry to be run down, flogged off and denigrated in advance. That is what they are doing to the railways, but they will not get

[Mr. Wilson]

away with it. Many analogies can be made with the poll tax. The more that people know about the Government's proposals, the more they will resist them and defeat them.

9.34 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): Throughout this long debate, Conservative Members have given solid and consistent support to our proposals. Eight Conservative Members spoke. With the exception of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), the seven others—my hon. Friends the Members for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry), for Hampshire North-West (Sir D. Mitchell), for Southport (Mr. Banks), for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst), for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) and for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins)—supported the Government's proposals. That clearly showed the support of Conservative Members for our proposals.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) was a prophet of gloom in the last general election campaign. He forecast that if a Tory Government were returned there would be a series of closures of stations, lines and services. He was wrong then, and he is wrong now. Let me deal with his point about Jim Sherwood. The Government do not accept what Mr. Sherwood proposes. When we franchise services there will be a competition and the company that wins will be obliged to run those services. No private sector company will close any railway service, so let us not be taken in by media comments or by comments from one individual.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North said that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had said that there could be closures on a significant scale. That is untrue. The franchising authority will start with the existing timetable and will impose on franchise companies a requirement to run a specific service for the length of the franchise. There will be clear closure procedures. In exchanges with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) at the beginning of the debate, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made it plain that to draw the inference that privatisation or the reforms that we propose will lead to closures was quite wrong.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North criticised the disaggregation of subsidy—the allocation of subsidy to individual railway lines. I think that he will find that he is in a minority. The transport users consultative committees are broadly in favour of the allocation of subsidy to particular lines and groups of services because they believe, and I believe that they are right—*[Interruption.]* No, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North was not in favour of that. He talked erroneously about cross-subsidy. We are talking about taking the £1,000 million of subsidy to Regional Railways and Network SouthEast and, over time, allocating it to particular services. The Government believe that that will lead to a more informed debate about what is sensible and what is needed for rail services. The hon. Gentleman is out of step with his colleagues.

The hon. Gentleman asked a number of questions about freight, as did the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), who informed my right hon. Friend and me that she would not be here for the wind-up. The mail freight target set by Lord Parkinson, the then Secretary of State for Transport, was a profit of £50 million for the fiscal year 1992-93. Rail freight will lose £50 million this year, which is wide of the mark, and British Rail is rightly taking relatively modest steps to price up certain traffic. I think that it is sensible for British Rail to seek to increase prices where the business is not even covering its avoidable costs, making no contribution whatever to the infrastructure.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Freeman: No. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I have to answer 15 speeches and I intend to do so briefly in the time available. That is a courtesy to the House.

The 8 per cent. rate of return for new investment is modest compared with road haulage, shipping or aviation in the private sector.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West, in a powerful speech, asked a number of pertinent questions. He asked about contracting-out services by Railtrack, the infrastructure body. I give him a categoric assurance that when Railtrack, a nationalised industry, has been established—we hope that the infrastructure body will be established by April 1994—the Government will require it to contract out as many of its services as possible. That will be a powerful incentive to get the best value for money from national resources going into infrastructure.

Secondly, my hon. Friend referred to leasing and rolling stock procurement. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State hopes next week to publish a consultation document on rolling stock procurement. We shall spell out carefully our plans for the development of a leasing industry so that the private sector can commence at an early stage—this year, we hope—the ordering of rolling stock and, ultimately, its leasing to private sector operators.

Mr. Morgan: Old or new?

Mr. Freeman: New rolling stock.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West asked about the ability of the private sector to commence the haulage of freight now. The first step is for us to publish yet another consultation document on the charging regime for not only freight but passenger services on the railway. My right hon. Friend hopes to publish that document in the next few weeks. It will enable the private sector to judge the viability and profitability of hauling freight, with private sector ownership of locos and wagons and private sector employment where profitable opportunities lie. I hope that in 1993, prior to privatisation, British Rail will take the opportunity of working with the private sector.

I see sitting on the Front Bench the previous Secretary of State for Transport, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind). My right hon. and learned Friend asked British Rail to encourage the private sector to haul freight now and not to wait until we have reformed the legislation. I confirm that we shall discuss with British Rail opportunities for the private sector in the immediate future.

Sir David Mitchell: Does that mean that there will be open access for the private sector freight operator to use British Rail track this year?

Mr. Freeman: There cannot be open access until Royal Assent has been given to legislation. Prior to Royal Assent, we need the co-operation of British Rail because it has a statutory right to provide the drivers of trains. I hope that British Rail will co-operate voluntarily in any passenger and freight opportunities prior to Royal Assent.

The hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) asked what were the benefits to passengers. During the debate, I noted 10 possible practical benefits to passengers, perhaps to commuters on Network SouthEast. It is not an exhaustive list, but I will quickly read out some examples of how a private sector franchised operator could improve the quality of passenger services.

The first is the interconnection of InterCity services and other rail services using buses or even aeroplanes. It would be a positive advantage for rail users, although, of course, one must be careful about monopoly legislation. The second example is an improvement not only in car parking facilities for users of commuter services but in the security of cars in the car parks.

Thirdly, there could be better passenger information systems. This is not merely a question of money but of attitude. It involves paying attention to passengers' interests. Fourthly, there could be the improvement of retailing opportunities at stations. Fifthly, there could be early provision of new equipment and the design of new rolling stock. Instead of engineers being responsible for designing what they think that the public needs—

Mr. Prescott: Who will do it?

Mr. Freeman: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman who will do it. The private sector owners of the rolling stock will be much more interested in designing stock to suit the passengers' needs.

Sixthly, there could be better marketing. There must be new opportunities for changes in the price structure—especially for off-peak travel—to encourage more traffic. Seventhly, there could be better on-board services and, eighthly, development at stations. There must be property development opportunities which will improve some of the provincial railway stations in particular.

Ninthly, there would be better staff incentives, giving rail staff the opportunity to own a share of the company, and there could be better performance pay arrangements. Finally——

Mr. Bayley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Freeman: No. On station services, more could be done at our major rail stations if the staff were interested in the passengers who use the rail stations rather than in the running of the trains.

Mr. Harris: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Freeman: No. I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me. I have only 14 minutes left.

The hon. Member for North Devon referred briefly to Tony Speller and to the Transport Act 1962 (Amendment) Act 1981, which he promoted. It is right that we should record the progress made in introducing experimental new rail services as a result of his initiative several years ago. I confirm that we shall preserve the Speller process, which brings great benefit to the rail services.

It is strange to see the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) sitting right at the back. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not resiling from the challenge of being a member of the Standing Committee. We look forward to his energetic and constant attendance in Committee—and to his sense of humour, which somewhat defeated him when he talked about rail investment. He implied that rail investment was being neglected. I looked at the record under the previous Labour Government. Between 1974 and 1979, at current prices——

Mr. Snape *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. I shall give him the figures. From 1974 to 1979, in 1992-93 current prices, the average annual investment made by British Rail, with Government support, was £600 million. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned to the Select Committee only yesterday, next year—a difficult year—British Rail will invest £1 billion a year——

Mr. Wilson: Including the channel tunnel?

Mr. Freeman: Investment by British Rail in rolling stock and in improving the railway, whether it is in the channel tunnel or in commuter services, is rail investment.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Freeman: I shall come on to the other points raised by the hon. Gentleman. I will not give way.

I am grateful for the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Southport. He supported the concept of pilot franchises. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport hopes to announce the first tranche of franchises soon. During the course of 1993, that will enable negotiations with those who are interested in running the services. The first franchises cannot be let until there is Royal Assent to the Bill and until Railtrack is established. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support.

The hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell), who is in his place, referred specifically to rolling stock for the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority. I share his concern about that. I have arranged to meet the PTA at an early date to discuss whether the new leasing initiative announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with £150 million of leasing for rolling stock, will apply to the Leeds-Bradford railway. I understand that there are substantive negotiations on rolling stock and it may be appropriate to consider that stock under that facility.

On investment, order books for the past 44 years have reflected the fact that British Rail, being a nationalised industry, can look forward only a relatively short period. One of the great advantages of bringing in the private sector is that the time horizons for investment planning can be greater. That will be a great advantage.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough asked a number of questions. He is a neighbouring Member of Parliament with long experience in transport. He asked about private management bids. I can confirm that British Rail will encourage and finance management buy-out bids. That is right. A price preference will be available when it comes to purchases of freight operations. We want the management of British Rail to play an active part.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough also asked about closure procedures. His argument is exactly right. The public sector will get better value for money for

[Mr. Freeman]

the £1 billion subsidy currently spent if the private sector operates existing railway services more efficiently. That must be right.

I should make it plain that the 12-year time horizon referred to during the debate applies to privatisation on the German model, which marches closely with the British Government's proposals. During this Parliament, we hope to make progress with transferring freight into the private sector and also to make significant progress with franchising. The 12-year time horizon is for the complete privatisation of the railway, as proposed by the Germans.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) talked about channel tunnel freight. I share his view that such freight, which should be running in about 12 months' time, should travel all the way by rail to the north-east and the north-west. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the terminal at Wilton and to the Government's belief that we must look forward into the 21st century for alternative routes around London for the transport of freight beyond London.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Freeman: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me; I have nine minutes left and have yet to deal with some of the points raised by Members on the Opposition Front Bench.

My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden made a number of helpful points. I agree that the Opposition's approach has been extremely negative. We have heard nothing positive from the Opposition Front Bench. Labour Members argue that there is nothing wrong with British railways that a lot more money will not solve. That is the sum total of their argument. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support of the concept of Railtrack. He was right in talking about the Government's new initiative in providing capital grants for investment in infrastructure —the new department announced in the White Paper last summer. Moreover, the Chancellor's autumn statement provides the opportunity for the private sector to play a role in the financing of infrastructure as well as rolling stock.

On the subject of the franchising process, I confirm that we do not rule out the possibility of what we call vertical franchising. In certain cases, it may make a lot of sense for franchisees to control the signalling and the infrastructure —subject, or course, to the freeholding interest of Railtrack. If that makes sense, we are prepared to consider it.

In his short speech, the hon. Member for Meironnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) asked me 15 questions. I shall read the record and reply to all of them. The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to say that, whatever answer I gave, he would not change his mind, but some of his constituents may. The hon. Gentleman asked how the franchising authority would go about subsidising—what the criteria would be. I can confirm that when it comes to the letting of franchises and the holding of competitions, the franchising authority will start with the service provided by British Rail. It will know the cost of the subsidy provided to that line and will be looking for better value for money. If that cannot be obtained, the service will continue to be provided by British Rail. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, the revenue subsidy regime will continue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dartford would go with three peers a-commuting. I look forward to hearing of my hon. Friend's experience with Lords Young, Ridley and Whitelaw on the 8 am from Dartford. Perhaps he will report back to us on that. The Government agree with my hon. Friend's view that private sector franchising will improve accountability. We shall have a leaner management, with shorter lines of reporting and a better service provided.

The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) is not in her place, so I will write to her.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh for his support. In his powerful speech, he drew upon the experience in Sweden, Japan and Germany, all of which helps support our proposals. My hon. Friend is right to talk about the successes of Foster Yeomen and the Royal Scot because those services currently provided by the private sector will expand under our provisions of open access.

In answer to the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley), I shall explain that the safety document published today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recommends consultation on the desirability of imposing controls of drivers' hours. We are prepared to listen to representations not only from the hon. Gentleman but from other people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch raised a number of matters which deserve comment. The Government will publish eight consultation documents. I am sure that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East and the whole House will welcome the consultation process. It is not a dogmatic imposition of policy; it is a dialogue that the Government will conduct with the industry and those who are interested in running services.

We have published four documents—on franchising, the British Transport police, safety and consumer representation—and we shall publish four other documents: on pensions, rolling stock procurement, access and charging, and the structure of the freight industry that will be transferred to the private sector. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch will appreciate, as I know that many of my other hon. and right hon. Friends will appreciate, the open way in which the consultation process will be conducted.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch referred to the role of British Rail in bidding for services. I can confirm that when the franchising authority lets franchises for passenger services it will pay special attention to bids from management and staff. If a bid does not present good value for money, British Rail will continue to provide the service. I hope that that will provide some protection, certainly for the Exchequer, to ensure that the service provided is efficient.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch also referred to leasing and the public sector borrowing requirement. The £150 million is not counted in British Rail's public financing limit and, therefore, represents additional resources provided by the Government to British Rail.

In conclusion, I shall draw on three matters raised by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. I have tried to answer questions raised, rather than resort to cheap exchanges, as typified to a certain extent in the hon. Gentleman's speech. The hon. Gentleman cannot quite

reconcile two different statements that he made. First, he said that private sector operators are not as good as the state.

Mr. Prescott: I did not say that.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman did say that—I wrote it down very carefully. The hon. Gentleman can read the record in the morning. Later in his speech, he said that he was happy for private sector operators to provide public transport services.

The difference between the Labour party and the Conservative party is that we see the private sector working in partnership with the public sector to improve the quality of the rail services. We see the infrastructure being provided initially by the state, Railtrack, and financed by the state with an improvement in the mechanism for financing it. We also see the transfer of freight services to the private sector. All other modes of freight movement in the United Kingdom, whether by ship, air or road, are in the private sector and are not subsidised. There is no reason why rail freight should not be in the same position.

The privatisation of passenger services has the strong support of Conservative Members. To bring in the private sector to run certain passenger services will be a gradual process. The Government will continue to provide a substantial level of subsidy. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is dogmatic, although he charged the Government with being dogmatic. He is not prepared to see any private sector operation of a passenger train. By opposing the Government's proposals, he is against the concept of the private sector operating passenger services. He is also against the transfer of freight to the private sector.

The Government are determined to introduce legislation shortly which will command the overwhelming support of Conservative Members. The reforms in such legislation will provide a service which improves the quality and quantity of passenger services provided by British Rail at present. I commend the Government amendment to my colleagues on the Conservative Benches. I invite the House to throw out the Opposition motion and go, to use the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch, "full steam ahead."

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 270, Noes 309.

Division No. 109] **[9.58 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*

O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Horderm, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*

Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sidney Chapman and Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises that progress has recently been made in improving British Rail's services; believes that further necessary improvements for rail users can best be achieved by creating the opportunity for introducing into the railways private sector ownership, management skills and capital; and therefore supports the Government's proposals as set out in the White Paper, "New Opportunities for the Railways".

Insurance Companies

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): I beg to move,

That the draft Insurance Companies (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 30th November, be approved.

The regulations which I have laid before the House are intended to fulfil our obligation to implement the second Council directive on life insurance, directive 90/619/EEC, of 8 November 1990.

The main purpose of the directive is to allow life insurance companies which have head offices in one member state to operate in another without having to set up a branch or agency in that state. This concept of selling insurance across member states' borders is known as the freedom-to-provide services. This freedom has existed for most non-life insurance for two years and was extended in November last year to companies providing cover for motor insurance risks. The regulations now before the House extend this freedom to life insurance, although not, for the time being at least, to long-term business falling within class VII, that is, pension fund management.

This freedom is, however, of limited effect. Only insurers of large non-life risks and life contracts which are taken out by the policyholder on his own initiative enjoy full freedom to provide services under the second directive. The directives allow the member state where the services are provided to continue to authorise the provision of other insurance into that member state. The Government did not take up this option in respect of non-life insurance provided into the United Kingdom, and do not propose doing so for life insurance. Thus we will continue to allow freedom to provide services into the United Kingdom.

The directive represents a midway stage between the first life directive, which in 1979 allowed life insurers for the first time to establish branches in other member states, and the third directives which were adopted last year and which complete the single market for insurance by introducing the single passport concept for all direct insurance. This single passport will mean that an insurer will be able to offer insurance anywhere in the European Community on the basis of a single authorisation which it receives in the state where its head office is situated. These third directives are due to be implemented by July 1994. I shall be laying measures later this year to implement the third directives. Tonight, however, we have to consider the implementation of the midway stage of the second life directive.

The directive is in two main parts. First, it amends and extends the first life directive by introducing provisions in four areas: first, rules governing the law applicable to direct life insurance contracts; secondly, procedures for the transfer of life insurance contracts from one insurer to another; thirdly, an extension of the supervisory authority's powers to take action against an insurer which infringes the laws of another member state; and, fourthly, the establishment of reserve powers to enable member states to act together to obtain effective access to non-EC markets.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Can the Minister give an assurance that he is satisfied as to the measures of protection for individual policyholders contained in the regulations?

Mr. Hamilton: As regards contracts which are written in the United Kingdom, there is no change in the protection that applies to policyholders. As regards United Kingdom residents who wish to take advantage of the opportunity to purchase contracts of insurance from other member states in the Community, they will be protected by such arrangements as are in force for those member states.

I reiterate that this is a halfway stage between the first and third directives. We are not going to be in a situation where there is complete freedom to provide services throughout the Community which we shall eventually enjoy, and to that extent the need to be authorised as an insurer in other member states will, to some extent, I suppose, provide the kind of protection which the hon. Gentleman might be envisaging.

Secondly, the directive introduces freedom for life insurers to provide services. The provisions include a requirement on the insurer to notify the supervisory authorities in the member state where his head office is situated of his intention to provide services in another state, to notify the authorities in the state where the services are to be provided, and, where the insurance is to be provided from a branch established in another member state, to notify the authorities of that state also.

The option to which I referred for member states to choose to make the provision of services in their territory conditional on the grant of an official authorisation from their authorities except where the policyholder takes the initiative to conclude a contract on a cross-border services basis includes also a power for the competent authorities in the member state where the services are provided to take action against companies which fail to comply with the laws applicable to them in that state, and if the authorities in the member state where that establishment is situated fail to do so it also provides for cooling-off rights for all individual life assurance policyholders contracting on a cross-border services basis, and the exchange of statistics on premium income receivable from services contracts.

I have placed in the Library and in the Vote Office detailed notes on the regulations. I hope that hon. Members will find those helpful to their understanding of their effect. I shall explain briefly how each regulation implements those principles, but I shall be happy to explain any point should hon. Members find that helpful.

Regulations 2 and 4 extend to long-term insurance business existing provisions in the Insurance Companies Act 1982 which were introduced by earlier regulations in respect of general insurance business. Regulation 2 extends the Secretary of State's powers of intervention, powers to withdraw a company's authorisation and powers to petition for the winding up of a company where that company has failed to comply with the laws of another member state if those laws implement the first or second life directives.

Regulation 4 extends the provisions relating to the provision of life insurance into the United Kingdom from another member state and thus fulfils one of the key purposes of the directive. Regulation 6 provides interpretation for certain phrases used in the Insurance Companies Act 1982, as amended by these regulations.

Regulation 3 implements article 6 of the directive, which lays down detailed arrangments for consultation with the authorities in other member states before approval can be given to a transfer of long-term insurance business from one authorised insurer to another. It also requires the authorities in the member state where the head office of the transferee company is situated to certify that the transferee will have the necessary margin of solvency after taking the transfer into account.

Regulations 5 and 9 implement the provisions of the directive which determine the law applicable to direct life insurance contracts. Regulation 5 amends the Insurance Companies Act by introducing the rules of article 4 of the directive and the Rome convention. Regulation 9 clarifies the relationship between article 4 and the Rome convention on the law applicable to contractual obligations.

Regulation 7 limits the notification requirements on EC insurers providing insurance into the United Kingdom, if that insurance is investment business within the definition in the Financial Services Act 1986. The FSA requires such insurers to notify the Securities and Investments Board of its intention to provide such services into the United Kingdom. However, all EC insurers providing any sort of life insurance services into the United Kingdom are required by the Insurance Companies Act to notify the Secretary of State. That regulation allows such insurers to be deemed to have complied with the FSA by submitting a single notification to the Secretary of State, who will in turn forward such notification to the SIB.

Regulation 8 completes the implementation of article 9 of the directive and article 4 of the motor services directive, which is directive 90/618/EEC, which for the most part were implemented by the Insurance Companies (Amendment) Regulations 1992, in the consideration of which I had the advantage of the presence of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) on 19 November last year.

That regulation ensures that the Secretary of State's or the Treasury's powers to take action under section 183 of the Financial Services Act against an insurer which is connected with a non-EEC country cannot be exercised in situations where the Council or Commission may issue a direction under the directives. In the view of the Government, the powers of the Council and Commission are exclusive. A similar provision in respect of banking was made last month in the Banking Co-ordination (Second Council Directive) Regulations 1992.

Regulations 10 and 11 introduce a statistical requirement on life insurers to provide details of premium income receivable from their services business broken down into each class of business in each member state in which the services have been provided. Regulation 11 limits the provision of statistics to cover only that business provided from the time the regulations come into force —that is, after 20 May this year—thus ensuring that the requirement is not retrospective.

The schedule to the regulations provides the form in which this information should be supplied.

These regulations do not implement the cooling-off provisions of article 15, to which I referred earlier. This article was amended by article 30 of the third life directive, which was adopted on 10 November last year. I intend, in due course—shortly, I hope—to lay separate regulations to implement the cancellation provisions of both directives. These regulations would come into force on the same day—20 May—as the regulations we are discussing now.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): This means that we shall end up with two different cooling-off periods

—one, of 10 days, for policies within the Community, and another, of 14 days, for those involving countries outside. Does the Minister agree that this will be rather confusing?

Mr. Hamilton: I admit that it is less than satisfactory. As the Church of England might say, it falls short of the ideal. The difficulty is caused by the problem of vires under European Community legislation, inasmuch as we can implement by order the provisions of the directive only insofar as it is required to fulfil the purposes of the directive with regard to the provision of services entirely within the European Community. As regards third countries, it is not possible for us to include provisions to harmonise the legislation by order. We should have to introduce primary legislation to do that.

In view of the fact that the regime under these directives will subsist for only a relatively short period—12 months or so—it does not seem to us to pose too great a risk, although I have to admit that if we had had a completely free hand in the matter we might have acted differently. However, I see no prospect of our being able to implement a common regime by means of primary legislation in the meantime. As the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) knows, we have much pressing business to do in the remainder of this Session.

The Government attach high priority to the completion of the single market in insurance. The second directive and the regulations that we are discussing tonight represent a small but useful step. I therefore look forward to bringing before the House later this year regulations to implement the third directives, which, as I have said, will grant the single passport to European Community insurers and make the single market a reality.

On that basis, I commend the regulations to the House.

10.27 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I am grateful to the Minister for taking us through the regulations and explaining the great entanglements involved in dealing with European Communities legislation. We can see that our signing the Single European Act, with the single market coming into force on 1 January, permeates all the legislation that goes through this House and produces entanglements such as the Minister has described. We have here a clear example. The regulations with which we are dealing impinge upon and modify the Insurance Companies Act 1982, the Financial Services Act 1986, the Insurance Companies (Amendment) Regulations 1992—not to mention the Contracts (Applicable Law) Act 1990.

Today I have noticed a curious paradox. On one hand, the Prime Minister called for more deregulation, whereas later in the day we are debating more, rather than less, regulation. While the Government consistently call for more deregulation, anyone in the business of protecting the consumer—it is the duty of the Department of Trade and Industry to supervise the insurance industry—must look for regulations such as we are debating tonight.

Regulation or not, it can hardly be said that the Government have been particularly successful in maintaining the pre-eminence of our insurance industry as an international leader at the heart of the European Communities. In 1990 the insurance sector's net foreign earnings were £2·2 billion—below its 1983 level, and well short of the peak of £4·9 billion attained in 1986. An analysis of London's actual share of international insurance business suggests a decline from 50 per cent. in 1976 to 25 per cent. now. Specialist insurance, a field in which London was formerly an international leader, has also registered a decline. In total, funds such as pension and life assurance under portfolio management in the United Kingdom fell some way short of the equivalent totals managed in Tokyo and New York.

The insurance industry has not provided a reassuring face for the British public. Throughout the country there is genuine concern about increased premiums and the sheer inability to get insurance cover. I—and, I am sure, many hon. Members—have constituents who cannot get insurance cover for items such as rented flats, youth clubs and community centres or even for businesses whose leases are running out and will not be renewed because of the absence of insurance cover.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): The hon. Gentleman is aware of my interest as a member of Lloyd's. One of the reasons for British insurance not being so successful as it should is that the tax regimes of successive Governments have made it impossible for British insurance companies and, indeed, Lloyd's to build up adequate reserves in the way that all our overseas insurance competitors have done. Will the Opposition support tax measures which will make such reserves possible?

Mr. Bell: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's interest in Lloyd's and in insurance in general. One of the side issues of the directive will be taxation and whether there should be support for the view that policyholders' funds relating to services business written by United Kingdom insurers should not be taxed as they build up, so that United Kingdom insurers can compete on an equal footing with insurers in other countries. The debate has consequences for taxation. I shall deal with the matter of Lloyd's later in my speech.

The uncertainty and insecurity that the Governments of the noble Lady Thatcher liked to strew around the country as her own particular stardust have now affected the insurance industry—those who are insured and those who do the insuring. Equally important is the effect on those who invest their lives in their work for insurance companies. Local authorities encountered difficulties following the sudden withdrawal from the insurance market of MMI. Those difficulties have been lessened by its acquisition by the Zurich Insurance Company and by the hiving off of other assets of MMI. Those difficulties arose because MMI diversified into property, finance and computing and moved from its traditional base of insuring local authorities.

Local authorities throughout the country must have adequate insurance cover at reasonable premiums to avoid additional charges upon their council tax payers—especially at this time of Government-induced stringency. With the threat of council tax capping hanging over them, reasonable premiums are even more important. I am grateful to the Minister for his courtesy to me and my hon. Friends when we met him to discuss the future of MMI and the uncertainties faced by its staff. We are hopeful that the Zurich Insurance Company will understand that its future success will be founded on the kind of co-operation between management and workers that existed at MMI.

Insurance companies throughout Europe which will be covered by the directive employ nearly 790,000 people. Life assurance accounts for about 44 per cent. of premiums. We should all encourage that industry.

[Mr. Bell]

In this country, the Confederation of Insurance Trade Unions alone represents more than 100,000 insurance staff.

It is ironic that the Government use the cloak of European Council directives to amend our internal legislation, notably the Lloyd's Act 1982 and the Insurance Companies Act 1982. That means that the Secretary of State, in accordance with regulation 2 of the order to which the Minister referred, now has powers of intervention over Lloyd's underwriters when they fail to satisfy obligations laid down in Community legislation.

It is a significant turn of events whereby the House is called upon to modify domestic legislation through the instigation of a European directive rather than a Bill through the House, especially on such an important matter as Lloyd's underwriters. The Minister was honest enough to say that the kind of primary legislation that we would need to put the various Community directives into order is not likely to happen, due to pressure on time. Therefore, we welcome this short debate tonight which allows us to air some of the matters that we have wanted to debate which otherwise would be excluded.

We have seen the untoward publicity that Lloyd's of London has received of late, the allegations of widespread insider dealing, financial mismanagement, the steps that Lloyd's has taken to put its house in order, the appointment of a new chief executive and chairman—both of whom I wish well in their work—the actions of the so-called burnt names and the difficulties with certain syndicates. We are looking closely at the question of self-regulation and statutory regulation. We are even considering in the long term whether the Lloyd's Act should be repealed.

On the complex question of taxation that the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) raised, while the Opposition closely scrutinise the regulation of Lloyd's, we are anxious to ensure that the Lloyd's market is successful not only in the City of London but within the framework of the EC and on the global stage.

The regulations touch on solvency margins. Will the Secretary of State tell the House what the solvency margins referred to in the directive and the regulations are? What is the excess of assets over liabilities within the EC? Is the minimum margin permitted approximately 17 per cent. of premiums, but is the benchmark throughout Europe the 30 per cent. margin that the Department of Trade and Industry thinks is the more appropriate margin?

We can also see from the regulations that there has to be full reciprocity throughout the Community in that regulation 8 precludes the issue of a notice in relation to a subsidiary insurance company where the only ground for the issue is the failure of a third country to allow insurance companies in the United Kingdom to carry on direct insurance business on an equal basis.

Regulation 8 also highlights the intertwining of insurance business throughout the European Community, which the Minister mentioned when he referred to the variety of regulations that we shall have to debate and discuss. We can also see the application of private international law in the regulations—that is to say, a court in this country looking into another's jurisdiction and satisfying itself that specified conditions in that member state are met.

We see, too, that under Community legislation not only must the Secretary of State satisfy himself as to the obligations of an insurance company under our own United Kingdom law, but he may also act to satisfy an obligation under the law of another member state. The Chinese walls between member states become ever thinner in what is clearly a drive to harmonisation and, it is hoped, consumer protection.

We see under regulation 10 how the Department of Trade and Industry maintains its supervisory status—its watchdog status—by requiring establishments to prepare additional information to be submitted to the Secretary of State in respect of operations, namely, in the case of gross premiums.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) referred to the cooling-off period. As I understand it, the regulations introduce a mandatory cooling-off period of between 14 and 30 days for all cross-border business, and that is extended to establishment business by the life framework directive. As the Minister has said, it is proposed to implement those provisions at the same time by insurance companies' cancellation regulations and he issued a consultation document last year. There may be some anomalies and paradoxes, but the 14 to 30-day cooling off period will be of assistance to those who wish to take out insurance in another country in accordance with the framework of the directive.

The Minister referred to a Committee sitting which took place on 19 November. Over a period, the Committee has observed the way in which EC financial directives are affecting the City's relation to Europe—and the insurance industry is at the centre of the City. Opposition Members believe that, while the City may be a leading player in the world financial markets, it is no longer the sole leading player.

We consider the City to be a leading financial centre, which will be working within the Single European Act—under a variety of directives, such as the one that we are debating tonight—to ensure that the single market includes a basic harmonisation of the rules and operations of financial intermediaries and markets. Our party will look carefully at the way in which we handle regulation in the City. We shall consider whether that regulation should be self-induced or independently induced; and whether there should be statutory regulation, along the lines of the Securities and Exchange Commission, or whether there is another form of regulation in harmony with the European legislation and directives that we can enact. We shall also consider the fact that we have two life investor protection statutes and two prudential supervisors for the life assurance industry.

The strategy that we shall work out will be one which links the City to Europe through directives such as this, and which links the City to industry. It will ensure that insurance industries are able to satisfy the home market with appropriate premiums at reasonable rates, which are within the reach of those who wish to insure, while at the same time playing a full part in that sector of the globalised economy which is Europe.

The insurance industry is a massive employer: some 490,000 people are employed in it throughout Europe. It is a creator of work, which we should encourage as we will encourage the City of London as a whole, but we should do that within a framework which not only protects the

consumer and those who work in the industry, but gives the City a reputation for health, wealth and encouraging people throughout the country.

10.41 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): People in the insurance industry have told me how much they appreciate the co-operation that has been shown by the Department of Trade and Industry—not only in regard to the specific issues in the regulations, but in regard to their representations to the Treasury about taxation. Although this is only an interim measure, it will assist greatly in the completion of the single market, which is so important to the UK insurance industry.

One or two matters, however, present problems. One, which was mentioned by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), is the difference in the cooling-off period. As I understand it, the difference will arise in respect of policies provided by UK insurers for non-EC policyholders and the UK branches of non-EC insurers for UK policyholders. Those are the policies for which primary legislation would be required and which at present involve the anomaly of a 10-day cooling-off period rather than the 14-day period that is proposed.

In his reply to the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, my hon. Friend the Minister suggested that the anomaly would disappear in a year's time—presumably when the life framework directive comes into force in July 1994. It would be helpful if he could confirm that that is so and tell us under what mechanism UK statute law will be changed through implementation of that directive.

Another matter that is still giving rise to concern is a new one concerning taxation. There has been no problem with the overseas branches of UK insurers being able to conduct business on the same footing as companies in the countries concerned. The problem is that the directive will permit United Kingdom life offices to sell direct to people who are resident in other EC countries. As I understand our present tax system, those policies would be subject to the principle of United Kingdom taxation, whereby the policyholder's funds are taxed as they build up. United Kingdom insurers selling across border would therefore be at a competitive disadvantage with other EC insurers who may be selling domestically or across borders. I am sure that that is not what the Government intend. Has my hon. Friend the Minister made representations to the Treasury on that matter and can we look forward to the Government addressing the problem?

I repeat my welcome for this measure and for the constructive approach of the Department to the problems.

10.45 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Although the regulation is, as the Minister said, a temporary measure, it is nevertheless important for the workings of an important industry that is a major employer, especially outside London. One thinks of cities such as Norwich, Bristol and Edinburgh, where the insurance industry is a major employer. The Minister has the headquarters of Refuge, which is an important employer around the country, on the edge of his constituency. It is doubly important, therefore, that we ensure that the regulations are as accurate and satisfactory as possible.

I mentioned the cooling-off period, about which questions were well put by the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill), so I shall not add to what I said.

Mention has been made of the tax implications of the regulations and the belief of British insurance companies that they will be at a competitive disadvantage in trying to attract business from customers in the face of competition from businesses based elsewhere in Europe whose taxation system does not operate in the same way as ours but treats earnings on a basis that allows the expenses of getting the business to be reckoned against income at the beginning and which pays more regard to the way in which income arises and the investment that follows insurance business. The Government contend that other aspects of company taxation in Britain may help to compensate for that, but the significant difference in the way in which insurance operations are taxed will have to be taken into account.

Another factor that will loom large if we ever have a single currency will be divergence and fluctuation in the United Kingdom exchange rate in relation to other European countries. This is an uncomfortable matter for the Minister, who, when he pointed to the existence of legislation that is filling our parliamentary timetable, could not mention his own traditional hostility to much of that legislation now that he has to vote for it. People taking out insurance policies in the future will have to have regard to exchange rate fluctuations and will have to make calculations about what they think will happen to their stream of income from, for example, a policy in retirement if they do not know what the relative strength of the currencies will be and if those currencies are not pegged together. Most parts of business and industry are well aware of the importance of a single currency to a single market, not least in financial services.

There is another area where the implementation of this regulation will present new problems for the insurance industry that are not so much of the Government's making but more of the industry's making. British companies will have to compete in a market that is not so dominated by tying as has latterly become the practice in the British insurance industry. It has suited large parts of the British industry and most of the large financial institutions to develop tying arrangements under which the decision to take out a mortgage commits the subsequent decision about which company will be used for endowment insurance policies or other insurance policies. That is not the pattern throughout Europe, where insurance brokers play a large role in a number of countries. The British insurance industry may have to look once again to its traditional ways of seeking business when it cannot rely on such tying arrangements.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) mentioned some of the problems faced by customers who find gaps in insurance provision which may lead them to look to overseas companies. I constantly come across such problems, but the other day I heard of a new one. Someone in my constituency was seeking to let his home, but found that his existing building society and insurer would not accept his current insurance for any tenant whose rent was paid by the Department of Social Security. He applied to other insurance companies and found that they too would not accept insurance for property if the tenant's rent was paid by the DSS. That is another restraint on the provision of rented housing for those who need it, but in this case one arising from the insurance industry.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I am surprised by what the right hon. Gentleman said about insurance, tenants and the DSS. Is he convinced that it is legal to prevent DSS tenants from renting a house in such circumstances?

Mr. Beith: I do not think that it could possibly be illegal. An insurance company is merely placing conditions on the letting of a property on which there is a mortgage. Many different conditions can be imposed, including the approval of a tenancy. If it becomes a blanket condition that no one whose rent is paid by the DSS can be a tenant, it will be extremely damaging although not illegal. It would be a severe restraint and something would have to be done about it.

The example that I gave is another reason why there should be more competition in the insurance market. British consumers should have the opportunity to compare British products with those of other countries and I want our insurance companies to operate successfully and obtain business in the rest of Europe, thereby bringing employment to this country.

10.52 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): I suspect that this is an issue on which there is much agreement across the House. I also welcome the regulations in principle, but I have two concerns one of which has been mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill). One is a minor concern and the other major, and I should be grateful if the Minister could reassure me on both of them.

My minor concern is that the Minister explained that under the directive member states will be granted the option of insisting that all life contracts which are not sold as a result of the initiative of the assured remain subject to authorisation and that we had decided not to take advantage of that option although it existed. The assumption is that others will take advantage of it. Clearly there is a lack of reciprocity inherent in such a situation. At first sight, it seems to go against the purpose of a single market. I should be grateful for the Minister's assurance that, in practice, it is not a basis on which the export channel from this country will be constricted whereas the import channel will not.

My major concern involves tax but is not the point mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor). He spoke about the different tax treatment of insurance provisioning here and in other Community countries. It is a very important point, with which I agree. My major concern, however, is the one mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West.

In this country, the tradition has always been that life insurance funds are subject to tax as they accumulate and not subject to tax in the hands of the beneficiary when payment is finally made to him. On the continent, the reverse generally applies. The funds roll up free of tax—they are, in effect, gross funds, like pension funds in this country—and the beneficiary is taxed when he receives payment. It follows that if in this country a fund is subject to tax as it builds up, and if the beneficiary is the resident of another Community state, he will be charged by his own tax authorities in the country in which he is resident tax on the amounts accruing from the policy when he receives it, and he gets the worst of all possible worlds.

It seems at first sight—and, I fear, probably at second and third sight as well—that, if that is the case, the tax handicap carried by life insurance policies written in this country will be such that no sane man or woman on the continent will purchase one. It must be blindingly obvious to the whole House that all the tremendous bureaucratic and ministerial effort—I am sure that it was very gallant and talented effort—that went into the negotiation and drafting of the directive will have been completely wasted in terms of the interests of this country or of our insurance industry if such a tax handicap is carried by any policies written in this country as we enter the single market in life insurance.

I know that it will be possible for life insurance companies based in this country to sell policies through their subsidiaries in other Community countries and that they will thereby be able to escape from that tax charge. However, the whole purpose of the directive was supposedly to make progress on the regime we have had since 1979 under which it has been possible for British life insurance companies to set up subsidiaries in the Community and to sell life insurance policies from there. My point is fundamental to the utility for this country in practice of the new arrangements that are represented by the directive. I look forward with great interest to what the Minister will say. I am sure that my hon. Friend will say that any remedy to the problem that——

Mr. Corbyn: He is not listening.

Mr. Davies: He probably knows the answer already and we shall get it in due time.

Mr. Corbyn: He is not listening.

Mr. Davies: So that the hon. Gentleman——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We cannot have a sub-conversation going on.

Mr. Davies: So that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) can fully appreciate the weightiness of the ministerial answer when he hears it, it may be a good idea for me to establish the essential question with which my hon. Friend will deal.

Mr. Corbyn: I was only trying to assist, Madam Deputy Speaker, and to ensure that the Minister understood the question. I had the distinct impression that the Minister was not giving the slightest attention to the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies).

Mr. Davies: The Minister has no doubt grasped my point, and I am sure that we shall hear an answer. I hope that it will be a reassuring answer because much of the industrial interest in the directive turns on the question of tax.

I also share the concerns of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) about the prospects of a single currency emerging in the European Community in terms of our ability to exploit the single market in financial services. We could argue all night—we may do so tomorrow—about the merits of a single currency or about the prospects of such a phenomenon arising. If it does come about by the end of the century or in any other timetable that a large part of the continent adopts a single currency, that will create a major problem for any British

insurance company that seeks to sell life insurance products or other financial services, such as unit trusts, on the continent.

A life insurance policy is something that people will always want to buy denominated in their own currencies. It is a fundamental asset for any individual who holds it. No one would seriously wish to incur a foreign exchange risk for such a fundamental asset. It follows that if one wants to sell a life insurance policy in France or in Germany and those countries have at the time a single currency, one will have to offer a live insurance policy denominated in that currency. To be able to do that, one will have to invest the premiums in assets largely denominated in that currency.

That means that people will not be able to cross-sell the products that they have in this country in the single market. There will have to be different products managed, packaged and marketed in different ways. They will be very different products. Therefore, in the single market, British life insurance companies will not be able to benefit from their very good management record by citing the returns that they have been able to make for their clients and beneficiaries over the years. They will not be able to point to what a particular policy has done over the past 20 or 25 years. Rationally or not, life insurance products have to be sold on historic record and our companies will not be able to use that record because it will relate to a sterling product.

One of the fundamental premises on the basis of which we entered the single market was that there are some sectors in which we in Britain have an inherent competitive advantage, and many of us for a long time believed that financial services, insurance products and life insurance were among those sectors. That will not be the case, however, if a single currency emerges in the single market and we are not part of it.

11 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I have no wish to detain the House at this late hour, but there are so few opportunities for us to speak on the insurance industry that I felt it appropriate to make one or two comments. Essentially, my comments are directed at the Minister, because I want to give him some encouragement. My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) is absolutely right and, like him, I want to place on record the fact that the Minister's efforts on behalf of the United Kingdom insurance industry are much appreciated.

Although, as the Minister said, the directive is an important, if small, step on the road towards the single market, we should not delude ourselves into thinking that the single market—particularly in the life assurance sector—will mushroom overnight. A great deal of effort will be required on the part of United Kingdom life assurers and life insurance companies if they are to exploit that market and I suspect that it will be five to 10 years before we see much development of it.

There are clear cultural and structural differences between the insurance industry in the United Kingdom and that on the continent, although I often speak on behalf of the all-party group—which, as the Minister knows, is blossoming at the moment—and I hear encouraging noises to the effect that the markets in Spain and Italy look particularly attractive.

Will the Minister please give our life assurers every possible encouragement to be innovative, flexible and entrepreneurial? The market creates an opportunity for us to expand into the European dimension in a sector in which Britain has great traditions, great expertise and a great deal to offer. I sense, however, that those who work in the industry sometimes need a little encouragement to put their entrepreneurial hat on and be as innovative as their forebears were 100 or 200 years ago, when the United Kingdom life assurance industry and the great mutual funds—I shall not advertise by mentioning any of them, but I think that the House will know those to which I refer—were born. The industry has provided a great service to United Kingdom policyholders and can provide a similar service to policyholders on the continent.

When the Minister is persuaded to try to argue with the Treasury that we want a level playing field as regards tax—I entirely endorse and agree with what has been said—he should remind the life assurers that, on premium rates, we have an enormous competitive advantage which makes some of the tax problems shrink into insignificance.

That brings me to my third point. One of the reasons why the United Kingdom has such a competitive industry is that we have a strong independent intermediary sector. It is that sector that has provided the competitive market in life assurance in the United Kingdom which will provide the springboard for a competitive market in Europe and every prospect for United Kingdom life assurers to take advantage of the single market.

There is one caveat, however. We must ensure that in the next year or 18 months we get right the United Kingdom regulatory framework for insurance intermediaries, whether in the financial services sector or in the general insurance sector. I am sure that hon. Members will not need much imagination to recognise that there would have been considerable difficulty in and damage to the United Kingdom insurance industry if the Financial Services Act 1986—often much maligned—which brought to the surface a number of scandals and the fraudulent behaviour of disreputable firms, had involved European policyholders and not just those in the United Kingdom. I want us to look to the longer term, the next five, seven or 10 years, and recognise that we will be able to launch ourselves confidently in Europe and secure a much bigger market for the United Kingdom insurance industry if we get our regulatory framework right and ensure that those who work in the industry are properly regulated and are, above all, fit and proper to be in the industry.

11.6 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I am grateful to all hon. Members, on both sides of the House, for their helpful speeches on the regulations. As I said earlier, the second life directive represents a small but useful step towards completion of a single market in insurance. The directive is a small step for the United Kingdom because we already have a more open market than that provided by it. Of course, the directive represents a bigger step for other member states.

The directive is useful because it established the principle of single-country supervision for certain insurance contracts—those entered into by the policy holder on his own initiative. The principle of single-country supervision became the foundation stone for the much more significant third directive which was agreed last year.

[Mr. Neil Hamilton]

I have no difficulty whatever in agreeing with the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and my hon. Friends the Members for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) and for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) and others who lauded the achievements of the British insurance industry. As a result of the flexibility which we have traditionally exhibited, the British insurance industry stands to gain considerably from the increased freedom which will come from the implementation of the third directive next year.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hamilton: I am sorry if I omitted the hon. Gentleman from my litany of financial experts.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister comment on the matter raised by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) about insurance companies refusing to allow Department of Social Security claimants to become tenants in houses in which they have an insurance interest? Is the Minister aware that the hon. Members for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) and for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) have declared interests, one in the insurance industry and the other as a merchant banker? Clearly they were speaking on behalf of those interests in the general sense of the industry.

Mr. Hamilton: I know that the hon. Gentleman thinks that it is a considerable disadvantage to know what one is talking about when one speaks in a debate. However, we could not accuse him of that when he speaks on such complex matters, so I acquit him of any knowledge or understanding as a result of experience. I hope that he is pleased by the accolade which I have just given him.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hamilton: I have made one mistake, and that should probably be sufficient. I will respond to the matter raised by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as I will attempt to deal with all of the matters raised by hon. Members in the debate.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) brings great expertise to our debates. I welcome him to the Opposition Front Bench because it is worth listening to him. He raised a number of matters which were referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) and others, and I hope to respond to them.

I shall start with the matter of taxation. I know that representations have been made by the industry and others about the different approach to taxation which has been adopted in respect of the insurance industry in the United Kingdom. It is always possible to pick out the tax advantages and disadvantages in the various member states of the Community. To believe that we will ever harmonise the tax regimes of the different Community member states so that there is no difference between the tax systems is fantasy. However, the Government have said that they will consider action if clear evidence shows that United Kingdom insurers are worse off, overall, than their EC counterparts. In particular, we must consider the lower tax rates in the United Kingdom.

I do not know how many of my hon. Friends or how many Opposition Members noticed my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer lurking behind the Chair at the beginning of the debate. He is enjoying a period of purdah in the Chamber. I am therefore limited in what I can say as I cannot anticipate his Budget. However, the competitive position of United Kingdom insurers as opposed to those in the rest of the European Community is currently being examined.

Hon. Members may have no doubt that the Department of Trade and Industry sees it as its role to be the advocate for British industry and commerce and, if arguments are put to us that are relevant to the policies of other Departments, we will ensure that they receive a fair hearing.

Mr. Bell: In response to a point raised by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), the Minister referred to the number of directives that are required. One of the difficulties of the Minister and of the House is the division of responsibility between the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry. However, as the DTI has a supervisory role over insurance, we would welcome confirmation from the Minister that there will be the closest co-operation between the two Departments.

Mr. Hamilton: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Government are indivisible. We are indistinguishable from one another in all respects and wholly united on all policies at any one time. I confirm that the position is as the hon. Member for Middlesbrough would hope it to be. I guarantee that the representations that he and other hon. Members have made in respect of complex taxation issues will certainly be considered very carefully.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to the Minister for responding to me, but I now have a longer intervention to make on two points. The first point relates to the comments made by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed after my reflections and the second to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) about those who rent premises or apartments for which the Department of Social Security is paying board and lodging.

In respect of the second point, insurance companies are now refusing to insure landlords in respect of such properties. As a result, landlords are reluctant to rent property to those individuals. It is not a question of it being illegal to rent the property. However, landlords will be worried if there is no proper insurance on such flats. That is a cause for concern on the Opposition Benches, and that point must be examined.

Will the Minister also note the intervention of the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), who made a significant contribution in respect of regulation? We have certain views about regulation. In respect of the City and the industry, it is a matter of "physician heal thyself." The industry must note the comments made in this place and elsewhere about the need for clear regulation which works in relation to those who insure with insurance companies and which gives confidence to the outside world. I should like the Minister to address those specific points.

Mr. Hamilton: On the latter point, as the deregulation Minister I am well aware of the costs that can be imposed by laws that we pass which are not clear or effective in achieving the objectives that we set when we draft legislation. I assure the hon. Member for Middlesbrough that we attach considerable importance to that matter.

With regard to the alleged lack of insurance cover for properties in multiple occupation, it is not simply a question of DSS claimants. As my correspondence with hon. Members shows, the problem can also be found in other areas.

This is first and foremost a commercial matter for the companies. My principal responsibility as the insurance regulator is to protect the interests of policyholders. I have to ensure that insurance companies manage their business in such a way as to satisfy the prudential requirements of the insurance companies legislation. It would be quite wrong for us to seek to lean upon companies in the carrying out of their day-to-day commercial business to try to slant things in favour of one class of policyholder rather than another, particularly if the consequence of that were to be to expose them to an excessive risk, which would be paid for by other policyholders. I am not in a position to second-guess insurance companies in this respect.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough and others will know from their correspondence with me on this and similar topics that it is not the case that no cover whatever can be obtained in the market, although I admit that fewer and fewer companies are prepared to take the risk which they believe to be associated with that kind of occupation. It is not a question of discriminating against people because they happen to be social security claimants; it is just that a multiple occupation property presents higher risks for insurance companies. There is an increased risk of fire and various other characteristics which make it a less acceptable risk for the companies. Consequently, if insurance can be obtained, inevitably the premiums will reflect that risk.

It would be wrong for the Government, in my view, to seek to intervene in the commercial contracts of insurance companies in that way. If we do it for one class of insurer, we have to do it for all classes, and in that way madness lies.

Mr. Beith: I remind the Minister that this problem is not confined to multi-occupation. In the case that I mentioned to him, it was a straightforward letting of a single house to a single family, and it seems a little odd to the outside world that those people whose rents the Government are paying can be regarded by the industry as a bad risk.

Mr. Hamilton: It is a mistake for the hon. Gentleman to say that the industry regards it as a bad risk, because the industry does not speak with a common voice. There is competition in the insurance market; insurance is a highly competitive business. I believe that if, through the intermediaries about which my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) spoke so eloquently, as he always does—he knows what he is talking about, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman appreciates—the cover can be obtained.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough asked me some technical questions. I shall have to crave his indulgence, if he will excuse me for using such an elitist and gentlemanly term in respect of him, and carry on to deal with some more serious points which he and others have raised in the debate.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough raised some questions, to which the answers are complex, about solvency margins. I know that this is an issue which has excited some interest and comment in recent months. I have seen criticism of both the slimness of the minimum margin for general business and the inability of the factors included in the margin calculation to reflect all the risks to which an insurance company is exposed. Supervisors generally expect companies to maintain a margin of at least double the minimum and to examine a wide range of other parameters—for example, type of business, profitability, the level of reserving, quality of management and systems—in forming their view on the financial strength of companies. So, important as the solvency margin is, it is not the whole story.

The answer to the specific questions which the hon. Gentleman asked me is contained in the first life directive, in articles 18 to 20. It would probably confuse the House as much as I am confused myself if I were to go into too much detail on that, but he will find all the details on the questions which he asked in those articles. If he still has some specific doubts or questions that he wishes me to answer, I will of course be more than willing to put on record, by means of a written reply, the facts that he requires. I answered a question from his hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase), which said precisely what I have just said about the statutory minimum solvency margin insofar as there are Community obligations stemming from the first insurance directives in respect of non-life insurance, 1973, and of life insurance, 1979.

The Commissioners have undertaken to review and report on the need for further harmonisation of the solvency margin by July 1997 at the latest, so these are matters which will be under active consideration and the hon. Gentleman will be able to contribute to the debate on that. I would welcome his active co-operation. We will certainly bear in mind the implications of the questions that the hon. Gentleman raised.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the situation as regards Municipal Mutual Insurance. I was grateful for the opportunity to meet him, his hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), representatives of MSF and others who were concerend about the employment implications of the unfortunate events surrounding MMI. I share with him the joy at what appears to be in prospect, the rescue of MMI by Zurich Insurance, and, although contracts have not yet been signed, we very much hope that all the loose ends will shortly be tied up. I bore in mind very much the arguments that the hon. Member raised with me in the Department, and although, as I indicated then and earlier in the course of this speech, my principal concern must be the interests of policyholders, as I am a prudential supervisor in respect of them, I do not depreciate the importance of the employment-related issues that he has raised, and I will certainly draw attention once more to the points that he has made in this debate to the Zurich Insurance Company.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman appreciates the difficulty that the DTI always encounters in circumstances such as those surrounding MMI, whether to use our powers to cease to authorise business or to put it into run-off, effectively to reduce the value of the assets of the company; and there are circumstances in which immediate action is required in the interests of policyholders. In other circumstances, if one can preserve the company in being as a going concern, the assets that can be realised in the interests of the policyholders can be augmented and therefore the interests of policyholders can be advanced. Happily, this is one of the cases in which there appears to

[Mr. Hamilton]

be such a consequence, and that is to be applauded. I hope that as a result the solvency of MMI, in effect, will be restored.

We have had a wide-ranging debate which in some respects has gone beyond the details of the regulations, but that is no bad thing. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale pointed out, there are few opportunities for us to exhibit a serious interest in debating insurance matters, and I am glad to have had this opportunity of doing so. The Government attach considerable importance to a successful insurance industry in this country. I pay tribute to the ability of our insurance industry to compete successfully in the world and, in particular, in the single market in insurance which will shortly be upon us. I am sure that the flexibility which the relatively free market that we in this country have traditionally enjoyed will be rewarded by an increasing share of European business.

I take, in particular, the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding about reciprocity in the authorisation of business within the Community. He asked me whether it was not an unlevel playing field, that we did not propose to authorise or require authorisation for business sold into this country from other member States of the Community, and whether it would be reciprocated elsewhere.

So far as I am aware, only the Netherlands intends, like us, not to require the authorisation of business sold into its own country. We do not yet know for certain what is to happen with other member states, and the hon. Gentleman will know that the second directive is a temporary state of affairs. It will not be in force for very long before the third directive supervenes and takes over, after which there will be no need for authorisation for the inward sale of business. So I suppose it is true to some extent that in all probability we shall have a more liberal regime than some of our Community partners, but I do not think that we should regard that as a weakness. Ultimately, as the experience of the years shows, a protectionist attitude weakens one's industry, makes it less able to respond flexibly to the requirements of the market and therefore, when the restrictions are reduced or removed, the consequence is that one is not as strong as those who have had to compete in rather more rigorous selling conditions.

I have every confidence in the British insurance industry being able to compete successfully in the regime which will shortly be inaugurated to give us a single market in insurance in the Community. We attach considerable importance to the completion of the single market in insurance, and I know that the directives which we are debating tonight and which we shall debate in due course have the support of the insurance industry and consumer organisations.

I welcome the opportunity to put these points on record and welcome the contributions which have been made by my hon. Friends and Opposition Members. I therefore commend——

Mr. Butterfill: May I press my hon. Friend on the point of harmonisation of the cooling-off period? He indicated earlier that there was some mechanism whereby that would be achieved by 1994. Would he deal with that?

Mr. Hamilton: I apologise to my hon. Friend for forgetting to deal with that point. In response to the earlier intervention of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, I pointed out that we cannot remove the difference in treatment by means of orders because the European Communities Act does not allow us to do that. Section 2(2) of the Act gives us the vires to implement our obligations by secondary legislation only in respect of insurance business within the Community. Outside the Community we require primary legislation to achieve that effect. I hope that it will be possible at the time we implement the third directive to complement that by means of primary legislation in order to remove this anomaly.

That depends, of course, upon the good will of my hon. Friends the business managers, by whom I am surrounded, and who are glaring at me and looking at the clock. I cannot guarantee to my hon. Friend that we shall be able to align them in terms of time because that will take place in a different Session, but I am well aware that this is an unsatisfactory situation and we shall seek to correct it at the earliest opportunity. I hope that I have been able to satisfy my hon. Friend.

I commend the regulations to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Insurance Companies (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 30 November, be approved.

PETITION

Asylum Seekers

11.29 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I have the pleasure of presenting a petition to the House which has been circulated widely throughout the country concerning the passage of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill which completed its Third Reading in the House yesterday and is now on its way through the House of Lords. I will read the petition:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of the people of the United Kingdom sheweth:

That we wish to register strong protest at the Government's proposals to restrict the rights of asylum-seekers;

That the fast-track systems for the determination of claims will deny natural justice to asylum-seekers, giving only 48 hours in which to give notice of appeals against refusal;

That some of the proposed changes in the Immigration Rules will make it more difficult for asylum-seekers to establish their claim and are against the letter and spirit of the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees;

That the increased powers to fine airlines will further erode the spirit of the 1951 United Nations convention on refugees, as will proposals to send British officials to scrutinise passports at foreign airports;

That fingerprinting asylum-seekers is discriminatory and will criminalise innocent people;

That the housing restrictions proposed are discriminatory;

And that the secret intergovernmental discussions currently taking place in the ad-hoc group on immigration are apparently proposing even more restrictive asylum policies.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will not proceed with those unjust proposals, and your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

I am told that the petition is supported by 6,962 signatories, in addition to the three on the face of the petition. I fully endorse and support it.

To lie upon the Table.

Pension Funds (Transport Industries)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

11.31 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I speak on this subject as a sponsored Member of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers. I speak on a day when the Secretary of State for Transport has announced an industry-wide effort to reorganise the British Rail pension scheme. I had intended to use this occasion to urge the Government to take that step, so I welcome his announcement and hope that the Minister, in replying to this debate, will give more details of his right hon. Friend's proposals.

My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) hopes also to comment on the important matters that I am raising, which are important to many tens of thousands of workers. I hope that the Minister will explain whether his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends to issue a White Paper, will give details of the scope of that document and will say what class of employees will be included in any provisions.

There is a wider remit to this debate. It is about pension funds in the privatised transport industries, so we are dealing with workers in British Rail and in the bus and coach industry and with seafarers. Before dealing with my main points of concern, I remind the House that the transport sector is low paid. While not all employees in the sector are low paid, the sections of the industry which have been privatised contain, by and large, many low-paid employees. I hope that the Minister and hon. Members in all parts of the House agree that we do not want those employees, due to a deteriorating pension situation, to be thrown on to income support and become supplicants to the Department of Social Security. We want them to be in a position to make pension contributions and later to live on those pensions in their own right without recourse to DSS funding.

That being our desire, there must be something wrong with what is happening to pensions in Britain. We are familiar with the Maxwell fraud, but it goes further than that. There are frauds and near-frauds, but there are also perfectly legitimate ways by which companies can take money out of pension funds to the detriment of the pensioners-to-be. For example, the National Freight Corporation, Sealink, British Rail Engineering Limited and Travellers Fare have all been privatised, and the sales required that the pension benefits should be of equal, or better, value after privatisation. In fact, all those pension schemes now offer inferior benefits—and that is in spite of what the Government said at the time. Companies enjoyed pension holidays, and they introduced new schemes which gave them greater control. Transfer values tend to work against the transferee. That is one of the ways in which, I believe, companies cheat.

I will give some examples of bad cases. CityLink wound up its mirror image pension scheme and now offers personal pensions which exclude any employer contribution. That is not what employees were led to believe would happen, but it is what they now have to put up with. I hope that the Minister agrees with me that it is wrong. British Transport Hotels, when they were privatised, were all required to establish their own pension schemes, providing the same or better benefits. Some of those hotels have

[Dr. John Marek]

changed hands several times, and many of the schemes have been wound up or closed to new entrants. Again, that is quite wrong and is against what was intended when the privatisation took place.

A worse case is that of Nightingale Coaches. For two years employees paid their contributions, but instead of putting the money into the pension scheme, the company pocketed it and used it for cash flow purposes. Then it ceased trading. Action is proceeding at the moment. Whether those employees will ever receive full pension benefit is a moot point. I do not think that they will. Clearly, that is wrong, and it has resulted directly from the Government's policy and action on privatisation. Here, I am not seeking to engage in a debate about whether the privatisation was right or wrong; I am simply drawing attention to what happened as a result of Government policy and action. The effects on many people's pensions have been unfortunate.

Recently the Devon General Bus Company decided that from 6 September it could no longer afford the benefits provided under its hourly and monthly pay schemes. The schemes will be closed to new entrants, who will be able to join another scheme providing only minimal benefits. The Southern National Bus Company is now enjoying its second pension holiday. The fact that such a holiday is available to the company but not to the employees is a matter that we could debate. Opposition Members regard it as something that is not right.

Then there is the recent example of the National Welsh Bus Company. It may be that more than £1 million is missing from the pension fund of the former National Bus Company subsidiary, National Welsh. Having gone into receivership at the beginning of last year, it has deducted employees' pension contributions from pay but has not put them into the pension fund. In south Wales, about 800 former employees have been told that the fund is unable to meet its liabilities. Again that is quite wrong but it is a direct consequence of the bus privatisation policies of the present Government and of the previous Conservative Administration. It is true that the pension fund of the former National Bus Company is safe, but that does not apply to recent contributions.

I contend that pensions are deferred pay. They are part of the contract between employees and employers—employees agreeing to contribute part of their pay, and employers agreeing to contribute an additional amount. It is quite wrong that companies should be able to cheat, either through fraud or through changes in pension schemes. It is wrong that employees should not get what they expect. Employees have a right to have their pension funds managed properly. They have a right to know that their weekly or monthly contributions go into the fund. They have a right to know that, on retirement, they will receive benefits that have not been eroded. Funds should be managed in the interests of the employees—not in the interests of the company. Unfortunately, money has been stolen from former employees of National Welsh and of Nightingale Coaches. Money has also been stolen from employees of companies which have changed the rules or taken contribution holidays.

I am pleased at the announcement by the Secretary of State for Transport of an industry-wide scheme for British Rail employees when, or rather if, the railways are privatised or franchised. I say "if" because there is no general acceptance of the Government's proposals. Will that scheme be open to new entrants after franchising or privatisation? Will it be open to outside employees? The Government intend to franchise London's buses, but how that will be done is another issue. Will there be franchises for different routes, such as Nos. 88, 12 or 53 which pass the House? If after three years the franchisee decides that he cannot make a profit and gives up the route and his employees are engaged by another franchise operator, the only sensible course would be to have a nation-wide scheme or extend the BR scheme to allow people who are not BR employees, perhaps bus workers, to join.

The Goode committee was set up as a result of the Maxwell scandal and will produce a considered report addressing some of my other concerns. Will the Government act quickly on that report to ensure that there is statutory provision for the setting up of pension funds, that contributions go to the fund and that it is managed properly in the interests of fund holders so that they receive what they expect when they retire? They should not have to put up with lame excuses that the money is not there but has been used for other purposes or fraudulently spirited away. The Government have a duty in these matters. Tens of thousands of people want to know what the Government intend to do. They should act as quickly as possible.

11.41 pm

Mr. Keith Hill (Streatham): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) for his generosity in permitting me to participate in this debate on these important matters. I welcome the statement on pensions today by the Secretary of State for Transport. In some respects, it seems to meet the requirements of British Rail pension fund members and their representatives and has ended the powerful sense of uncertainty and anxiety which has built up on the subject in the past few months. It will be necessary, however, to study the Secretary of State's precise words in print and to examine in detail the consultation document on pensions promised within the next two weeks.

I especially welcome the commitment to an industry-wide railway pension fund. That proposal, which is the preferred option of the railway trade unions, was first mentioned by me in a speech in Standing Committee on the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill in June. The Government Whip nods. I am glad that he remembers my contribution in Committee. At that time, the Minister for Public Transport said that he would give careful attention to the proposal. I am grateful to him for his response and I am happy to have played a modest part in what seems to be a successful outcome to the representations.

The model for the industry-wide scheme is the Electricity Act 1989, which provided protection for past service so long as members remained in their respective schemes during and after transition from the nationalised electricity undertaking to the new privatised electricity companies. We shall have to confirm that that is the model that the Government will use for the railways. If it is, and provided there are long-term guarantees for the integrity and maintenance of the value of benefit, that commitment

will be an important reassurance to railway workers in a period of understandable anxiety as the railways are privatised.

Regrettably, however, the Government still seem intent on excluding future recruits to the proposed new franchising companies from the industry-wide scheme. I very much hope that the Government will display a further degree of open-mindedness on the issue.

If, as will presumably be the case, the franchisee will be required to sustain, at the same level as British Rail formerly did, the employer's contribution to the industry-wide scheme, it seems quite unfair that new employees, working side by side with longer serving railway employees, should not enjoy the same level of benefits. Equity surely demands that employees doing similar work, in identical conditions, making the same contribution to the success of the company, should be entitled to equal pension benefits. That arrangement operates in the shipping industry; it should apply in the railway industry as well.

I assume, of course, that existing scheme members will retain total freedom to remain in the industry-wide scheme for as long as they so choose. If, however, as may be the case, they choose to enter an alterntive scheme arranged by the new franchisee, it is essential that copper-bottomed guarantees should be enshrined in law to ensure the long-term viability of the alternative scheme. In particular, there must be an appropriate mechanism to ensure that the liabilty continues to any subsequent franchisee.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham has demonstrated, it has been the all-too-frequent and painful experience of employees in privatised transport industries that attractive new schemes, initiated at the moment of privatisation, have collapsed after the second transfer of ownership. In other words, the transfer value of the scheme must be organised on an actuarial basis with the assurance of adequate funding to sustain the scheme, and there must be similar guarantees to protect the pension rights of employees in the event of failure of the franchisee.

The Secretary of State's statement also embraced the position of current pensioners under the British Rail scheme. I especially welcome the Government's rejection of the possibility that present pensioners should become the responsibility of the franchising companies. That would have been to place at intolerable risk the moral and legal rights of a large number of pensioners who, in many cases, have given a lifetime of service to the railway industry and now derive a modest reward for that service.

The Secretary of State seemed to outline two alternative arrangements for the future of the pension fund, and we shall need to look at that proposal with great care. What is paramount, however, is that the assets of the fund should be ring-fenced to protect the individuals concerned: we want no corporate raids from the Treasury.

While I am speaking of the Treasury, I add a special plea that there should be no undermining of the small, historic pension schemes inherited from the original railway companies. Those funds benefit from a topping up from the Treasury under the terms of the Transport Act 1980. They still have a large number of beneficiaries. It is essential that the protection of the 1980 Act should be maintained for them.

I hope that the Minister will be able to offer reassurance on that subject and on the ring-fencing of the larger British Rail pension fund. I hope that she will also undertake, on behalf of the Government, to extend the proposed industry-wide scheme to new recruits to the privatised railway undertakings.

With those specific qualifications, I repeat my welcome for the announcement that we have heard today.

11.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): I congratulate the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) on securing this Adjournment debate and the hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) on his interesting intervention.

There are two difficulties in replying to the debate. The first is that much of the material quite properly raised by hon. Members concerns the responsibilities of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I hope that hon. Members will be patient with me when I say that I cannot enter into detailed discussions on what he may or may not have in mind as a result of his announcement this afternoon. However, I undertake to draw specifically to my right hon. Friend's attention the particular points that hon. Members have raised, and I am sure that he, or one of his Ministers on his behalf, will respond to them in so far as it is possible at this stage.

My second difficulty is that the parts of the debate that concern my responsibilities—namely, the protection of occupational pension rights—are also subject to an independent review by Professor Goode, as the hon. Member for Streatham pointed out. It would be quite improper for me to pre-empt what Professor Goode might decide to do. However, I will undertake to ensure that the remarks made specifically about protection for scheme members on transfer of schemes are drawn to his attention.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): When is Professor Goode likely to report?

Miss Widdecombe: I shall come to that. I was asked a pertinent question about how quickly we would react.

My third difficulty is this. Such is the availability of NHS dentistry that I have had three dental operations in as many weeks, and for that reason I may sound a bit peculiar.

We expect Professor Goode to report in the summer. We have given two undertakings. The first is that if at any time in his deliberations—before he produces his report—he should by any chance conclude that a particular measure could be taken that is so urgent that it should be taken out of context with the rest of his report, the Government will consider implementing it ahead of any general Bill that we might introduce to meet the professor's general recommendations. So far we have had no indication that that is likely to happen, but the undertaking was given very clearly by the Secretary of State and would be honoured if the situation arose.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): If my hon. Friend makes contact with Professor Goode and with colleagues in other Departments—the Secretary of State for Transport and, perhaps, the Secretary of State for the Environment, who deals with local government matters—will she mention the points raised with me by the managing director of Blackpool Transport Services Ltd., in my constituency? They are not dissimilar to the points raised tonight by the hon. Members for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and for Streatham (Mr. Hill). Will she follow up

[Mr. Nick Hawkins]

the helpful reply that I received from my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment in December? Perhaps if I write to her about the company's concerns—which were raised again in a letter that I received today, the managing director having heard about the debate—she will consider his anxieties about employees who were members of the local government superannuation scheme——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. This is a very long intervention in a short debate.

Mr. Hawkins: I am coming to my last sentence, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has already come to it.

Miss Widdecombe: I think that I can anticipate that last sentence. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) that I will relay his remarks to the relevant quarters, and ensure that he receives answers to them if necessary.

Let me now deal with some of the specific points that have been raised. First, there is the question of contribution holidays. The purpose of a contribution holiday is not to undermine the rights of employees so much as to undermine revenue received by the Inland Revenue. Once a scheme has reached 105 per cent., it can attract tax liabilities. As a result, many employers choose to take a contributions holiday rather than meet that liability. Professor Goode will consider contributions holidays. I am sure that he will also consider the ownership of funds and the protection that is available to members who transfer schemes from one employer to another.

Under trust law, trustees are obliged to act in accordance with what is of the greatest benefit to the fund rather than to the employer or to existing employees. The duties of the trustees are to secure the best for the fund and always to act in its interests. I am sure that Professor Goode will consider whether that duty can be tightened in law to ensure that it is better discharged in some cases. In doing so, he will wish to consider the composition of trustees and the law that lays down their duties and obligations.

It would be wrong to leave the House with the impression that we examine occupational pensions law only when something goes wrong. It was nothing to do with the Maxwell scandal that the Social Security Act 1990 provided for the restriction of self-investment by schemes and for a deficit on the winding up of a scheme to become a debt on the employer. That Act introduced the pensions ombudsman. Last year, we extended and strengthened the requirement on schemes to disclose information to members.

An Opposition Member—I am ashamed to say that I have forgotten who it was—raised the issue of information. It is important not only that individuals have rights of access to information about their scheme but that they are encouraged, as individuals or through their trade unions or representative bodies, to make such inquiries. People should understand that once they have joined a pension scheme they should treat it in exactly the same way as they would treat savings on deposit in a bank or some other account. We have an extremely successful pensions tracing registry in Newcastle, which is often asked to trace schemes going back 20 or 21 years with which members have lost contact. I urge anybody with an occupational pension to treat it as preciously as they would something under a mattress that they would check from time to time.

We all regret what was done by Maxwell. The only good that has come out of Maxwell is that it has drawn the attention of individuals to the importance of occupational pensions, whereas in the past there has been a tendency to take such schemes for granted.

I have every faith in Professor Goode and we shall react as soon as practicable to his recommendations. When he reports, we shall want to examine his proposals and to consult on particular aspects of them. There will be no undue delay in implementing anything that seems to us to be wise, reasonable, practical and in the interests of pensioners.

The vast majority of pension funds in this country are properly, securely and responsibly operated—only a few, which are known to the Occupational Pensions Board, are not.

I will ensure that hon. Members receive specific answers to the transport issues that they raised, which are not within my remit. I am satisfied that occupational pensions are, in general, very safe, a very good investment, are greatly to be encouraged and have added significantly, particularly in the past 10 years, to the retirement income of many people who otherwise would not have had that additional income above their state provision.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 13 January 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC-ASEAN Relations

1. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in developing relations between the European Community and the ASEAN countries.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): Considerable progress has been made in strengthening relations during the United Kingdom's presidency. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs personally attended two ministerial meetings with ASEAN in Manila in 1992, the second of which I also attended. The outcome of the EC-ASEAN ministerial meeting last October has increased co-operation in a range of fields, including trade, environmental protection, technical co-operation and human rights.

Mr. Spring: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the meeting of the ASEAN Trade and Industry Ministers in Jakarta in December, to discuss and promote the newly created free trade area? That new area offers important investment and export opportunities to British business. In the light of those developments, will my right hon. Friend comment on the relationship between the EC and the emerging ASEAN free trade area?

Mr. Goodlad: Yes. We and our European Community parners welcome the establishment of the ASEAN free trade area, which seeks to achieve a trading regime compatible with the general agreement on tariffs and trade, with progressively lower tariffs. On 11 December, the AFTA council decided on the first tranche of tariff reductions on a wide range of articles from 1 January this year. We hope that that will boost commercial relations between the Community and ASEAN countries, which already run at $50 billion a year in two-way trade. Our trade relations are of great importance. The ASEAN countries are enjoying high growth rates and offer many significant opportunities for British investment and trade.

Middle East

2. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards peace in the middle east.

4. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on progress with the middle east peace process.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The eighth round of bilateral negotiations between the Arabs and Israel ended in Washington on 16 December. It is slow progress and the next round is expected next month. Recent events, including the killing of Sergeant Major Toledano and the deportation of 415 Palestinians from the occupied territories, underline the fact that the peace process is the only way to resolve the problem.

Mr. Carrington: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is unacceptable for Saddam Hussein to ignore United Nations resolutions and for Israel to ignore United Nations resolutions over the plight of the 415 Palestinians deported from that country? Will my right hon. Friend make representations to the Israeli Government, pointing out the urgency of complying with the United Nations resolution if there is to be any return to peace and any possibility of success with the peace process in the middle east?

Mr. Hurd: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's first point. The two cases are, of course, very different. On the second, the Israeli Government know our view—which is the Security Council's view—that the action that they have taken is in violation of their obligations under the fourth Geneva convention, which prohibits deportation from occupied territory regardless of the motive. We believe —we hope—that the Israeli Government will allow those deported to return to their homes.

Mr. Dalyell: Do Egypt and Bahrain support military action against Iraq?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman must ask them for their views. I am accountable for the policy of this Government. Iraq is defying the United Nations and the international community. It has not complied with representations made to it on the southern no-fly zone and has refused UNSCOM—the United Nations special commission—permission to fly into Iraq. It has violated the border with Kuwait and has moved missiles into northern Iraq.

The Security Council has made clear its views on all these matters and Iraq should be in no doubt that the consequences will be serious. The hon. Gentleman will not expect me to speculate on the form that those consequences might take. The House will be kept closely informed. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State will be answering a private notice question later this afternoon; I have to leave for a special Foreign Affairs Council on Yugoslavia.

Mr. Sumberg: When my right hon. Friend considers recent events in the middle east, will he bear in mind the fact that Israel has to deal with the Iranian-backed Hamas movement—an organisation which is dedicated not only to the destruction of the state of Israel but to the ending of the whole peace process on which so many hopes and lives ultimately depend?

Mr. Hurd: Certainly Israel has legitimate security interests and we entirely sympathise with its desire to

stamp out terrorism. I do not, however, believe that the means that it has used on this occasion—by deporting the people in question—are a sensible way of setting about it.

Sir David Steel: Will the Foreign Secretary make it clear that, deplorable though the murder of the Israeli sergeant-major was, the Israeli Government's response has been completely disproportionate and that that response is not only inhumane—as we have all seen from the television pictures—but extremely stupid, because it plays precisely into the hands of those Palestinian extremists who wish to stop the peace process?

Mr. Hurd: If I commented, I should be repeating what I have already said. We condemned the murder of the Israeli border guard and we entirely understand Israeli preoccupations with Hamas and its negative and destructive policies. We also believe, however, that the peace process—including, in particular, the dialogue with the Palestinians—is crucial. We hope that it will be possible to solve this problem before it gets in the way of the resumption of the talks.

Mr. Renton: Bearing in mind the tragic plight of the 415 Palestinians, does my right hon. Friend see any great possibility of negotiating more successfully with the present Israeli Government than with the previous one?

Mr. Hurd: Indeed so. There has been a radical and welcome change of policy in Israel as a result of the election. I hope that the present problem can be solved. The Secretary-General's special envoy, Mr. Gharekhan, is reporting on his mission to the region. Discussions are in progress and I very much hope that they will succeed.

Mr. Kaufman: Reverting to the first part of the question of the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington), may I ask the Foreign Secretary whether he agrees that the repeated Iraqi violations of the ceasefire resolutions are unacceptable and that Iraqi offers of constructive negotiation are ludicrous in the light of those violations and of Iraq's repeated attacks on the Kurds and Shi'ites? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that many hon. Members will support military action—provided that civilians are protected—to ensure that Iraq obeys the ceasefire resolutions?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his remarks and I agree with his analysis. The House will not expect me to say anything further at this point, but, as I said, the House will be kept closely informed.

Mr. Marlow: Given that it is nearly 50 years since the last war ended, should not we now treat Israel in the same way diplomatically as we would treat any other delinquent country? Given that the 400 people were picked up from their only home without trial or charge and deposited on someone else's territory, should not we consider some form of sanction against Israel until it learns how to behave properly?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that that would be right. We have made clear our view of the Israeli action and what we think should happen—that a way should be found for those deported to be returned home. That way is now being sought and I hope that it can be found.

Dr. John Cunningham: Does the Secretary of State recognise that we denounce the activities of Saddam Hussein unequivocally and that we support—and have always supported—the enforcement of the air exclusion zones in Iraq to safeguard the Kurds in the north and the Shi'ite Muslims in the south? Will the right hon. Gentleman assure us that, whatever military action may ensue in support of the enforcement of those air exclusion zones, it is covered by the terms of the United Nations resolution 688, under which the air exclusion zones were established in the first place?

Will he also explain whether it is true, as reported in the *Sunday Mirror* recently, that he personally authorised a visit to Britain of people from Iraq to discuss with GEC the purchase of telecommunications systems? If it is true, does that give completely confusing messages to not only Saddam Hussein about our relations with him, but the people of Britain about the Government's real intentions?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman will not expect me to speculate on the possible consequences of Iraq's defiance of the United Nations Security Council. I am grateful for what he said about that. Obviously, any measures that are taken will need to be, and will be, in full compliance with international law.

The same point covers the hon. Gentleman's second question. I have not come to the House armed with details of the matter reported in the *Sunday Mirror*, so I must clearly supply him with them, which I will. Certainly, neither I nor any of my colleagues have authorised any action which could lead anyone in the United Kingdom to believe that it was correct or possible under our law to break the sanctions of the United Nations.

Mr. Batiste: As Hamas is an Iranian-sponsored organisation, what representations have been made to the Iranian Government with a view to curtailing the activities of Hamas in seeking to disrupt the middle east peace process?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that such representations are likely to be fruitful, but I will certainly study my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the Foreign Secretary's reply, may I give notice that I hope to raise this matter under Standing Order No. 20?

Yugoslavia

3. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what current discussions he has had with other Foreign Ministers about the long-term future of the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: European and north American Foreign Ministers met repeatedly in December for discussions on the problems of the former Yugoslavia in a number of fora, including the NATO council, the EC and the steering committee of the international conference in Geneva.

The European Council in Edinburgh declared again that the Serbian nation faced a clear choice: if there were a radical change of policy, Serbia would gradually be admitted to the international community. If not, existing sanctions and pressures would be tightened and extended to isolate Serbia.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Foreign Secretary aware that Common Market countries are partly responsible for the

problems that exist in the former Yugoslavia? Is not it true that several months ago Germany, after annexing East Germany, decided to recognise Croatia, and that the Government and the rest of the Common Market countries agreed with it? Is not that the same Croatia which supported Hitler in the second world war and was responsible for slaughtering hundreds of thousands of Serbs?

Is not it ironic that the Common Market, which wants political union with 12 nation states, is now taking part in the fragmentation of the former Yugoslavia? Are not these double standards?

Mr. Hurd: I am sorry to have to tell the House that a British soldier was killed in Bosnia this morning. I know that the House will join me in expressing our sorrow and sympathy to his family.

I do not accept the analysis of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). It was right for us all, and certainly the Government, to find out whether it was possible to hold Yugoslavia together by consent, which would have been the best answer. However, that was made impossible, not least by the Serbs.

So we had the emergence of republics. Historians will argue for years about the timing of recognition, but, whatever one's feelings about it, it was a matter of months. No one would seriously argue that we should today refuse to recognise the existence, which is a fact, of a Croatia which is very different from the Croatia and Croat leadership of 1943, 1944 and 1945.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is every bit as important to have peace in the Balkans as it is to have peace in the middle east? Does he further agree that if, as we all devoutly hope, the talks in Geneva result in a proper peace under international auspices, it will be the duty of the international community to guarantee that settlement?

Mr. Hurd: I certainly welcome the extent of progress yesterday in Geneva. My hon. Friend brought the Foreign Minister of Bosnia to see me this morning and I am grateful for that. I found that he, who represented his country at the talks, welcomed the progress, although he was understandably sceptical on the ground that what counts is not what is agreed at Geneva but whether the Bosnian Serbs honour that agreement. Meanwhile, we must keep up the pressure. But my hon. Friend is perfectly right that any eventual agreement achieved in Geneva through the EC-UN process will need to be underwritten by the international community.

Mr. George Robertson: First, may I join in expressing the sympathy and deep condolences of the Opposition for the relations of the British soldier who was killed this morning in Bosnia. Our troops, wearing the blue helmet of the United Nations, are involved in the heroic task of getting humanitarian help to thousands of people who would otherwise die in the winter of this horrible civil war. It was never going to be a risk-free operation, but it is still a singular tragedy when even one of our troops is killed for the greater good of the people of that troubled area.

May I also commend the outcome of the Vance-Owen talks in Geneva, which have shown the first glimmer of hope for that area for a long time? My hon. Friend the shadow Foreign Secretary and I met the Bosnian Foreign Minister, Mr. Silajdic, this morning, as did the Foreign Secretary. Does the Foreign Secretary accept that it is crucial that when Lord Owen reports at the EC Foreign Ministers' meeting this afternoon, it is made clear that an enduring peace will be guaranteed only by the permanent cessation of the use of heavy weapons in the area and that we must continue the pursuit of those who are accused of war crimes in the region?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his first point. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence told the House yesterday, our troops in Bosnia are carrying out a necessary job successfully. So far they have escorted 147 convoys and carried almost 12,000 tonnes of food and humanitarian supplies. That means that lives have been saved in places which until then it was hard to reach. I agree with the hon. Gentleman's second point. The corralling of heavy weapons was agreed in principle at the London conference in August. It has not happened, partly because the Bosnian Serbs have not agreed to it and partly as a result of the difficulties of arranging it. I am sure that we shall discuss both points this evening with Lord Owen.

Mr. Colvin: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will have heard from the Bosnian Foreign Minister this morning that he wants the arms embargoes lifted so that Bosnia does not continue to fight with one arm behind its back. He also wants the no-fly zone under Security Council resolution 781 to be enforced. What further steps can be taken on both matters?

Mr. Hurd: On the no-fly zone, there are no combat missions—that is, no Bosnian Serb bombers or fighters are striking at targets in Bosnia—from those airports. There have been helicopter flights, which are certainly in breach of the United Nations resolution, as are some Croation flights. The members of the Security Council are fairly near the end of their consideration of how the Security Council should react to those violations.

I know the Foreign Minister's view about the arms embargo, although it was not at the top of his agenda this morning. I do not believe in half an arms embargo. In practice, it will not be possible to allow the arming of one party to a conflict and expect the other party to go without resupply. In practice we would find that Serbia would be resupplied by those who sympathise with her. As Bosnia is already awash with arms, the war would be likely to continue rather than be brought to an end. Perhaps that is why this morning the Bosnian Foreign Minister put the emphasis on demilitarisation, beginning with the corralling of heavy weapons, not on militarisation.

Bosnia

5. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make an official visit to Bosnia to discuss British relations with Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): There are no immediate plans for a further ministerial visit to Bosnia. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I visited Bosnia on 22 December to see British troops deployed in the UNPROFOR peacekeeping operation. Our relations with the Bosnian Government are good. As has been said, my right hon. Friend and I met the Bosnian Foreign Minister

this morning. The British Government have played a leading role in the international effort to resolve the Bosnian crisis.

Mr. Kirkwood: The Foreign Secretary was right to express the wish, which I am sure is reflected in all parts of the House, that our condolences should be sent to the relatives of the British service man who lost his life this morning.

What representations are the Government making about that tragic death and what consequences will it have for our approach, for example, to the United Nations with a view to beefing up the mandate, to prevent such tragic incidents from happening? What assurances can the Minister give the House about bringing all possible pressure to bear on the Serbs in Bosnia to conclude a speedy negotiated settlement which will satisfy the international community? Finally, can he assure us that no such settlement would preclude the right of the international community to pursue and bring to book people found guilty of crimes during the conflict and recent events in Serbia?

Mr. Hogg: The death of the British soldier is a tragedy. We do not yet know the full circumstances. We shall try to find them out as speedily as possible and we must then determine what lessons are to be learnt. We shall make a report as soon as possible.

On the question of the Bosnian Serbs, the hon. Gentleman is broadly right. We must make it entirely plain to them that if the agreement to which Dr. Karadzic put his hand is not approved and carried forward, the Serbs in Bosnia will face an ever-deepening crisis.

Mr. Temple-Morris: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that British military involvement in Bosnia is, and continues to be perceived to be, purely for humanitarian purposes? Will he endeavour to preserve that position?

Mr. Hogg: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence responded to a similar question yesterday. He confirmed the statement that my hon. Friend has just made and I can confirm it once again.

Mr. Wareing: Does the Minister accept that there is always a danger of the conflict spreading to Kosovo, Macedonia and elsewhere in the region? Military intervention by other powers would turn that risk into an absolute certainty and encourage people in other parts of Yugoslavia who are even more extreme than those who have power. Will he also make it clear to President Tudjman of Croatia that the existence of UNPROFOR in Krajina is essential beyond the end of next February, to ensure that a conflict does not arise there, too?

Mr. Hogg: I entirely agree with what the hon. Gentleman said in the latter part of his question. I saw President Tudjman in late December and told him that the presence of United Nations forces in the United Nations protected areas was, to our way of thinking, a matter of cardinal importance. I hope that the mandate will be renewed when it expires in the latter part of February. As regards Kosovo and Macedonia, I have a great deal of sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman has just said. It is partly for that reason that I am glad that there is a CSCE presence in Kosovo and that a reconnaissance party of United Nations troops is already in Macedonia.

Mr. Churchill: While we must all hope that the Vance-Owen plan brings peace to Bosnia, is it not now a matter of urgency for the international community to move to ensure that all heavy weapons in Bosnia come under direct United Nations control? Will my right hon. and learned Friend make that a high priority for Her Majesty's Government?

Mr. Hogg: In a sense, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has already responded to my hon. Friend's question. The demilitarisation of Bosnia is a very important part of the agreement to which Dr. Karadzic put his signature yesterday.

Mr. John D. Taylor: With many of my constituents serving with the Royal Irish Regiment in Bosnia, I naturally wish to extend sympathy to the family whose son has been killed today.

Does the Minister agree that the Government are placing British troops in an impossible position by asking them to carry out humanitarian work in the midst of a civil war in which, politically, we are seen to be actively opposed to one of the participants?

Mr. Hogg: I think that the proper way to describe the activities of British soldiers in Bosnia is to say that they have been remarkably successful in performing an immensely important task. They have acted with enormous courage and skill and, as a result of what they have done and are doing, tens of thousands of people are now living who might otherwise be dead.

European Community

6. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on developments in the EC since the Edinburgh summit.

Mr. Hurd: There have been two substantial developments in the European Community since the summit in Edinburgh; notably the single market, which came into effect on 1 January, and the agreement of Foreign Ministers on 21 December that negotiations for full membership of the Community with Austria, Finland and Sweden should open at our meeting on 1 and 2 February.

Mr. Riddick: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on a United Kingdom presidency which was far more successful than the knockers and whingers on the Opposition Benches would have us believe?

Now that the single market is in place, will my right hon. Friend assure the House that we will have less red tape and fewer directives coming out of Brussels? Will he also confirm that, as a result, the EC in general and the Commission in particular will turn their attention to extending free trade throughout the world, which, of course, means in particular ensuring a successful outcome of the GATT negotiations?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The presidency had its roughish moments, but I am glad that it ended with a success and a smile. As my hon. Friend has said, one result of the single market is that the volume of legislation in the EC has already begun to drop markedly. We expect and hope that that trend will continue, partly as a result of subsidiarity as it comes into effect.

My hon. Friend is right about the importance of the GATT negotiations. It is the aim of the Commission and of most member states to achieve agreement as soon as possible. The basic deadlock between the EC and the United States on agriculture was removed during our presidency and now we have to wrap up other details, some of which are still intractable.

Mrs. Ewing: Given that one of the important issues discussed during the British presidency was the need for increased powers for the European Parliament, as crystallised at the Edinburgh summit by the agreement to increase the number of seats at that Parliament, is the right hon. Gentleman yet able to advise us how the extra six seats allocated to the United Kingdom will be distributed? Will he tell us whether, in the interests of fairness, proportional representation will come into play?

Mr. Hurd: No. I think that the hon. Lady can take it that we will need to change the boundaries of the European parliamentary seats, and decisions about how to proceed will be taken soon.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Is the Foreign Secretary aware of the widespread confusion that was created when the leaders of countries such as Spain and Eire went back to their homelands after the Edinburgh summit to report that they had gained billions of pounds while the leaders of countries such as Britain and Germany, which pay the money, said that the extra costs would be minimal? Would it not help to remove that confusion if the Foreign Secretary appealed to the Commission or the Council of Ministers to publish their estimate of who will gain what as a result of Edinburgh and who will pay for it? It will simply undermine confidence if the sums do not add up.

Mr. Hurd: It is not unusual for people who go to a negotiating session to return and say that they are reasonably satisfied with the result, but to no Member of this House is there any mystery about the actual facts and figures or about the way in which the original proposals by President Delors were first whittled down as a result of his own compromise and then further substantially reduced at Edinburgh. The result was modest compared with that of the last review, in 1988, and that will give my hon. Friend substantial satisfaction.

Armenia

7. **Mr. Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the current position in Armenia; and what further measures he intends to take to relieve the situation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Armenia is experiencing acute hardship as a result of the collapse of the Soviet system, shortage of natural resources and the confrontation with Azerbaijan. We are urging Armenia and Azerbaijan to resolve their differences through the negotiations of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe on Nagorno-Karabakh. The United Kingdom is contributing £450,000 to Nagorno-Karabakh relief programmes of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross and is a contributor to the European Community's 36 million ecu loan to help Armenia to buy food and medicines.

Mr. Tipping: The Foreign Secretary will know that the Lord Byron school in Leninakhan was gifted by the British Government. It is twinned with the Holgate school in Hucknall, Nottinghamshire. The staff, pupils and parents of the latter have collected enormous sums of money and equipment for their friends in Armenia, but the aid is not reaching its destination because lorries are being hijacked. Will the Minister consider ways in which he might complement the excellent work of the people at this school?

Mr. Hogg: All credit to the pupils of the school who have raised this money. I am afraid that I am not aware of the particular problem to which the hon. Gentleman refers. If he would care to discuss it with me in greater detail I shall see what, if anything, we can do to help.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: In view of the assistance that the British Government are giving to Armenia, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the continuing six-year war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh is a significant source of instability in the region? Does he agree that an important role in any negotiations to end that dispute must be taken by Turkey, which is giving significant assistance to Turkish people in Azerbaijan?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is quite right: the fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh is extremely destabilising for that region. The proper way forward is for everybody to recognise that there must be autonomy, within Azerbaijan, for the peoples of Nagorno-Karabakh, that Nagorno-Karabakh cannot be an independent state and cannot be absorbed into Armenia. The proper way forward is through negotiations designed to achieve autonomy status for Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan.

On the question of Turkey, the Turkish Government do indeed have a prominent role to play in stabilising the situation. I have spoken to the Turkish ambassador and others about this matter; my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has raised it with the Turkish Foreign Minister; and we have had other high-level contacts with the Turkish Government to reinforce the point.

Arab-Israel Dispute

8. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made to resolve the Arab-Israel dispute.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has already said, the eighth round of bilateral negotiations ended in Washington on 16 December. Slow progress continues, and the next round is expected to take place in February. Recent events, including the killing of Sergeant-Major Toledano and the deportation of 415 Palestinians from the occupied territories, underline the fact that the peace process is the only way to resolve the problems of the region.

Mr. Madel: As Mr. Rabin has offered to make concessions over the future of the Golan Heights—the first time Israel has made such an offer—will the Government press Syria to respond positively to this genuine move towards peace?

Mr. Hogg: As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has said, the election of Mr. Rabin opens the prospect of really promising negotiations such as we have not seen previously. Prime Minister Rabin's statement on the question of the Golan Heights is important and much to be welcomed. I should like to see the Government of Syria respond by recognising the need for a permanent peace agreement with the state of Israel.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Does the Minister accept that the middle east peace talks will always be vulnerable when the Israeli Government over-react, as they have on this occasion by deporting 415 Palestinians? The peace talks will continue to be vulnerable unless and until the Israeli Government believe that serious international action will be taken against them when they violate international law. The Israeli Government have clearly broken international law and 415 Palestinians are somewhere between Lebanon and Israel, yet Israel is still allowed to participate in international organisations, there is still bilateral trade between ourselves and Israel, and there is still contact between Israel and the EC. Only when Israel believes that serious retaliation will be taken will the middle east peace talks get on stream and be protected.

Mr. Hogg: The British Government have made their position plain on the deportation of the 415 Palestinians. Clearly, it was a serious breach of the fourth Geneva convention and is a serious infringement of human rights. As the hon. Gentleman and the rest of the House know, we have condemned it in many ways. We now need to find ways to persuade, induce and cause the Israeli Government to reverse the effect of their decision—a decision which we greatly deplore.

Mr. Rathbone: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, in pursuance of what he has just said, it might be useful carefully to review the access that Israel has been given to the European Community and the help that it receives from the Community?

Mr. Hogg: We must consider how most effectively we can persuade the Israelis to reverse the effect of their decision—a decision which we deeply deplore.

Mr. Galloway: Does not the Minister understand the dynamics that lie behind the process that has led hundreds of thousands of Palestinians under occupation and in exile to look towards the Islamic extremists of Hamas? Do the Government understand that the failure of the secular nationalist leadership of the Palestinian people to obtain any significant concession has led to that radicalisation and Islamicisation of the whole national consciousness in Palestine? Does the Minister realise that, for example, the British Government's refusal to meet leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organisation when they were recently in London strengthens the arm of the extremists in that regard? The alacrity with which they are preparing to pulverise the Iraqis, while allowing the Bosnian Muslims to be massacred in Yugoslavia, does not help either.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is simply not correct to suggest that the Israeli Government have made no movement since the election of Prime Minister Rabin. The change that has taken place with regard to the settlement policy, for instance, is an important step forward, although it may not go far enough. We must push forward on the basis of resolutions 242 and 338, and recognise that the Palestinian people have a right to self determination and to land to make a reality of that self determination. That is our policy and we shall keep with it.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the greatest threat to peace in the middle east comes from Saddam Hussein, and any action that is taken against him is in the interests both of the people of Iraq and of peace in that troubled region?

Mr. Hogg: There are a number of threats to peace in the middle east and Saddam Hussein is one of the most prominent. However, it is also important that we do what we can to promote an agreement between the state of Israel, the peoples of the occupied territories and the Arab states.

Dr. John Cunningham: Does the Minister recognise that we deplore the Israeli Government's actions, which are in clear breach of international law and the fourth Geneva convention? I regret having to say that, as I warmly welcomed the election of a new Labour Government in Israel. Is it not clear that that breach of international law has given Hamas a huge propaganda victory?

Is it not also clear that the actions of the Israeli Government have undermined the legitimate leadership of the Palestinian people in Israel, too? Do not both those things militate against a successful outcome to the continuing peace initiative which we strongly support? Will Her Majesty's Government make it clear to the Israeli ambassador, as I did yesterday, that his Government should be obliged, in line with the decisions of the United Nations and the condemnation internationally, to rethink this decision and to treat these people using the proper legal procedures to which they are entitled?

Mr. Hogg: I think that I agree with almost everything that the hon. Gentleman has just said, and I welcome his statement. Yes, the action by the Israeli Government is deeply to be deplored, it is illegal and it is contrary to the fourth Geneva convention. Yes, too, it is a recruiting sergeant for people in the occupied territories to join Hamas. It makes martyrs of them. It is a terrible thing to have done. Yes, I entirely agree that it undermines the peace process. What we must all seriously hope is that it does not destroy the peace process and, in so far as any of us has influence in this matter, we must try to keep the peace process alive.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has rightly called for pressure to be mixed with persuasion in the case of Serbia. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is also appropriate for Israel?

Mr. Hogg: I think that I have said all I can usefully say on this matter. There has been a serious breach of international law by Israel. That breach of international law has been roundly condemned by, for example, the United Nations and by the British Government. What we now need to do is, first, to get the Government of Israel to reverse the effect of their policy, and secondly, to exercise our best efforts to keep the peace process alive.

Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill

9. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications for the staff establishments of British overseas posts of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: It is too soon to assess the affect of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill on staffing establishments at British posts abroad, but, as the removal of appeal rights does not imply any change in the criteria under which visit visa applications are considered, it is likely to be limited. Staffing establishments are primarily determined by the number of applications for visas.

Mr. Madden: Does the Minister understand that a growing number of people, including British entry clearance officers, recognise that clause 9 of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill represents a serious denial of natural justice? Does he also accept that if genuine visitors, those who wish to come here to share in joy and grief with their relatives and friends, often in emergencies, are denied those visits, he and other Foreign Office Ministers will be deluged with requests to intervene from hon. Members? I hope very much that he will be prepared to offer us his private telephone number for telephone calls at weekends, over public holidays and during parliamentary recesses, because I suspect that a very large number of such requests will be made if this ridiculous clause becomes law.

Mr. Goodlad: No such reservations have been expressed to me or to my colleagues by entry clearance officers. Applicants will be given every opportunity as before to present their case, and applications will not be considered any less thoroughly than at present. There will be no change in the criteria used to assess applications. Entry clearance officers are under a duty to act fairly and will continue to do so.

Mrs. Currie: Is the Minister aware that a number of my constituents, with families in Bangladesh, particularly in Derby, have an interest in this question? Will he consider, if he has any problems with a shortage of trained officers accustomed to dealing with passports, immigration and the like, making far better use of the staff who currently waste travellers' time, particularly on the cross-channel ferries, insisting on seeing all our passports? Surely there must be a better way, if we are serious about chasing illegal immigrants and about helping the small number of genuine asylum-seekers, than having these officers spend hundreds of hours of publicly paid time sitting on their backsides on the cross-channel ferries?

Mr Goodlad: I know that my hon. Friend takes a close interest in such matters and she has made an interesting suggestion.

EC Foreign and Security Policy

10. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will next be attending a meeting of the EC foreign affairs troika to discuss the future of EC common foreign and security policy.

Mr. Hurd: The 12 Foreign Ministers meet Lord Owen in Paris this evening to discuss events in the former Yugoslavia as part of the continuing co-operation beteen Governments on a number of foreign and security issues.

Mr. Gapes: When the Foreign Secretary meets his colleagues will he draw any lessons from the failure of the Western European Union to impose effective sanctions to stop oil reaching Serbia, as it has during recent months? Will he, from that experience, draw lessons about the role of the WEU assembly—the putative defence arm of the European Community? Will he also discuss with his colleagues the contingency plans to be put into operation if military action is taken in the next few weeks? If that happens, the WEU will be evacuating the humanitarian forces who will be the meat in the sandwich—inadequately protected and vulnerable to attacks from Serbs and others as a result of retaliation.

Mr. Hurd: We believe that oil reached Serbia and Montenegro from the Adriatic before the warships on patrol there were given powers by the Security Council to stop and search. We believe that the stop and search resolution has been effective. We must now concentrate on the supplies that are still coming down the Danube, which will certainly be one of our main themes this evening, although pressure there has increased.

On the hon. Member's second point, I should make it clear—as my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State has already done—that we do not believe that a political answer can be imposed on Bosnia by military force. That is not the purpose of having troops there, and nor will it be.

Sir Michael Marshall: What consideration does my right hon. Friend believe the troika will be able to give to the issue of common security and foreign policy in the Community in relation to the work of the proposed Assises—the new Community parliamentary Assembly? What progress has my right hon. Friend to report and what hopes does he hold for the future?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that that will specifically be a matter for the troika. The CSCE has decided in principle to have a parliamentary Assembly. I have mixed feelings about that prospect, as a large number of parliamentary assemblies are already attached to different organisations, but we must wait to see how we proceed on that issue. I do not think that it is a particularly urgent matter at present.

Mr. Faulds: In view of the murderous treatment of the Bosnian Muslims by the Christian Serbs, would it not be advisable for the right hon. Gentleman to discuss with his fellow Foreign Ministers the dangers and implications of the reactions of the vast Islamic community throughout the whole world?

Mr. Hurd: As the hon. Gentleman says, that reaction is certainly sharp, and we have been in close touch with a number of Governments, particularly the Turkish, Saudi and Egyptian—as the hon. Gentleman knows, a meeting on that theme is being held in Dakar. We are well aware of the reaction.

European Community

11. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current developments in the European Community.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Garel-Jones): I refer my hon. Friend to the pamphlet entitled

"UK Presidency of the European Communities: July-December 1992"

published by Her Majesty's Government on 11 January, which summarises developments in the European Community under the United Kingdom presidency. I refer my hon. Friend also to the statement made to the House by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister after the Edinburgh European Council.

Mr. Shaw: My right hon. Friend will be aware that, with the introduction of the single European market, the European Community has agreed that 24 mecu should be made available to assist customs clearance brokers and freight forwarders—many of whom work and live in my constituency. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that every effort is being made by the British Government to ensure that the money is made available to businesses in Great Britain for their use and that the form filling—about which many businesses are concerned—is made easier? Will he also ensure that the money is adequately distributed?

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend is characteristically assiduous in the defence of his constituents' interests. He asks about the regulation which will enable the Community to assist in areas hardest hit by the regulation. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry is co-ordinating that effort. I know that my hon. Friend is in contact with him and is working closely with the east Kent initiative which has been invited to draw up proposals on how to spend that money in Kent for the benefit of my hon. Friend's constituents and the companies that are affected in his constituency.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: Since the conclusion of the British presidency, has the Minister or the Foreign Secretary come across any other Foreign Ministers or Government leaders of the other member states who agree with the description given by the Prime Minister when he reported on the Edinburgh summit of the distinction between subsidiarity as it is understood at Community level and devolution as it is understood in the United Kingdom? I cite in particular last year's speech by Chancellor Kohl whose clear view was that subsidiarity meant proper delegation of power, not just to national Parliaments but within the United Kingdom to Scotland, Wales and the regions of England.

Mr. Garel-Jones: If I may say so, it is the hon. Gentleman's interpretation of subsidiarity which strikes me and many others in Europe as bizarre. Subsidiarity means distinguishing those areas which are the responsibility of nation states from areas that may be the Commission's responsibility. Once that distinction has been made, subsidiarity means that each member state should decide how those competences should be distributed within it.

Sir Peter Emery: Can my right hon. Friend assure us that in future actions and developments, major consideration will be given to finding a solution to the problems of a GATT treaty? Has any thought been given to persuading the new American President to arrange for the fast track to be made available for settling a GATT treaty? The negotiations could fail if we do not do something fairly quickly.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I can certainly give my right hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks. As he knows, the British presidency attaches the highest importance to finding a solution to the GATT problems. In spite of the difficulties that have been heralded recently, we hope that by the end of this month agreement can be reached which will enable us to take advantage of the fast track.

Mr. Home Robertson: Returning to subsidiarity, may I ask whether the Minister has grasped the fact that Britain is not a nation but a union of nations? Does he accept that the most significant happening at the Edinburgh summit was a demonstration by 25,000 Scots on the streets of Edinburgh demanding democracy for Scotland within Britain and within the European Community? When will the Government address the case for democratic accountability for the government of Scotland according to the principle of subsidiarity in Europe?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Birmingham declaration made perfectly clear the interpretation of subsidiarity and it was agreed by all member states. I am sure that the House agrees that decisions made in the United Kingdom about local government, devolution and other matters should be made by this House and our sovereign Parliament and not by Brussels or anywhere else.

Tibet

12. **Mr. Trend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about human rights in Tibet.

Mr. Goodlad: We remain very concerned over reports of human rights abuses in Tibet and throughout China, and Ministers have made our concerns clear to the Chinese at a high level both in public and in private on many occasions. My noble and learned Friend Lord Howe of Aberavon who visited China from 1 to 7 December will in due course submit a formal report on his visit to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. That report will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Trend: In view of the appalling human rights record in Tibet, will the Government use their good offices and best endeavours to encourage direct negotiations between the People's Republic of China and the Tibetans on the basis—and this is the heart of the matter—that there be no pre-conditions on either side?

Mr. Goodlad: The present position, as we understand it, is that the Chinese have offered to talk to the Dalai Lama about Tibet but have set certain conditions. The Dalai Lama has in the past responded positively to the principle of talks, but was not happy with some of the conditions. Although there have been reports in the media of subsequent talks, we believe that the impasse has still to be resolved. We believe that dialogue between the Chinese Government and the Tibetan people offers the best hope for a solution to the problem of Tibet. We shall continue to encourage both sides in this process. We are strongly in

favour of the principle of talks without preconditions. We have consistently urged the Chinese authorities to get into a real dialogue with the Tibetans, including the Dalai Lama. We reminded the Chinese embassy of our position only yesterday.

Dr. Godman: The continuing Chinese violations of Tibetan human rights are surely made worse by the Chinese Government's policy of moving hundreds of thousands of Chinese citizens into the very heart of Tibet. Does the Minister agree that that policy of mass migration has as its objective the systematic destruction of the culture of the Tibetan people? When will the Government stand up to the ancient men in Beijing and tell them to stop these horrible violations of the rights of the peaceable and peaceful people of Tibet?

Mr. Goodlad: We are not in a position to confirm the accuracy of the reports alluded to by the hon. Gentleman. We are, however, as I have repeatedly said, deeply concerned about reports of widespread human rights abuses in Tibet and throughout China. We have raised the issue with senior Chinese leaders on several occasions in recent months.

Human rights are a central issue in our bilateral relations with the Chinese and are on the agenda of every ministerial meeting. We and our EC partners will continue to urge the Chinese authorities to adhere to internationally recognised standards of behaviour and to improve their record on human rights. My right hon. noble and learned Friend has, as I have said, recently led a mission to China as an earnest of our hope that, in particular, legal protection of the individual can be improved.

Kuwait Border (Iraqi Violations)

3.32 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the situation on the Iraq-Kuwait border.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Over the past few weeks, there have been a number of violations by the Iraqis of the border with Kuwait. The United Nations Secretary-General reported on 10 January that, on that morning, a party of some 200 Iraqis with trucks and heavy loading equipment forced entry into six ammunition bunkers in a former Iraqi naval base at Umm Qasr on Kuwaiti territory and took away most of their contents, including four anti-ship Silkworm missiles. Later that day, 500 Iraqis continued to dismantle prefabricated buildings in the former naval base. Similar violations have continued until today.

The Secretary-General reported to the Security Council that these activities were in violation of the procedures established by the Security Council. The Security Council responded on 11 January with a statement condemning the action taken by Iraq which constituted further material breaches of Security Council resolution 687, which established the formal ceasefire at the end of the Gulf war.

The council demanded that Iraq co-operate fully with the United Nations Iraq/Kuwait observer mission—UNIKOM—and warned Iraq of the serious consequences that would flow from continued defiance. We hope that Iraq will not miscalculate, that the violations of the border will cease immediately, as will other Iraqi provocations, and that Iraq will comply with all United Nations resolutions.

Mr. Robertson: We fully understand why the Foreign Secretary cannot be here but has to be in Brussels this evening.

Is the Minister aware that there is wide international agreement that the conduct of President Saddam Hussein in the last few days has been designed as a deliberate and calculated provocation by a despicable regime, which calls in one breath for constructive dialogue and with the next says that it will recover Kuwait again? Is he further aware that there is no question but that Saddam Hussein must comply with the provisions of the United Nations Security Council resolutions that formed the basis for the ceasefire at the end of the Gulf war?

I assure the Minister that the good reasons for implementing the two air exclusion zones over northern and southern Iraq—protection from Saddam's genocidal attacks on the Kurds in the north and the Shi'ite Muslims in the south—remain as valid as they ever were. The imposition of the two air exclusion zones was supported by the Opposition in order to save many lives which were and are still in danger, and for that same reason we shall continue to support the air exclusion zones and their enforcement.

I welcome the assurance that the Foreign Secretary gave the House earlier today—that whatever necessary military action is taken will be taken in accordance with international law. I also strongly welcome the Foreign Secretary's assurance that he will keep the House fully informed of all developments, because that is an assurance which is of extreme importance to hon. Members from both sides.

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he has said. He is right: Saddam Hussein must comply with the Security Council resolutions. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his support for the no-fly zones. He is right to say that Iraq must not infringe the zones.

I can give the assurance once again that any action that may be contemplated at any stage by any party would proceed in accordance with international law. I can also assure the House once again that any material acts of any kind will be reported to the House.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): Everybody supports action against Saddam Hussein to make sure that he complies with United Nations resolutions, but will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that any action is taken with the agreement and support of our Arab allies in the Gulf war?

Mr. Hogg: It is very important that our Arab allies should support any action that the international community might deem appropriate; that is why it is important that any appropriate action should proceed in accordance with international law.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does the Minister agree that it is not just border incursions but the deployment of anti-aircraft missiles in southern Iraq and the interference with the United Nations arms inspection teams' rights to fly into Baghdad which mount up to a worrying picture? Is it not necessary to remind Saddam Hussein that he finds himself in the position that he does today only because of his invasion of a neighbouring member state of the United Nations?

In view of the disturbing report this morning by Saddam Hussein's press officer in an Iraqi newspaper that Iraq intends to "retake Kuwait", is it not important that the Government enjoy cross-party support in the House for whatever action they take in an international context against Saddam Hussein?

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman and to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) for the remarks that have already been made this afternoon. I agree with the great importance of proceeding in accordance with international law and maintaining cross-House agreement. It also needs to be said that the violations that the right hon. Gentleman has described amount to a pattern of conduct which must be deeply deplored.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that no United Nations aid has reached the south of Iraq for many months, nor are there any plans for it to be sent, and that the recent meagre aid flows to the Kurds in the north were fire-bombed and have now ceased completely? Therefore, does he agree that the memorandum of understanding and the United Nations' plans to send food to the south and the north are in rags and tatters and that nothing save intervention on the ground will save millions of people in the north and hundreds of thousands in the south from death by starvation this winter?

Mr. Hogg: As the House is well aware, my hon. Friend has been deeply involved in trying to take assistance to the people of south Iraq. She deserves all our praise.

The suffering in south Iraq, especially among the Shia people, is one of the reasons why it was thought right to impose a no-fly zone south of parallel 32.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Has not the ceasefire agreement been systematically broken over the past two years, ever since it was signed by Iraq's criminal regime? Saddam Hussein has taken every possible opportunity to test and tease the allies.

I understand the difficulties that arose when the war of aggression against Kuwait was decisively defeated; but does not the Minister appreciate that many people—probably not least those in Iraq—are asking why the allies did not take the opportunity of ending once and for all the bloodstained tyranny that has been responsible for so many deaths and tortures in Iraq, and for all that has occurred since the invasion of Kuwait?

Mr. Hogg: I well understand why people ask on occasion why Saddam Hussein was not removed at the end of the Gulf war. The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind, however, that we were part of a coalition acting under the authority of the United Nations, for the purposes authorised by the Security Council and none other. Had we tried to go beyond the scope of those authorised purposes, the coalition would have fallen apart—and, incidentally, Ministers would have betrayed the word that they gave hon. Members in the House.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Does my right hon. Friend agree that Saddam Hussein has won every move on the board? He is still in power, and he is still mocking all the western countries and treating them as a laughing stock.

What worries me particularly is the fact that, for some years, one of my constituents has been waiting for compensation for the death of her husband in Baghdad. There has been no movement whatever. The United Nations compensation committee has agreed that she should receive compensation, but Saddam Hussein simply refuses to sell oil for that purpose. Is it not time that he was taught a fundamental lesson in keeping his word? Should we not go in and do exactly what the United Nations has recommended, instead of playing what amounts to a game of draughts with him? Is it not time for firm action?

Mr. Hogg: I do not agree with my hon. Friend's observation that Saddam Hussein has won every game on the board. He has not. He invaded Iran; he lost that war, and tens of thousands of his people were killed. He invaded Kuwait; he lost that war too, and again tens of thousands of his people were killed. His country is now in a state of ruin. That is not winning every game on the board.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): The Minister's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) was disingenuous, to say the least. Hostilities ceased because of American domestic political opinion, not because our forces would have been acting beyond the constraint of the United Nations resolution; and the Republican Guard army units just north of our forces should have been taken out.

Will the Minister tell us which idiot left those Silkworms where they are? They pose a real threat.

Mr. Hogg: I was responding to a specific question from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick)—whether we should in some way have deprived Saddam Hussein of the leadership of Iraq. My point was that we were acting within the authority given to us by the Security Council; we could not go outside that authority without the coalition falling apart, and without Ministers having misled the House in previous statements.

Sir George Gardiner (Reigate): I refer to my right hon. and learned Friend's comment about the need to maintain the coalition at the end of the Gulf war. Will he give a further assurance that, if counter-action against Saddam Hussein is authorised, at least he will do his level best to ensure that this time the effort does not fall short of the objectives to be achieved?

Mr. Hogg: We shall proceed, in anything we do, in accordance with the principles of international law.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Why does not the Government more strenuously support the Iraqi opposition abroad, and in particular the Iraqi National Congress? Should not moneys owned by the Iraqi Government in the form of assets abroad be defrozen in part and handed to the INC to promote its internal campaigning in Iraq and to give it credibility in Baghdad?

Mr. Hogg: We have done various things to encourage the Iraqi opposition. We welcome the fact that a broad-based opposition is developing because that provides the people of Iraq with an alternative. As to compensation and assets, the hon. Gentleman makes an interesting proposal that has not yet been advanced. I can see two obvious difficulties. It would be a clear breach of the Security Council resolution freezing those assets, and there is a whole range of other claims on them. However I shall reflect on the hon. Gentleman's point, as I do on all his points.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Has my right hon. and learned Friend held any discussions with the Kuwaiti Government, and will he confirm that it is no use the international community extending threats to Saddam Hussein, but that it must publicly be seen to be prepared to act?

Mr. Hogg: Discussions with the Kuwaiti Government have continued over many months, and will naturally continue. As to Iraq's violations of Kuwait, it is important for us to say that Iraq must comply with the Security Council resolutions and cease its violations of the no-fly zone—otherwise it will be exposed to great risk.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Count some of us out of the so-called all-party, cross-party agreement. Why is it that *Al Ahram* and the rest of the authoritative Egyptian press are against military action? Was not the Foreign Secretary's candid answer—which the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows very well—to my question on Egyptian and Bahraini support a blunt "No"? They do not support us in military action in the circumstances.

Mr. Hogg: One interesting aspect of the Security Council discussion and of the debate about Iraq generally is the broad consensus in support of the proposition that Saddam Hussein must comply with Security Council

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resolutions and cease to infringe the no-fly zones. There is very broad agreement for the proposition that, if Iraq does not do those things, it faces serious consequences.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill)—that Saddam Hussein has twice been severely defeated in the battlefield recently, but why do we continue to permit him to turn military defeat into propaganda victory? What steps are the Government taking in the Security Council to obtain its authority to take action to stop once and for all Saddam Hussein's retreat and cheat tactics?

Mr. Hogg: The best thing we can do to deflate Saddam Hussein's reputation is to explain the facts. They point to continued and dramatic failure—loss of the war against Iran, loss of the war in Kuwait, and a total destruction of Iraq's economy. That pattern of failure has seldom been surpassed.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Mr. George Gardiner—I mean Mr. George Galloway.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): My hon. Friend is much better looking.

Madam Speaker: My apologies all round.

Mr. Galloway: Notwithstanding the consensus that exists across the Front Benches, I must say—like my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—that, whatever bloody act has been planned, it will not be done in my name, in the name of many people in this country or in the name of many members of the coalition that fought the Gulf war only a couple of years ago. Does not the Minister understand that, in the Islamic world and elsewhere, the new coalition is regarded as a bunch of bloody hypocrites? They are ready to pulverise Iraq for its transgressions against international agreements, yet stand by and watch while Israel—which for nearly 40 years has been breaking every international law in the book—expels, imprisons, tortures and kills people in occupied territories every day of the week; and they do absolutely nothing while Bosnian Muslims are massacred in the centre of Europe. They will be seen as a bunch of hypocrites and will receive the response from the international community that they deserve.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman's threat that he will be unable to support any action that we may have in mind is a threat that can be borne with equanimity.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Given that, sadly, my right hon. Friend has unfinished business still to be accomplished, will he ensure that, rather than concentrating on the no-fly zone over southern Iraq, Her Majesty's Government and their western allies will concentrate on creating an effective no-go zone for Iraqi troops on the ground in neighbouring Kuwait? Will he also ensure that any further incursions into Kuwait by Iraqi forces or civilians will not go unpunished—because, if they do, Saddam Hussein will be further emboldened to defy international opinion and international law and to commit further acts of aggression?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend will have heard me say in answer to the private notice question that the Secretary-General is of the opinion that what has happened in Kuwait constitutes a serious breach of the relevant procedures. In answer to his question, let me make it plain that Iraq must comply with the resolutions of the Security Council and must cease to infringe the no-fly zone. If she does not, she faces very serious consequences.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): As some sort of military response on the part of the Gulf war coalition seems more and more probable, can the Minister comment on reports that, this time round, the use of airfields in Turkey will be denied to the coalition forces?

Mr. Hogg: I do not wish to speculate about matters of that kind.

Points of Order

3.52 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have already given you notice of my intention to raise a point of order concerning a Scottish Office memorandum sent by the parliamentary clerk to the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch). The parliamentary clerk informed the hon. Gentleman that he would be tabling a question for him on transport subsidies of the "good news" type, saying that it should not present him with any difficulties. The answer duly appeared at column 466 of *Hansard* of 17 December. The parliamentary question's signature was indistinct.

Having referred to earlier instances in *Hansard*, I know that former Speakers have taken a very serious view of such matters. For example, *Hansard* of 20 November 1975 refers to a similar incident involving two former Members —George Cunningham and Jeremy Thorpe. On that occasion, the Speaker was unequivocal in his statement that no Member can table a Question for another Member unless he has the agreement of that Member—in other words, unless that second Member wishes the Question to be tabled.

In this case, it was a civil servant who tabled the Question. That is completely against the rules of the House and also against the civil service compromise, being in pursuit of the objectives not of the Government but of political masters. Given that disgraceful state of affairs, I am referring the matter to the Select Committee on Procedure. But, more than anything, I seek your view and your guidance, Madam Speaker, on what should be done to ensure that hon. Members are protected and the integrity of the House is maintained.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member has raised what is potentially a very serious matter. I should like an opportunity further to examine the circumstances, after which I shall give a considered ruling.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will be aware of the problems we face in Tayside with the weather. You will also be aware that I made an application under Standing Order No. 20. Can you tell me whether I did anything that was out of order? If so, can you tell me how I can go about changing my ways?

Madam Speaker: What the hon. Gentleman did was in order. He also knows that I seriously consider such matters, and I give no reasons for my decision. I know that he will not press me.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Further to the point of order, Madam Speaker. There is a serious aspect to the point raised. Has the Secretary of State for Social Security informed you whether he intends to come to the House to make a statement on the very severe weather conditions which have affected Scotland and many other parts of Britain in the past few days, leaving many elderly and infirm people trapped in their homes——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman need not argue the case with me. I can answer him and the whole House: no Minister has informed me that he wishes to make a statement.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As part of the changed ways of the House, brought about by Mr. Speaker Weatherill but not practised by Mr. Speaker Selwyn Lloyd and many of his predecessors, one could make an application under Standing Order No. 20 on the unsatisfactory nature of a statement in answer to a private notice question or questions themselves.

Against that background, I should like to make an application under Standing Order No. 20 on the imminent military action to be taken against Iraq. The House will know that there are deep issues as to whether the Gulf allies, especially Egypt and Bahrain, have in any way——

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me put this to the hon. Gentleman. I recognise him regularly in the House which allows him to put across his opinion. I value that, and I know that he values it. However, he cannot now argue the case with me again. No new facts have arisen whereby he can now make an application under Standing Order No. 20. He made such an application earlier today which I could not hear. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will now accept what I have to say.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Is it further to the point of order?

Mr. Dalyell: Yes, and there is also a point of principle. We cannot know whether ministerial answers will be satisfactory or unsatisfactory. In the case of the Foreign Secretary, a number of my hon. Friends gasped at the answer that he gave to a factual question. We could not know that the Secretary of State would not answer the question about Egypt and Bahrain, but evade it.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not argue the policy with me. New factors must arise before I can allow an application to be made under Standing Order No. 20. New factors have not arisen, and the hon. Gentleman cannot argue the matter with me now. He can make an application under Standing Order No. 20 tomorrow or at any other time, but not now.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker——

Madam Speaker: No, there is nothing further to that point of order. I have dealt with the matter.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Further to the point of order on the weather conditions in Scotland, Madam Speaker. I refer to the issue of applications made under Standing Order No. 20 and the allocation of them. You will appreciate that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was not the only hon. Member to make an application under Standing Order No. 20 today and to have his application rejected.

When severe weather conditions prevailed in London and the south of England some two years ago, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Social Security gave contradictory statements daily in the House until new regulations were tabled—a minor improvement. Many of us who represent Scottish constituencies now face the position in which many of our pensioners and disabled——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is trying my patience. I have already dealt with that matter. She put in

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a Standing Order No. 20 application to me earlier. She knows full well that I cannot hear it. She must not pursue the matter with me now.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During the private notice question on Iraq a Conservative Member said that all Members of this House supported military action. You rightly called some Opposition Members to refute that and say that it would not be done in their name. But, of course, that did not give the opportunity to all Members of Parliament who oppose such military action, such as myself, to put it on the record that we oppose——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is trying to prolong the debate. I do my very best to call Members representing a variety of opinion in this House. That is what it is all about.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand that President Bush has just authorised an air attack on Iraq. We have just had a statement from the Minister of State but that news was not given to us. I wonder whether exceptionally you could extend for a further period questions to the Minister so that we can find out whether the action is taken in compliance with security——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that I do not have that authority.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether you could give some guidance on Standing Order No. 20. As you know, at one time—certainly when my party was in government—there were six or seven applications a day at least on some occasions. There were few days, if any, when the Conservative Opposition did not have the opportunity—unsuccessfully on most occasions—of submitting three or four applications. You were here at the time in another capacity and you were aware of that practice.

I am also aware that your predecessor made certain changes to the interpretation of the Standing Order, which presumably you also apply. May I bring it to your attention that in 1979 a debate took place on the Floor of the House on a recommendation by the then Procedure Committee that Members should not be in a position to make an application for an emergency debate? Fortunately, that recommendation was defeated. When a Back Bencher makes a Standing Order No. 20 application it usually means that you will hear it and no more. Perhaps unfortunately, it is rare that an application is successful.

May I have your guidance, Madam Speaker? Are you saying that it would be useful, perhaps before one submits an application to your office, to accept that it has become a rare occurrence even to be in a position to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20?

Although my views are diametrically opposite to those of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who has unsuccessfully made an application, surely the subject that he wished to raise is of great significance. As a Back-Bench Member of Parliament, does he not have a right like the rest of us at least to put a case to you for an emergency debate?

Madam Speaker: So long as the basic requirements of the Standing Order are met, that is perfectly in order. However, Standing Order No. 20 applications are made to me regularly by many Members every day. As Speaker, I have to determine whether the criteria are met so that the application might be heard. I read many applications every day of a working week.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm that if the Government seek to make a statement tonight you will grant permission for a Minister to make a statement about any possible aggressive action by the United States, using the name of the United Nations or any other combination? Will the annunciators give adequate notice to Members that a statement will be made tonight, should the Government make a statement? In the view of many Members, they ought to make a statement.

Madam Speaker: That is somewhat hypothetical at this stage, but as usual I will look extremely carefully at any request that is made to me at any time. We must now proceed.

BILLS PRESENTED

Licensing (Amendment) (Scotland)

Mr. Phil Gallie presented a Bill to amend section 23(2) of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 in relation to certain planning certificates: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 January, and to be printed. [Bill 110.]

Animal Experimentation (Cosmetics)

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie, supported by Mr. Don Dixon, Sir Teddy Taylor, Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. Phillip Oppenheim, Mr. Jimmy Wray, Mr. Gordon McMaster, Mr. James Pawsey, Mr. Archy Kirkwood and Mr. Norman Hogg, presented a Bill to prohibit the use of animals in the development and testing of cosmetics: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 January, and to be printed. [Bill 111.]

Ban of Imports (Child Labour)

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie, supported by Mr. Alan Meale, Dr. John Reid, Mr. David Marshall, Mrs. Irene Adams, Mr. Thomas McAvoy, Mr. Michael J. Martin, Mr. Stanley Orme and Mr. Thomas Graham, presented a Bill to prohibit the sale of imported goods, the manufacture of which has involved child labour: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 January, and to be printed. [Bill 112.]

Gaming Machines (Prohibitions on use by Persons Under Eighteen)

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie, supported by Mrs. Irene Adams, Mr. Jimmy Wray, Mr. Jimmy Hood, Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. Frank Cook, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. George Galloway, Mr. Keith Vaz and Mr. Mike Watson, presented a Bill to prohibit the use of gaming machines in cafes, small shops, amusement arcades, snack bars, fairgrounds and other places by persons under the age of eighteen: and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 January, and to be printed. [Bill 113.]

Energy (Fair Competition)

4.4 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to eliminate unfair competition in the import, production and sale of coal, oil, natural gas, nuclear power, electricity and other primary and secondary energy sources.

The aim of this Bill is unashamedly to save the pits and to defend coalfield communities. This is an appropriate day on which to introduce the measure as, 100 years ago today, Keir Hardie, who had been a Scottish miners' leader, met fellow socialists at the inaugural conference of the Independent Labour party. The conference was held in Bradford and at that time Keir Hardie was editor of the paper that he had founded, which was appropriately named "The Miner". By 1893, Hardie was already a Member of Parliament and was fighting the cause of the unemployed. My Bill is directed at preventing further unemployment today, and is, I hope, in the tradition of that great Labour pioneer.

The need for my Bill arises because of the Government's failure even to debate in the House the threatened pit closure programme. All that we have heard from the Government is a statement from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 19 October, almost three months ago. It has been left to the Opposition to raise the issue, through an Opposition day debate, through initiatives by Members at Question Time, and on an earlier ten-minute Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington). Otherwise, the pit closure issue has emerged only through the invaluable work undertaken by the Select Committees on Trade and Industry and on Employment.

Deep-mined coal faces a crazy situation. Mines are breaking productivity records, yet a fixed and fiddled energy market denies British Coal the opening to sell sufficient of its highly efficient production. The Bill will unfix the fix against the coal industry. It is a fix to guarantee sales to uncompetitive producers in the nuclear power industry and gas-fired power stations, while electricity is also being unfairly imported through a French interconnector and dumped imports of foreign coal, and through orimulsion, which has a high sulphur content.

Under the legislation to establish electricity privatisation, regional electricity companies are obliged to purchase a slice of their electricity from non-fossil fuel sources. In practice, such purchases come overwhelmingly from nuclear power. In addition, there is an 11 per cent. levy on electricity supplied to consumers from fossil fuel generation. Under the arrangement, nuclear power generation is subsidised to the tune of £1·3 billion per year and it is set to remain in place until 1998. The subsidy is being used to extend the lives of the obsolete Magnox stations and for the construction of Sizewell B.

The Bill will offer the Government two options: either the nuclear levy will be abolished and assistance be provided only to the nuclear industry for decommissioning projects, which will lead to the closure of the high-cost Magnox power stations and create a market for between 7 and 8 million tonnes a year, or the coal industry will have to receive the same subsidy as the nuclear industry—a move that would lead to a dramatic growth of export revenues for our home production and stimulate growth in the British economy.

Gas-fired stations are being built independently of National Power and PowerGen. Their new capacity would displace 30 million tonnes of coal a year. In the main, the gas-fired stations have important links with the regional electricity companies—often through an equity stake. Those stations have already secured or intend to secure long-term sweetheart contracts with their regional electricity companies. Those contracts will usually last up to 15 years.

The link between the electricity producer and the supplier makes economic sense to the regional electricity companies, but not to the customers. The new gas-fired stations wil be more expensive than the existing coal-fired ones. My Bill would halt that economic madness by suspending long-term contracts for those gas-fired stations and by obliging them to sell their electricity in open competition. As a result, some 20 projects in the pipeline would probably be dropped, and gas burn would be reduced at other stations. That would also preserve United Kingdom reserves which would otherwise be dangerously depleted.

There is a two-way link between the national grid and France, but, in practice, it has become a one-way system for the import of French electricity to Britain. That has occurred in part because of the competitive advantage given to French electricity by the fossil fuel levy in England and Wales. The current contract with the French expires in March 1993, and my Bill is designed to prevent it from being renewed. That would create a market for 7 million tonnes of coal a year.

It would be of little competitive advantage to the deep-mined coal industry of Britain, however, if its potential sales were mainly picked up through further coal imports and the expansion of opencast production. There is evidence that coal imported into the European Community, including the United Kingdom, is being exported at prices below those at which such coal would be sold on its domestic market, and below its production cost.

My Bill would therefore ban the import of coal into Britain unless it could be proven not to be dumped here. Certified and checkable claims would have to be issued for the place of origin of that coal, its home market price and the cost of production. Furthermore, my Bill would require action by Britain, through the European Commission, to seek to extend that practice into other member states. For instance, 95 per cent. of Danish electricity is produced from coal that is currently imported from Colombia, but that contract is shortly to be transferred to South Africa.

The opencast coal potential in Britain is massive. The remaining pits in Derbyshire are threatened with closure, but the area is in danger of being swamped by opencast mining, which would result in massive social and environmental costs. Opencast mining, however, occupies a uniquely privileged position in the United Kingdom planning system. Mining planning guidance note 3—MPG 3—provides presumptions in favour of such planning applications and inhibits the work of local authorities seeking to act on behalf of their communities' interests.

My Bill would abolish MPG 3. Stricter conditions would be laid down for opencast applications, to include the distance of the sites from communities and the need for rail links for the movement of coal from those mines. My Bill would contain a formula to ensure the guaranteed life of all existing pits, which would ensure that commercial practices and delegated legislation are not subsequently

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

introduced to defeat its effects. That formula would be based on an assessment of the size and extraction rate of coal reserves.

I seek leave to bring in the Bill, the exact drafting of which I am still prepared to discuss with the President of the Board of Trade, given that I have now beaten him to the task.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Harry Barnes, Mr. Eric Clarke, Mr. Bill Etherington, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe, Mr. Tony Benn, Mr. Ronnie Campbell, Mr. Martin Redmond, Mrs. Helen Jackson, Mr. Alan Meale and Mr. Bob Cryer.

ENERGY (FAIR COMPETITION)

Mr. Harry Barnes accordingly presented a Bill to eliminate unfair competition in the import, production and sale of coal, oil, natural gas, nuclear power, electricity and other primary and secondary energy sources: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 January and to be printed. [Bill 114.]

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 2 December]

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION

4.16 pm

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): The first amendment to be selected is No. 40.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You will be aware that when, in Committee, there arises a problem relating to a matter outside the Committee—particularly if it has arisen since the Committee last met—it is within the power of the Chair to accept a motion for the adjournment of debate so that matters may be clarified. I understand that the equivalent procedure on the Floor of the House follows virtually the same criteria, but that a Member moves that the Chairman report progress. I ask you, Sir, to allow me to move that motion.

Since we last met, there have been events that I suggest require clarification and a response from the Government before proper consideration of the Bill can be continued. We are glad to see the Minister of State here, and I emphasise that the prospect of his disappearance is not the reason for my request. Nor is it the failure of the Attorney-General, who owes me a letter, to put in an appearance. The reason for my request is the decision, taken at the Edinburgh summit meeting, in relation to Denmark and the statement about it that the Prime Minister made in the House on 14 December.

There is some doubt about the status of this decision. Some people say that it is a treaty; some say that it is not. Some say that, in practice, it amends the treaty that we are discussing; some say that it does nothing of the sort, that it affects only Denmark. Some say that it can be justiciable in international law—as, indeed, the Prime Minister has claimed; others are presenting papers, which I believe are well known to hon. Members, indicating that it cannot. Some say that it can be binding on the parties; others say that it cannot, as only seven members of the European Communities are actually bound by the rules of the International Court of Justice.

The Chairman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, to whose comments I have been listening attentively. He is seeking clarification on a number of political points, and I understand his desire for such clarification. He keeps using the words "there is some doubt". I am sure that, as he did not manage to catch my eye on either of the previous two days of debate, he will wish to do so today. He may well wish to weave into his speech some of the doubts and points of clarification to which he has been referring.

However, I cannot at this stage accept a debate on political points. In case any hon. Member may have forgotten over the Christmas recess, I must emphasise that this Bill does not ratify the treaty; it makes changes in

domestic law consequential upon the treaty. I therefore regret that I am unable to accept the hon. Gentleman's proposition for a dilatory motion.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I wish to seek clarification on two procedural points. First, shall we, during this Committee stage, follow the normal procedure whereby hon. Members are entitled to speak more than once on any amendment? Secondly, bearing in mind the fact that our proceedings are likely to last for many weeks and that we have other duties, which cannot be completely abandoned, will it be acceptable for hon. Members to leave the Chamber during the discussion and return still hoping to catch your eye?

The Chairman: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's first point is yes and the answer to the second point is that it depends on how many hon. Members wish to catch my eye and for how long they speak.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. A problem will arise in the debate that we are about to have, which covers titles II to IV. I remind you and the House of the words used to define titles II to IV in the Bill:

"Titles II, III and IV of the Treaty on European Union signed at Maastricht on 7th February 1992, together with the other provisions of the Treaty so far as they relate to those Titles, and the Protocols adopted at Maastricht on that date".

Twice in those words reference is made to the date of 7 February 1992, but, since that date and particularly in December, additional points were made on issues that fall within titles II and IV.

For example, within title II, the issue and definition of citizenship arise. However, at the December summit, Ministers made a further decision on refining, or at least stating and supplementing, the provisions in the treaty on the question of citizenship. It is section A of the citizenship provision in the Danish decision. That is part and parcel of the provisional articles which will fall within the compass of this debate yet will be additional to it.

Reference is also made, in section B of the Danish decision, to economic and monetary union, which again falls within the scope of today's debate, within titles II to IV. They, too, are a supplement to the treaty.

The Chairman: Order. I have the gist of what the hon. Gentleman is trying to say. He must accept that I have done a little preparation for this afternoon's debate. The issues under titles II to IV are very broad, and I expect —although I do not encourage—hon. Members to hold a broad debate. They will want to seek clarification of various issues. I think that allusions to the two points that the hon. Gentleman raised would be in order this afternoon if he can catch my eye.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Various decisions have come about fairly recently in Europe. One has to do with the cohesion or slush fund in terms of the contribution which this country will have to make following the Edinburgh summit. Another is to do with the special provisions made for Denmark. With regard to Denmark, there is a question about whether this is justiciable. A further question relates to how subsidiarity will be incorporated into law.

On all those issues, points will be made during the debate, and we shall no doubt get answers from the Government. They will give their best answers as a result of their best endeavours, but decisions on all those issues are made by bodies outside the House, outside the Government and outside the country. Decisions on the budget will be made by the Commission——

The Chairman: Order. What is the point of order for the Chair? There is none, is there?

Mr. Marlow: Yes, there is.

The Chairman: Order.

Mr. Marlow: Bunches of people outside the country will tell us what to do. Should we not ask them what they mean before debating the issue?

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a colleague of mine, and I hope that he will recognise that factor. If he has had a good lunch, perhaps he will have a good supper, too.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I wish to know how you intend to proceed with today's business. The treaty that we are debating is about the provisions that we should use to advance European integration. That was all agreed by the member states and put in the treaty document. Title II is at the heart of the treaty and it would not be unreasonable to conclude that amendment No. 40, which is the lead amendment today, is nothing short of a wrecking amendment. My point of order does not challenge——

The Chairman: Order. I would not have selected the amendment had it been a wrecking amendment.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Is it in order for a representative of the Treasury to comment on the expected date of the Third Reading? The matchless negotiating skills of my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) secured that Third Reading would take place after the Danish referendum. That assumption, I think, has generally held.

It is now quite clear that there is a fragile political situation in Denmark, and no one would like to postulate whether the Prime Minister or the Government will survive. In those circumstances, should the referendum then be postponed owing to the Danish domestic situation, I wonder whether we might have confirmation from the Treasury Bench that the commitment to hold the Third Reading after the referendum date still stands.

The Chairman: That was not actually a point of order to the Chair, was it? There are business questions tomorrow, which might be a more appropriate——

Mr. Biffen *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, but it is not a matter for the Chair. It will have been heard on the Treasury Bench. It seems to me that business questions tomorrow would be a more appropriate occasion on which to ask that sort of question.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. May I draw to the attention of the House the statements on the tape attributed to Mr. Lawrence Eagleburger, to the effect that American forces may well attack Iraq? May I, through you, Mr. Morris, ask Ministers whether, if British forces are involved in military action and there is any American attack on Iraq, a statement will be made to the House forthwith?

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman knows that Madam Speaker has commented on that. I was in the Chamber at the time, as he was.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. With respect to a submission made last time we were sitting and the invitation that we hoped to extend to the Attorney-General to take part in our proceedings, serious questions have been raised about the validity of the decisions arrived at in Edinburgh, and they could have a bearing on the scope and title of this particular Bill.

As the hon. Member for Methyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has just said, the Bill states that the treaty is the treaty signed on 7 February. If there were any serious doubts about whether or not the changes made in Edinburgh were legally binding and had effect within the framework of the treaty, we would not now be considering the same treaty as that which was signed on 7 February. I should therefore be grateful, Mr. Moris, if you could consider whether the Attorney-General might give us a clear indication on that.

The Chairman: Those on the Treasury Bench will have heard the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You said earlier that this Bill was not a Bill to ratify the treaty but was merely to deal with the internal consequences in British domestic law of the treaty. You also suggested that it might be possible in a wide-ranging debate to deal with the decision taken at Edinburgh which was outside the framework of the European Community —taken by Heads of Government quite separately—to do with Denmark. But since the view from the Treasury Bench appears to be that the decision is outdside the treaty, that it is not an amendment of the treaty but something quite separate, do I take it that, if it is in order to refer to that decision in the present debate, it will also be in order to seek to amend the Bill to incorporate that decision?

The Chairman: The right hon. Gentleman well knows from the previous two days of debate that I must ask hon. Members on both sides, if they wish me to consider amendments, to put them in writing. When they are received in writing, I will give the amendments detailed consideration and will hope very much to draw a conclusion on them. I also make it clear to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) that I did say that the points that were raised could be alluded to and passing references made to them. I think that that is what is appropriate at the present point.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Have you had an opportunity to discuss with the Select Committee on Procedure ways in which we can make as rapid progress with the Bill as possible, in order that it can move swiftly to ratification in this country's interests? There is in general debate in the Chamber an opportunity for the Speaker to apply the 10-minute rule. Is there any way in which we can give as many hon. Members as possible the opportunity to speak in Committee? It is not normally done, I understand, but it would give an opportunity to many hon. Members.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman is right—there is no such thing as a ten-minute rule in Committee. I hope that even the idea of it will not be necessary.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Like many other hon. Members, I am worried about the status of the decision taken at Edinburgh and how it will affect Denmark. I think that you described the issue as a political one which could be raised and discussed in the ordinary course of events, but is it a political matter? Is it not a legal and constitutional matter, and therefore one on which, before we can proceed with a Bill that could be profoundly altered by the answer to the question, we should have a statement from the Attorney-General?

4.30 pm

The Chairman: Hon. Members will have their own views on all such matters. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who first raised a point of order, sought clarification on a number of issues. He was perfectly right to do so, but the Chair cannot provide the answer to any of his doubts.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. The Bill is about changing United Kingdom domestic law. You will be aware that a unitary Parliament —set up by the Act of Union of 1707 between Scotland and England—was created to devise United Kingdom domestic law. That Act produced, among many other things, the British citizen. I trust that it will be in order to explore the implications of the effect that changes in United Kingdom law will have north of the border. Those changes will affect the original Act of 1707, which has since been amended by agreement.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman is right to raise that issue. However, I think that he will have a busy time tracking the changes that have taken place between 1707 and 1992. I wish him good luck on his journey.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I seek to follow up in a different way the issue raised by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). You said that hon. Members could consult widely and seek legal assistance. I am not sure that that is always the case. You, Sir, as the Chairman of the Committee seeking to safeguard the interests of the House—and within the House, of individual Members—have recourse to considerable legal expertise. Have you, in your role as representative of Back Benchers' interests, asked your legal advisers whether the changes that took place in Edinburgh have a major bearing on the Bill?

If so, it will be totally inappropriate for the House to continue to consider a Bill that was signed on 7 February last year, despite the fact that we began discussions in Committee in December—before the Edinburgh summit. As a member of your panel, I believe that we are discussing an important constitutional, not political, issue.

The Chairman: Every point of order that is in order is important. I have made it clear that no hon. Member has precedence over another hon. Member. I do not disclose the source of my advice. As all hon. Members who have spoken so far have said, they seek clarification because they have doubts. They may have their own opinions but, with the greatest respect, the opinion of the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) may not be shared by all

other hon. Members. I imagine that the hon. Gentleman will seek to catch my eye, raise his questions and see what answer he receives.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: No. I call Mr. Spicer.

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. What will the voting procedure be under this interesting cluster arrangement that you have invented? As I understand it——

The Chairman: Order. I have not invented any cluster arrangement. I am here to assist the Committee, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will feel that I am doing so. I have told every hon. Member that my door is open. The hon. Gentleman did not come to see me during the recess, nor has he done so since I have been back. I hope that he finds nothing to criticise in the organisation of the amendments.

Mr. Spicer: I hastily withdraw any implication of criticism in my use of the word "invention", Sir. I used it in a favourable sense, because I thought that it was an imaginative way to debate these issues. Other hon. Members may not feel the same, but I am left in some confusion about how we are to proceed with the detailed voting.

My question is factual. Am I right in thinking that, typically on each cluster, we shall vote perhaps for the closure, and then for the lead amendment, and vote on the other amendments when we reach the appropriate point in the Bill? If that is right, and as this is a short Bill, how will we know the exact point at which votes on the other amendments will occur?

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that it is up to hon. Members to decide whether to have a vote on each lead amendment. That is not a matter for me, but I imagine that there will be votes on some lead amendments. The hon. Gentleman has been in the House for the same time as I have. He will have to do some homework on when the other votes fall.

Mr. Rowlands *rose*——

Mr. Shore *rose*——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. The three hon. Members who are on their feet are seeking to catch my eye again, but I suggest that it is now time to make progress on the Bill. We are anxious to hear again the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) speaking to this amendment; perhaps, later, other amendments will be moved.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: I shall allow it, because it is the hon. Gentleman's first point of order in this series.

Mr. Skinner: I have been listening carefully. You told the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), who is your constituency neighbour, that he had had a heavy lunch, which implied that he had come here semi-drunk or whatever. You have just told a Tory ex-Minister——

The Chairman: Order. I have made no allegation, nor can it be inferred from what I said that any hon. Member has come in here drunk one way or the other. I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is an old friend, a good colleague and a close neighbour, and he knows jolly well what I meant. I am sure that he accepted the spirit in which I spoke.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), who is an ex-Minister, is another hon. Friend of yours, and you have just told him to go and do his homework. I am not upset by Tories falling out like Kilkenny cats, and if you want to continue to do that, get on with it. The important issue is that you are in the Chair and have a duty to ensure that the debate is properly conducted. You should not make remarks for which you would pull up a Back Bencher. You are inciting us to say such things on many other occasions. Mind your language. You have told me to mind mine many times.

The Chairman: That is not a point of order, and it is not particularly helpful.

Mr. Rowlands *rose*——

Mr. Denzil Davies *rose*——

Mr. Shore *rose*——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

The Chairman: I shall take second points of order from the four hon. Members who are on their feet. I hope that they sense the feeling of hon. Members that we wish to get on with the debate.

Mr. Shore: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. As you will be aware, because I wrote to you about the matter, new clause 10 is to be considered in a group of amendments although it is different in style and content from all the amendments in that group. It would be helpful to the Committee and certainly to me if you were able at the appropriate time to call a separate vote on the new clause.

The Chairman: I shall consider the matter when we see how the debate is going.

Mr. Rowlands: I seek clarification of your ruling, Mr. Morris. You said that we could make a passing reference to the Danish decision, because there will be a wide-ranging debate. Does that mean that, when issues of citizenship and monetary union come to be considered in greater detail, we shall not be able to discuss the Danish decision and the decision made at the Edinburgh summit?

The Chairman: No, I did not rule that out at all.

Mr. Denzil Davies: I, too, seek clarification, Mr. Morris. You have said that a passing reference to the Danish decision will be allowed. I put it to you, with respect, that the Chair should decide whether the Danish decision is within the confines of the Bill—strictly, that decision falls outside the Maastricht treaty—or outside them. If the decision is without the confines of the Bill, we know that your natural generosity will allow a passing reference to it, but the matter should be clarified for the sake of speeches that are made at a later stage in our consideration of the Bill and on later amendments. Does the Danish decision fall within or without the Bill?

The Chairman: The Bill does not ratify the treaty.

Mr. Davies: We know that.

The Chairman: Good. It makes changes in domestic law that are consequential upon it. Those are the crunch points. Therefore, it does not fall within the scope of the Bill.

Mr. Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I seek clarification of what you have just said. I think you said, "Therefore, it does not fall within the scope of the Bill." Is it your ruling that the Danish decision does not fall within the scope of the Bill?

The Chairman: That is right, but that does not mean that allusions to it cannot be made.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Unlike the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), with whom I may make common cause later in the debate, I did not see the implication to which he referred in our previous conversation. To clarify the matter, I had lunch in the Members' Dining Room, and the only beverage that I had was coffee. It was a very good lunch.

Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) with regard to the relevance of the Denmark decision and whether it comes within the Bill, you referred, Mr. Morris, to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench listening, and to their ability to comment. May I suggest that these matters are decided not by my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench but by the European Court of Justice, which will make the final interpretations and decisions?

In the interests of the House, knowing what is happening and knowing what we are debating, and knowing what is in store if we pass the Bill, which is the ratification of the treaty, is it not appropriate that the House, yourself, Mr. Morris, somebody, or even the Government, should get in touch with the European Court of Justice and put the matter to them so that we know what the facts are?

The Chairman: With regret, it is certainly not possible for me to do that.

Mr. Cash: On the list of amendments that you have selected, Mr. Morris, there is the grouping which refers to a referendum. I believe——

The Chairman: Order. I hope that the hon. Member will move amendment No. 40 and then explain why he has done so.

Clause 1

Treaty on European Union

Mr. Cash: I beg to move amendment No. 40, in page 1, line 9, leave out 'II'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 323, in page 1, line 9, leave out 'II'.

No. 11, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 2 on page 9 of Cm. 1934)'.

No. 17, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 138a on page 41 of Cm. 1934)'.

No. 116, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(other than the following provisions set out under Article G—

Paragraph A (1)

Paragraph B (2)

Paragraph B (3)

Paragraph B (4)

Paragraph B (5)

Paragraph B (7)

Paragraph C

Paragraph D (10), (11), (12), (14), (15), (16), (17), (19), (20), (22), (23), (25), (26), (27), (28), (29), (30), (31), (32), (33), (34), (35), (37), (38—except Articles 130, 130r, 130s and Title XVII), (39), (40), (41—except Article 138e), (45), (47), (48), (49), (50), (56), (57), (60), (61), (62), (63), (67), (69), (70), (71), (79), (80), (81), (83) and (84).'.

No. 124, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(excluding Article G B on page 9 to 11 of Cm 1934.)'.

No. 234, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 138a'.

No. 91, in page 1, line 9, leave out 'III'.

No. 20, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert '(except Article H on page 60 of Cm 1934).'.

No. 92, in page 1, line 9, leave out 'IV'.

No. 146, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert 'but not Article 1 in Title IV thereof'.

No. 183, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert 'but not Article Q in Title VII thereof'.

No. 122, in page 1, line 10, leave out from '1992' to 'and' in line 11.

No. 117, in page 1, line 12, after 'Protocols', insert 'other than—'

(a) The Protocol on the Statute of the European System of Central Banks and of the European Central Bank

(b) The Protocol on the Excessive Deficit Procedure

(c) The Protocol on the Convergence Criteria referred to in Article 109 of the Treaty establishing the European Community

(d) The Protocol amending the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunity of the European Community

(e) The Protocol on the Transition to the Third Stage of Economic and Monetary Union

(f) The Protocol on Certain Provisions relating to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

(g) The Protocol on Social Policy

(h) The Protocol on Economic and Social Cohesion.'.

New Clause 10—*Report of European Council*—

'.—After the European Council has submitted its report after each of its meetings, Her Majesty's Government shall publish and lay such reports, and those annual reports in writing, as required by Title 1, Article D of the Treaty on European Union before Parliament, together with a statement as to their policy and performance in respect of the activities of the Union and their policies for its future.'.

Mr. Cash: In moving amendment No. 40 on title II, I wish to refer briefly to the implications of having a referendum. We have not had a free vote in the House, nor a White Paper. I wish to put it on the record that this is an historic decision, but not to pursue that matter until we come to the question of a referendum. It is important for people to note that there will be an opportunity for a campaign for a referendum throughout the country, which will begin on Sunday at 11.30 am in Hyde park. Having got that point across——

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my hon. Friend forgive me if I am not there? Will he bear in mind that many hon. Members believe that it is the job of the House to make difficult

decisions on a complex Bill and that that is what the true definition of parliamentary scrutiny should be? That is why we oppose a referendum.

Mr. Cash: I should have more sympathy with what my hon. Friend has said if I did not believe, as many other hon. Members and 75 per cent. of the British population believe, that the issue goes to the heart of the manner in which our parliamentary democracy is to be conducted. That is the crucial issue and that is why we seek a referendum.

I wish to refer to the recent statement of Chancellor Kohl of Germany of Monday 4 January with respect to the Edinburgh summit, which has direct relevance to the questions arising on title II. He said:

"the leaders of the European Community expressed their sympathy for Denmark's special reservations, but decided not to change the Maastricht treaty. Reopening negotiations was not, and is not, on our agenda."

4.45 pm

He continued:

"In Edinburgh we therefore could go no further than to clarify the relevant treaty clauses to respond to the main Danish concerns. This purely declaratory 'decision' neither changes nor complements the treaty and therefore does not require ratification by member states."

It was with that in mind that I raised the question whether the Attorney-General could or should come to the House —I believe that he should—to explain to us precisely the nature of the decisions taken in Denmark. Undoubtedly there are seriously conflicting opinions. Eminent Queen's counsel believe that the Danish decision was not binding, and the view has been expressed that the matter is being dealt with by an international legal obligation outside the treaty. Indeed, that is what the Government claim.

A major question arises that turns on the nature of the legal commitment, if it be a commitment at all; I believe that it is not. This will ultimately determine the relevance of the Edinburgh summit and the decision that was taken, with vast consequences for the United Kingdom, the Danish people and Europe as a whole. We do not want the treaty ratification procedure to proceed in a state of obscurity and confusion. We want to get the thing out into the open. Accordingly, I believe that it would be important for the Attorney-General—I have written to him and to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, enclosing a copy of a legal assessment that has been produced by some eminent Queen's counsel, to ask for their opinions—to clarify the matter. I have asked my right hon. and learned Friend and right hon. Friend to give me their opinions in writing.

Mr. Spearing: I think that everyone agrees that this is a constitutional matter of some significance. You may recall, Mr. Morris, that we had some difficulty during a previous debate when the Minister was unable immediately to answer some of the questions that were put to him. I wrote to the Attorney-General on the Edinburgh issue on 15 December and asked him to reply before this debate took place. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) may be interested to know that I heard this morning that the Attorney-General would not be replying. I was told that a reply would come from the Minister of State, but that it was unlikely that I would receive it before this debate. I mention that to help the hon. Gentleman and the entire Committee. There are many matters that should be clarified, and especially the views of the Government, before we proceed, because we do not know how they will affect the law of this country.

Mr. Cash: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention which helps to clarify the position.

Title II——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Marlow: Let my hon. Friend get on.

Mr. Corbyn: I thank the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) for giving way. He has obviously studied these matters in some detail. As an agreement has been reached between the Government and the Danish Government on a let-out clause that meets the Danish position, and if there is to be no change in the proposed Maastricht treaty, what is the point or validity of having a referendum in Denmark when nothing has changed since the first referendum?

Mr. Cash: That is the very matter which should be clarified. Does the present position add up to a row of beans? On one interpretation it appears that it does not. The matter must be resolved as we go forward.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I think that I might be able to shed some light on the matter. In his statement to the House, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said:

"The solution is binding in international law."—[*Official Report*, 14 December 1992; Vol. 216, c. 23.]

Any reference to Community law is conspicuous by its absence. Is not that the truth of the matter? It might be an international treaty, but it has no validity in Community law.

Mr. Cash: That is where the problem lies. We are talking about the ratification of a treaty. We are dealing with the future of the European Community. Title II amends the whole of the treaty of Rome over a wide range of matters which are set out from page 9 to page 60 of Cm. 1934. All those matters are affected by the legal status of the decisions that are being taken, provided that they are being taken in a proper constitutional manner that can stand up in relation to the European Community itself.

It is no good Governments and others going round, in the belief that they can cobble together decisions on pieces of paper, picking a little bit from one pigeon hole of international law and a little bit from another, nesting here and nesting there. We must know the precise impact of the treaty. The purpose of my opening with Chancellor Kohl's remarks is to illustrate the point that there is no clear understanding, even among the leaders of Europe, of precisely what was decided at Edinburgh.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my hon. Friend invite the Minister to explain how, if, as we understand it, under the European Communities Act 1972, the general body of international law is excluded from consideration under Community law, the treaty can be binding in international law and binding in Community law?

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend, who is a distinguished lawyer, makes yet another good point. The matter must be cleared up. We need to know the treaty's implications for Britain's domestic law in order to decide whether we have a treaty with which we can live.

Mr. Marlow: As that matter is so fundamental to the further consideration of the great issues that are at stake, will my hon. Friend, before he proceeds with his speech, put a positive, generous and pleasant invitation before the Minister to clarify the issue now so that we know where we stand?

Mr. Cash: I am grateful for that suggestion. The Minister of State, who is attentive to these matters at all times, will no doubt want to respond. I do not know whether he wishes to do so now. I see no sign of great movement to the Dispatch Box, but I hope that at least his advisers will bear in mind that we not only ask for but insist upon an answer to the question. The whole range of government of the United Kingdom is being changed dramatically by the treaty and by the provisions of title II. It is not good enough for us to be left in any uncertainty about the impact of the treaty on our domestic law. The ratification of the treaty means that we will be part of a new Community. Therefore, I invite the Minister to make a representation to us in due course, I hope before the end of the day.

Mr. Dalyell: If the hon. Gentleman is so attentive to all these matters, could we be forgiven for wondering how such a diligent colleague brought himself to vote for the Single European Act?

Mr. Cash: The answer to that is extremely simple. I believe in the European Community, it is extremely important and it should be made to work on a realistic basis. The Single European Act, through co-operation and, primarily, through its development of commercial and trading policies, was a sensible way in which to reduce barriers to trade and to increase free trade throughout Europe. The Single European Act is primarily about trading and commercial matters, but the Maastricht treaty is primarily about government.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones) *rose*——

Mr. Cash: I shall give way to the Minister. I gather that he intends to resign, but we do not yet know whether he has.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Does my hon. Friend also support the extensions of qualified majority voting brought about by the Single European Act? Does he therefore support the principle of qualified majority voting?

Mr. Cash: I have said repeatedly that I am in favour of the notion of an increase in majority voting for specific purposes relating to co-operation in the commercial field which will enable free trade to develop within Europe and at the same time ensure that we can reduce barriers to trade. The Community originated because of difficulties in reducing protectionism. Therefore, it had a logical reason. There is no logical reason for turning over Britain's government and democracy to majority voting. That is political union. The Single European Act was a move towards greater economic union.

Mr. Budgen: Does my hon. Friend agree that one thing that has clearly emerged is that the European Court is a highly political organisation? Was it not a highly political organisation at the time of the Single European Act? Many of us thought that if we voted for any form of qualified majority voting, that procedure would be progressively extended by the political movement of the Commission and the Court. How did my hon. Friend find himself able to support the beginnings of that most disagreeable procedure?

Mr. Cash: I am always delighted to reply to a mischievous remark by my hon. Friend. He may recall that I tabled an amendment to the Single European Act which said that nothing in the Act would derogate from the sovereignty of the United Kingdom. My hon. Friend will be glad to know that Mr. Enoch Powell signed that amendment because he believed that it would be a way of containing the implications of the Single European Act described by my hon. Friend. None the less, for the reasons that I have given, I thought the Act necessary to reduce the degree of protectionism.

The Chairman: Order. I imagine that the former Member for Wolverhampton, South-West, Mr. Powell, will wish to read the argument for amendment No. 40 in tomorrow's *Hansard*. I hope that we can now get on with amendment No. 40 so that he is not disappointed.

Mr. Cash: What does title II involve? Article G turns an economic community into a European community. That is a fundamental change. It is intended to move from the notion of an economic community to a political union. A subsequent amendment in my name deals with political parties in Europe. It is clear from the treaty—I know that many Conservative Members wish it—that European political parties should operate within a politically integrated Europe. That is what the treaty says and it is clear that the idea is for political parties to operate at a European level with a view to integration—political integration in Europe. That is why I object to the change of the words from European Economic Community to European Community. We are debating the construction of a federal treaty, the primary political impetus of which is to be at the European level, and the political parties at that level are intended to replace the national Parliaments.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that in 1972 we were told that we were joining a European Economic Community and that certain provisions would be permanent? They are no longer there. In 1985-86 we were told that the Single European Act had only certain implications and some former members of the Government believed that and supported it, but they have now changed their position. Experience tells us that things go far further than the Bill and that is why the amendments are essential.

Mr. Cash: That is right. The fact is that the single market has been severely abused. The Select Committee on Trade and Industry is now investigating that, and I hope that that will help to make the market work more effectively.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I think that my hon. Friend has let go the challenge issued from the Front Bench rather too easily. If I am not mistaken, Ministers have challenged my hon. Friend to justify his current position, bearing in mind that he voted for the Single European Act in 1986.

Surely the House is entitled to learn from its mistakes. It is clear that many hon. Members believed what they were told by Ministers at the time about the limited implications of the Single European Act. We now see that the Act goes very much further. Should not the House of

Commons, of all places—and, indeed, the Government—learn from their mistakes rather more frequently than they do?

Mr. Cash: I agree that we must all learn from our mistakes, but I will not change the position that I have adopted, and have held consistently.

The single market needs to be cleaned up. It has been abused, and I hope that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry will be able to throw some light on the unfair practices that are causing immense damage to British industry, increasing unemployment in this country and worsening the recession.

5 pm

Mr. Marlow: Had my hon. Friend known in advance that the powers for qualified majority voting in the Single European Act would be as heavily abused by the European institutions as we have discovered them to have been, would he have voted for it?

Mr. Cash: The answer to that can be found in what my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said about the activities of the European Court of Justice. Abuses should be dealt with in that court. I stand by what I said about the single market.

The provisions of article 2, which replaces the previous article 2, include a reference to

"sustainable and non-inflationary growth respecting the environment, a high degree of convergence of economic performance, a high level of employment and of social protection".

One thing can be said for certain about the direction in which the European Community is currently going: we are emphatically not seeing a high degree of economic convergence, non-inflationary growth or a high level of employment.

The real problem is that that is a load of rubbish. The words are in the treaty, but there is absolutely no evidence that the way in which the policies are being implemented is having any effect of the kind that is desired. Unemployment in the Community has risen from about 8 million to 15 million over the past few years, and it is expected to rise further to about 30 million. The policies that are being pursued are emphatically not bringing unemployment down. Indeed, I will go further and say that the Maastricht provisions relating to economic and monetary union and to convergence are likely to impose immense pressure for more unemployment. Moreover, the capping of public spending will prevent people from benefiting from an infrastructure that would generate construction work and thus increase employment.

The provisions of article 2 are completely contradicted by what is now happening, and the position is becoming worse rather than better. That in itself is a reason for leaving out article 2. People's expectations are being raised and then dashed. How can anyone imagine that that can continue without serious disruption in Europe? It is bad for business, because it raises expectations that cannot be fulfilled: it is wrong to deceive the workers of Europe into believing that something will happen simply because of what is written on a piece of paper. That is one of my objections to article 2. It is unfair and unrealistic to mislead people in such a way.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I do not wish to interrupt the hon. Gentleman's flow, but I feel that his remarks about the clause referring to political parties must be challenged. Presumably he does not object to the Conservative party's playing its part in a wider Conservative/Christian Democratic coalition. If he does not, what does he consider to be the purpose of such involvement?

Mr. Cash: It is clear that some form of political understanding in Europe is required, but that is perfectly achievable within the framework of the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act as it stands. There is no need to go down this further route. We want to enhance the national Parliaments and improve the scrutiny process, which is now lamentable in many member states. It is for precisely such reasons that I object to the fact that all we have at the back of the Maastricht treaty is a declaration relating to national Parliaments. It is not binding in any sense. We want to improve the quality of political decision making in Europe, but the treaty will do exactly the opposite.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. Gentleman mentioned public spending. Many Opposition Members—perhaps the majority; I do not know—find one aspect of that very difficult to understand. How on earth can someone who argues for further public spending to deal with a high level of unemployment—whether in Britain, where it certainly exists, or elsewhere in the Community—defend or justify the maximum gross national product of 3 per cent. that is laid down in the treaty?

At least a page is devoted to the penalties that will be incurred by member countries that go beyond that limit, but no limit is set in regard to unemployment, apart from the reference mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. If the treaty proceeds and such a limit is applied, it will undoubtedly bring about far more unemployment, deflation and misery throughout the Community. I do not see how any member of the Labour movement could possibly support what is being done.

Mr. Cash: That echoes many of the sentiments that I have expressed. Decisions about the allocation of economic and social priorities are currently made in the ballot box in general elections, on the basis of party manifestos, but all that will be taken away—even, in practice, under stage II, by way of gravitational pull into stage III. Under stage II, the European monetary institute will have important and greatly underestimated functions, which were criticised by a member of the Bundesbank council who wrote to me recently. He said that they had not been properly explained to the German people.

The understanding entered into about stage II will have a profound impact on decisions made by the people who will suffer increasing unemployment. In fact, the power to make those decisions is being taken from them and given to members of the European monetary institute. The Governor of the Bank of England, sitting in the monetary institute—under article 8 of the protocol relating to it—will not be able to take instructions as currently prescribed by section 4 of the Bank of England Act 1946.

The massive change taking place under stage II has been greatly underestimated. It strikes at the heart of the way in which we make decisions. Our voters, who are afflicted by the unemployment that is resulting from decisions that are already effectively being implemented, are losing the power to make their own decisions. Such

[Mr. Cash]

considerations lead some of us to say, in the absence of a free vote, that we must have a referendum. The people must be consulted.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Will my hon. Friend make available the letter from the Bundesbank official about the monetary institute and European monetary union, so that hon. Members can read it?

Mr. Cash: It is not a letter but an article, which makes it clear——

Mr. Dykes: If I may interrupt my hon. Friend, he told the Committee that he had a letter from, I believe, the vice-chairman of the Bundesbank——

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): No, from a member of its council.

Mr. Dykes: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He was presumably writing to explain why he has misgivings about the policy formulations in that particular part of the treaty. Will my hon. Friend help by making that letter —written to him, presumably—available to us all?

Mr. Cash: If any correction is required, it is contained in the document that I have, which is not a letter but which throws considerable doubt on the feeings that there were about the monetary institute and the attitudes adopted by the Bundesbank council.

Mr. Dykes: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's description of an article, but that is not the same as his saying—as he clearly and equivocally did just now—that he had received a letter. Presumably it was addressed to him, perhaps in response to one sent by my hon. Friend to a member of the Bundesbank council or because he had been mentioned in the press. It was clearly described as such.

I know that my hon. Friend has been in difficulties with other kinds of letters recently. I received an interim reply from Madam Speaker about an inquiry that is under way in the Serjeant at Arms office because my hon. Friend has apparently been using official envelopes to write to the constituents of other right hon. and hon. Members to tell them about anti-European meetings——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman must address the Chair. I am mystified as to the relationship of that point to amendment No. 40. Also, the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is beginning to repeat the speech that he made before Christmas. I listened attentively then and read it carefully, and I do not really want to hear it again. I should like to hear about amendment No. 40, about which we have heard very little in the nearly half an hour that the hon. Member for Stafford has been on his feet.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. A serious allegation has been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) against my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). Surely it is only right and proper, in the best traditions of the House, that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford answers that serious allegation about apparent misuse of House of Commons stationery.

The Chairman: That matter is for Madam Speaker and the Serjeant at Arms and not for the Committee stage of a Bill. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members recognise that.

Mr. Dykes: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. May I point out that if I was addressing the Chair incorrectly when you called me to order, it was because I was anxious to hear an explanation from my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford. If it is in order, perhaps he will respond to my latter comments—but I would particularly like an explanation about my hon. Friend's reference to the letter from a member of the Bundesbank council.

Mr. Cash: If it was misunderstood, I withdraw any suggestion that I received a letter from a member of the Bundesbank council. I make that clear. However, the article in question throws grave doubts on the basis on which the EMI was established.

The Chairman: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman to relate that matter specifically to amendment No. 40 or to leave it aside.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. If the time comes when a closure motion is moved in resepct of this set of amendments, will you bear in mind——

The Chairman: Order. I am not anticipating any future events. I merely want the Committee to proceed with the debate on amendment No. 40—or I hope that it will do so.

Mr. Cash: Citizenship of the union raises a fundamental question about the relationship of the voter to the Government of this country as elected at a general election. Article 8(2) states:

> "Citizens of the Union shall enjoy the rights conferred by this Treaty and shall be subject to the duties imposed thereby."

No specific, clear indication is given of what those duties will be. That article is therefore in the nature of a blank cheque, which presents a serious problem. If we are expected to ratify that provision without being told the nature of those duties, we are being asked to agree to something that the people of this country will not, without an explanation, be able to understand.

Title VI raises the whole question of economic and monetary policy. Its provisions present a serious difficulty in relation to the manner in which decisions are taken, to which I referred when I dealt with the European monetary institute and its relationship to the establishment of the central bank.

By creating that bank for the whole of Europe, a lethal blow is being struck at the heart of democracy for the people of Europe as a whole. We may have an opt-out, but it must be set against the provision relating to the EMI and to the transitional arrangements to which I referred earlier.

5.15 pm

An amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition seeks to leave out the whole of title III, which deals with the European Coal and Steel Community. I do not know what led to that particular provision, wide ranging though it is. However, its importance in relation to the British pit closure programme and to matters that we debated some months ago—which led to the High Court

declaring that closure programme unlawful—raises an important question in respect of the European coal and steel industry and its regulation.

I understand that a 100-year contract on very favourable terms, and backed by subsidies, has just been provided to the German coal industry, which will place a very unfair burden on our electricity users. I understand also that the European Commissioner formerly responsible for competition policy, Sir Leon Brittan, who has just changed his portfolio, approved a £3·3 billion deal between the power generators and the heavily subsidised coal industry.

Under that arrangement, which was entered into under the European coal and steel regulations, Britain is presented with a significant problem in respect of its own coal industry. A significant part of that industry, which includes the Trentham colliery in my constituency, is due for closure. It seems wholly wrong that that should have happened in the first place, and under the aegis of the European coal and steel arrangements.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Is it in order for my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) to address the Committee on the European coal and steel industries covered by title III when right hon. and hon. Members are debating an amendment that seeks to eliminate title II?

The Chairman: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will note that the selection list allows for titles II and IV also to be debated. While I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, in that I would expect the hon. Member for Stafford to concentrate on title II, nevertheless his remarks are just in order.

Mr. Cash: When those negotiations are under way, the opportunity to sort out the problems created by unfair subsidies and unfair competition could and should have been taken.

Amendment No. 183, also in my name, refers to article Q in title VII, which prescribes that the period of the treaty shall be unlimited. The treaty itself contains no power for cessation. If it is to be "for an unlimited period", we ought to be given some indication of why, if things go wrong, we will not have an opportunity to reconsider matters.

The provisions of title II are extremely wide ranging and affect all the amendments relating to the treaty of Rome. They go to the heart of the manner in which we would be governed in Europe as a whole. They deal with questions relating to employment, public health and culture and the establishment of trans-European networks. We have been given no justification for the provisions. There has been no White Paper explaining why they have been brought forward; we have had to rely instead on occasional Select Committee hearings, and so on.

It seems to me that the entire title is unnecessary. The policies that lie behind it have not been borne out by practical experience. Britain has a massive trade deficit with the European Community—at present, about £15 billion a year. I seek an improvement in the quality of free trade within the European Community. The present proposals are unnecessary. We should be improving the European Community rather than becoming involved in the governmental matters referred to in the treaty—a move which will cause a serious loss of faith in our ability to work together and co-operate in Europe as a whole.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): Labour's approach to the amendments, to the important provisions of titles II, III and IV—and, indeed, to the Bill as a whole—is to argue for European co-operation as an important dimension of our party's internationalism. For the people of Britain, as for the people of Europe, we want to see the real benefits of a positive future for the European Community.

Mr. Denzil Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. The second amendment in the group was tabled by a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself. You have quite properly called the Front-Bench spokeman. May I suggest, however, that the Opposition Front-bench spokeman cannot have an inalienable right to be called to speak immediately after the mover of an amendment and that consideration should be given to those on the Back Benches who have tabled amendments?

The Chairman: There is no inalienable right, but it seemed appropriate on this occasion that I should call the Opposition Front-Bench spokeman. I was hoping also to call the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) before long—but we shall see how we get on.

Mr. Smith: I, too, am concerned that Back Benchers should have a proper opportunity to contribute to our proceedings. It is not the length of Opposition Members' speeches that have prevented them from doing so.

We tabled amendments Nos. 11, 17 and 20 so that we might have an opportunity to present the case for a positive future for Britain in the European Community. They are probing amendments and will not be pressed to a vote.

The Labour party has made it clear how important we believe it is that the Community pursues the principles set out in article 2 of the treaty, which the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) described as rubbish. So far from being rubbish, they are eminently desirable and important goals for Europe to pursue. The article is a powerful statement of the central objectives of the European Community and it is important to get that message across to the public. It states:

"The Community shall have as its task, by establishing a common market and an economic and monetary union and by implementing the common polices or activities referred to in Articles 3 and 3a, to promote throughout the Community a harmonious and balanced development of economic activities, sustainable and non-inflationary growth respecting the environment, a high degree of convergence of economic performance, a high level of employment and of social protection, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life, and economic and social cohesion and solidarity among Member States."

Those important objectives, set out at the beginning of the treaty as the Community's task, set the context, legally as well as politically, within which its other provisions must be interpreted and applied. Britain would be much better off if the Government acted on the provisions of article 2, not least by giving the lead on proposals for concerted European economic recovery rather than obstructing them and watering them down.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): My hon. Friend has listed the new requirements to be introduced into the treaty of Rome by the Maastricht treaty, which includes a high level of employment and of social protection, the raising of standards of living and quality of life and so on. All those are important objectives to which Opposition Members are strongly attached. But article 3a(2) states

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

that the primary objective of economic policy is "to maintain price stability". That has never been an objective of the Labour party—nor, as far as I know, has it been the objective of any economic management in any country. [HON. MEMBERS:"Oh!"] That is stated as the primary objective.

The article then states that the other objectives are to be realised

"without prejudice to this objective".

In other words, the paramount requirement is price stability—destructive though that is certain to be in terms of employment, jobs and economic growth.

Mr. Smith: I am pleased to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) endorse the objectives of article 2, which seem to me to be good enough reason to support it. My hon. Friend referred to price stability. It would be interesting to hear his arguments in favour of price instability. I have yet to see the benefits of price instability to working people and, in particular, to pensioners. There is no merit in price instability. But I know what my hon. Friend was getting at. He sought to make the important point that we should be pursuing policies which, as a whole, promote full employment, prosperity and social justice, and that the goal of price stability should not be allowed to prejudice that.

Mr. Denzil Davies *rose*——

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Austin Mitchell *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I must make progress. I shall be happy to take further interventions later and I shall come on to refer to the details of article 3a, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby referred.

As I was saying, Britain would be far better off if the British Government put article 2 into effect and led forward the programme for concerted European recovery rather than obstructing it as they were doing before the Birmingham summit and at Edinburgh.

Many of the problems surrounding the treaty—we acknowledge that there are problems—arise from the way in which the Government have approached the matter. As I have said before, they are like gatecrashers entering a party backwards and assuring all around them that they are just on the way out. Britain will have paid a double price for the opt-out from the social chapter: first, there is the price to British workers, who have been disgracefully deprived of the rights that will apply in all the other member states—something that we shall seek to put right in our debates on the social chapter—and, secondly, there is the price paid in terms of the negotiating capital used by the Government to achieve the opt-out, which could have been used instead to help put Britain into the first division in Europe rather than confining it to the second.

I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends will want to devote attention to other fears that have been expressed about the treaty—its problems and how they can be overcome—as well as its benefits. We have never made any secret of the fact that, in a number of respects, the present treaty is not the treaty that we would have sought to negotiate. It is, after all, the product of bargaining between the 12 Governments of the Community. At the time of negotiation, five of those Governments were Christian Democrat or Conservative, four were coalitions, one was Social Democrat identifying with the Liberals and only two were Democratic Socialist. It should therefore come as no surprise to anyone that we have a number of important concerns that we shall wish to express in subsequent debates.

But with all the talk of problems, let us not forget the enormous potential benefits that can be derived both from the provisions already contained in the Bill and from the amendments that we shall seek to introduce. It is little wonder that the public grow sceptical of politicians' approach to the Maastricht treaty when they hear only of problems and wrangling and not of the potential benefits. Those benefits are derived from two important principles which are close to the hearts of Labour Members. First, international co-operation is essential for securing and preserving peace; and, secondly—this is inscribed on many of our trade union banners—unity is strength. By joining together in a union, we can secure social and economic progress which would not be achieved if we all stood apart. Those important principles are reflected in many of the provisions in the titles which are the subject of this debate.

When we examine the history of Europe and the state of the world, the value of such co-operation—rather than destructive nationalism—is more evident, whether through meditation on Remembrance day, by visits to graveyards in northern France or by seeing on television and elsewhere the appalling suffering of modern warfare.

Let none of us doubt the importance of building closer European co-operation. Let none of us forget that at the heart of the European project was the determination of European countries, especially France and Germany, never to go to war again. That is a noble aim and a worthy expression of our common humanity. Whatever the problems of Maastricht and whatever the difficulties and arguments that lie along the road to Europan union, let us not forget for one moment why it was well worth embarking on the journey in the first place.

Mr. Marlow: Government Ministers are saying that the treaty will not happen so we may as well vote for it. The hon. Gentleman is saying that if the treaty goes through we will get socialism in our time. I suggest that they are two fundamental reasons why all of my hon. Friends should vote against the damn thing.

5.30 pm

Mr. Smith: That is a matter for the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and his hon. Friends. We have made no secret of the fact that the provisions of article 2 would stand proud in any Labour manifesto. That is why we are so strongly in favour of the principles.

Mr. Corbyn: I have listened with great care to what my hon. Friend has said about article 2 and its social objectives. Does he concede that the whole basis of the Maastricht treaty is the establishment of a European central bank which is staffed by bankers, independent of national Governments and national economic policies, and whose sole policy is the maintenance of price stability? That will undermine any social objective that any Labour Government in the United Kingdom—or any other Government—would wish to carry out.

Does my hon. Friend recognise that the imposition of a bankers' Europe on the people of this continent will endanger the cause of socialism in the United Kingdom

and in any other country?

Mr. Smith: It is a task of the Labour party, and Labour in government, to ensure that the process does not result in a bankers' Europe—that the concerns of bankers are not allowed to dominate the goals for social progress to which we all subscribe. Time and time again we have made it clear that we believe that decisions on such matters must be taken within a politically determined context. That presents a strong case for strengthening the role of ECOFIN in the Community.

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): Does my hon. Friend accept that article 107 makes it absolutely clear that the European central bank will not take instructions from ECOFIN or any similar body?

On the point that article 2 would fit well in a Labour manifesto, article 2 explicitly says that it is subordinate to article 3. I wonder why my hon. Friend is focusing on article 2 rather than article 3. Article 3 makes it clear that the fundamental objective of economic policy is the control of inflation.

It was not fair for the hon. Gentleman to say, in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), that everybody wants the control of inflation. Of course, we want the control of inflation. However, it has never been the primary objective of Labour's policy that the control of inflation should be the first objective of economic policy. Therefore, articles 2 and

Mr. Smith: The reason why I am placing such stress on article 2 is precisely that the preamble of the treaty sets as the task of the Community the provision of

"a high level of employment and of social protection, a raising of the standard of living and quality of life".

Through Government and European institutions, in common with our sister parties in the rest of the European Community, it is our task to ensure that the implementation of those goals takes precedence. For democratic socialists and for all of those whom we aspire to represent, there are important reasons for engaging positively in the Maastricht process.

In an increasingly international economy which has powerful transnational forces, intervention to ensure employment, better living standards, enhanced quality of life and fairness and a sustainable environment must be undertaken at the international level as well as closer to home. Participation in the European Community cannot be an add-on extra or an opt-out deduction, as the Government maintain. It is a necessary condition for economic and social progress.

With the advent of the single market and the growing integration of the European economy, the European level of economic management is essential if workers, communities and whole regions are not simply to be left at the mercy of unregulated market forces. As Labour has consistently stressed, the advent of the single market and the integration of the European Community must be accompanied by corresponding action at national and global levels. Britain will be better placed to achieve both if we work in co-operation with our European partners instead of seeking to do so in isolation.

Mr. Rowlands: An absolute condition in the process towards monetary union under the treaty is to introduce legislation to make independent our national bank. Does my hon. Friend support that principle?

Mr. Smith: If the treaty is carried, it is clear that such matters will have to be examined. We have already made it clear that there is a case for examining the separation of the regulatory functions of the Bank of England from the responsibility for monetary policy. Of course, if a European central bank is established, every member state will need to examine the relationships between their central bank and the European bank and between the central bank and their Governments. The Labour party has tabled a further amendment about the accountability of the Bank of England.

It is crucial that a central bank remain in public ownership. It must not pass into any form of private ownership, as some have suggested. The constitution and governing council of a central bank must fully represent industrial, regional and social needs and the policies which it pursues must be carried into effect in a politically accountable context and in ways for which the institution must be held to account.

Mr. Dalyell: I am mindful that the Lothian region, the Edinburgh area and the Linlithgow constituency have greatly benefited from the sensitive understanding given by the European Community to their regional issues. Linlithgow constituency Labour party unanimously passed a resolution on Sunday which urged me to do everything possible to get the Maastricht treaty through. There are two views and there should not be the misleading impression that all the arguments are just on one side as far as Back Benchers are concerned.

Mr. Smith: Many regions, especially the region to which my hon. Friend referred, have had cause to benefit from the way in which the European Community and some of its activities have given attention to the social and economic problems in the United Kingdom. The Government have not sought to address those social and economic problems. Indeed, their policies have aggravated the problems. My hon. Friend is also right about Labour party policy, which is that the Maastricht treaty is the best available vehicle before us for securing the closer political and economic co-operation in Europe to which the Labour party is committed.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: The hon. Gentleman's position seems to be partial. I accept the sincerely held views of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), but is the Opposition spokesman saying that if the United Kingdom Government were disposed to do so, they could not do exactly what Europe has apparently done for Edinburgh and the Lothian and Linlithgow areas of Scotland? Is not the hon. Gentleman aware that Britain is a net contributor to the European budget and that we give far more money than we get back? If we had kept that money, some of it might well have been passed to not only the constituency of the hon. Member for Linlithgow, whose views I respect but disagree with, but perhaps to my constituency.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman effectively makes the point that the Government, of whose party he is a member, lack the political will to address the fundamental economic and social problems of Britain. That comes as no surprise. But is it not welcome that the European Community has at least been able to provide some assistance, as my hon. Friend said?

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: No. I must make some progress.

Mr. Winnick: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Smith: If my hon. Friend will allow me, I should like to make some progress. I trust that that will open up more time for Back Benchers who want to speak.

Some argue that much that I have advocated, such as the value of closer economic and political co-operation and gaining control of otherwise unregulated market forces, is good. They say that we need European co-operation and even European union, but that the titles in the Maastricht Bill offer no vehicle for achieving those goals. I do not dispute that those arguments are advanced with sincerity and integrity and deserve to be listened to with respect. However, I do not find them realistic, just as the Labour party conference did not find them realistic.

I do not see how we could build some theoretical European co-operation in the future by rejecting out of hand the practical European co-operation which is available now. When I hear arguments such as those of the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who said in the debate on 1 December that he favoured political co-operation within Europe and even that he had no difficulty with European union, it puts me in mind of those people—I am sure that my hon. Friends have encountered them—who say, "I am all in favour of trade unions in principle and would join the appropriate one if it was one that I liked, but I will not join the trade union my workmates are in because I do not like the rule book, the shop steward does things with which I disagree and I am not prepared to take collective action if I am outvoted."

Our position stands in stark contrast with that of the hon. Member for Stafford. He believes that the provisions of the Bill to give effect to the titles in the Maastrict treaty unreasonably limit the operation of the free market. We believe that they offer a framework which is essential if the single market is to be the servant, not the master, of workers throughout the Community. He and his friends believe that a free market in currencies is best for the economy. We believe in the principle of planned management of exchange rates.

The hon. Member for Stafford believes that common funds which seek to redistribute resources to weaker regions of the Community damage the economy. We believe that they are desperately needed for economic regeneration, social justice and common welfare. He believes that it is centralist for the Community to agree standards for terms and conditions of employment. We believe that there will be exploitation if it does not do so.

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend will appreciate that some of the arguments that he has just advanced about economic co-operation were the basis for the clamour for us to join the exchange rate mechanism. We know what happened. I do not for one moment question my hon. Friend's genuine sincerity. I mean that. Obviously, there is a genuine difference of opinion. Why not on such an important issue?

My hon. Friend talks about steps to reduce unemployment and all the rest. How on earth can that be justified bearing in mind article 104c, which places a strict limit of 3 per cent. of gross national product on public spending? Moreover, it sets out in considerable detail the penalties that will be inflicted on member countries if they go beyond that limit. Surely that will simply mean that public spending will be reduced, and further reduced in many cases.

Even under the Conservative Government public spending is, fortunately, higher than 3 per cent., at least at the moment. Surely an outright reactionary right-wing Government would use the 3 per cent. rule to justify further cutting public spending. They would turn round and say, "It is all in the treaty. We have no alternative." How could unemployment be reduced in those circumstances?

5.45 pm

Mr. Smith: I believe, and it was the view taken in the resolutions and documents passed by the Labour party conference, that within the framework provided by the treaty, it is precisely possible for us to take common action to tackle unemployment and the rundown of depressed regions as well as social inequality. But it is our task—I agree with my hon. Friend in this—to ensure that the Europe that we shape becomes an engine for economic growth, not an instrument for deflation.

My hon. Friend referred to the convergence criteria. I shall have more to say about those criteria towards the end of my speech. I hope that he will bear with me and allow me to make progress to that point.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Smith: No. I should like to make progress.

I was contrasting our position with that of the hon. Member for Stafford. However, I agree with him about one thing. The debate about Maastricht and the level of public knowledge about what is involved has been distorted by the Government attempting to face both ways. They do one thing while pretending to do another. They claim that Maastricht is all about reaffirming the power of nation states when the treaty seeks to pool a measure of sovereignty.

The Government claim that subsidiarity applies to all Community activities when it is plain from the text of the treaty that it does not. They claim that the Prime Minister has won great victories in bringing Europe round to his view when all that he has succeeded in doing is to achieve opt-outs which would consign Britain to the second division.

We remember the Government's other claims. They said that the ERM was the cornerstone of Government economic policy. According to the Prime Minister, at least this year Britain will never have to take part in the ERM again. The Government said that the pound would replace the deutschmark as the strongest currency of Europe. They claimed that other European countries envied our economic miracle.

With such a litany of contradiction, U-turns and doublespeak, no wonder that so many people are unsure of the treaty's purpose. Worst of all, at a time of devastating unemployment across the Community, the utter failure of the British presidency to place at the top of Europe's agenda the crying need for a co-ordinated programme for economic recovery was a dereliction of responsibility which not only failed to meet the economic and social

needs of the people of Europe but was bound to make many doubt the relevance of the Community to their everyday lives.

Our key goals in discussing the amendments and issues before us are to improve the Bill; to make it clear how Labour would want the treaty to operate in practice in the interest of the people of Britain and the people of Europe; and to win the case for the inclusion of the social chapter so that Britain will benefit from the provisions for employment rights and partnership which other Community countries realise are essential for economic success in the single market, as well as for employees' well-being.

We seek to win genuine regional representation on the Committee of the Regions, recognising that subsidiarity should start at home; to place economic policy within a framework of political accountability so that Community institutions and policy are the servant, not the master, of the people of Europe; and to make European co-operation a vehicle for sustainable growth. We shall return to all those important matters in the debates on subsequent specific groups of amendments.

I should like to make a brief reference to article 138a and then make some general comments about the convergence criteria, to which I referred when my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) intervened.

Article 138a, raised in our probing amendment No. 20 —which we shall not press to a vote—refers to political parties at the European level. Labour has consistently stressed the need for closer European integration being accompanied by measures to strengthen democracy and political accountability in the Community. That must mean an enhanced role for the European Parliament, as well as a more powerful role for bodies such as ECOFIN, to which I have referred. Also, it means that campaigning organisations, trade unions and business groups will build further on the considerable progress that they have already made to establish working European associations, making an invaluable contribution to the democratic process at the European level, as well as extending their formal involvement in Community decision-taking, for example, as partners in the social dialogue.

All that is to be welcomed and encouraged, but as article 138a recognises, political parties have an important role at European level to extend awareness of and participation in the European dimension of politics. I am pleased to be able to say that the Labour party has played a full role in that process, previously through the Confederation of European Socialist Parties and, since the Hague congress and declaration of 9 November last year, in the party of European Socialists which will be a force for stronger political co-operation in Europe.

Given the Government's support for article 138a in the treaty, I challenge the Minister to make clear whether the British Conservative party will carry that into effect by becoming a full member of the so-called European People's party, which supports the social chapter, or is there to be another cop-out and opt-out? I shall give way to the Minister if he wants to intervene.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

Mr. Spearing: By and large, my hon. Friend has made a factual statement. Article 138a is an addition to the existing treaties. Why is it necessary? Surely the operation of parties, even on a European level through the confederation and in this country, is an established fact of democracy. Why does it have to be put in a treaty, which is a legal document relating to powers and finances?

Mr. Smith: Perhaps it is all about applying the Short principle on the European level—I do not know. I was referring to the fact that it is of value to reaffirm in the treaty the importance of political parties at a European level.

An important part of the co-operation and democratic accountability that we want to establish is the arrangements for ensuring that the House is fully involved in the consideration of European policy. We have tabled amendments to that end, in later groups.

In addition, as part of the group of amendments before us, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) may seek to move new clause 10, standing in his name and that of other hon. Friends. The proposal to submit the reports to which it refers to this Parliament has much to commend it. Unless I hear compelling arguments to the contrary, I shall be inclined to support it.

It is important that we consider convergence criteria in this general debate, not least because they have been interpreted in different ways in the wider public discussion. Some of those interpretations do not properly reflect the wording of the treaty and some of the political implications that have been imputed to the criteria would not serve the cause of co-ordinated economic recovery, which the Labour party believes should be top priority.

I am sure that the Minister will point out that Britain is not committed by the treaty to the third stage of economic and monetary union, but that begs as many questions as it answers. The key arguments on the criteria for convergence are, first, that the criteria are not blanket requirements. They are some aspects of economic performance which must be evaluated in determining how far the economies of various member states have converged before the establishment of economic and monetary union and one set of considerations to evaluate comparative economic performance after such a union. The criteria are not cast in stone, which is just as well, given what has happened recently with the ERM.

Secondly, the articles that apply the criteria explicitly and rightly require them to take account of wider economic considerations. For example, the article on Government deficits, to which some of my hon. Friends have referred, requires the Commission to take account of the extent of Government investment and expenditure and the medium-term economic and budgetary position of member states.

Thirdly, the protocol on convergence criteria requires the Council of Ministers to adopt appropriate provisions to lay down the details of those convergence criteria, which will then replace those set out in the protocol. Therefore, Governments would have the opportunity to make it clear —as we urge the British Government to make clear now —that the criteria should not be defined or deployed so as to implement monetarist policies, or to inhibit economic recovery in member states. What Labour has long said —and what the Government should be saying and should have said when they occupied the presidency—is that

[Mr. Smith]

convergence should encompass the employment, industrial, investment and environmental measures essential for European economic recovery.

What is more, the Government have a strong obligation to do just that. Article 102a of the treaty states:

"Member states shall conduct their economic policies with a view to contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the Community, as defined in Article 2."

To fulfil that requirement, and in the light of the extent of the recession, the consequences of rebuilding the economy of eastern Germany and the recent experience of the ERM, under the provisions in the treaty for redefining the convergence criteria, as well as under articles 102a and 103 on economic co-ordination, the Community will need to agree the most effective way to put progress towards economic and monetary union back on course. That should be accompanied by co-ordinated policies for jobs, investment, training and growth. Nothing in the treaty is a barrier to Britain adopting those policies; it is the lack of political will on the part of the Conservative Government.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Smith: What is more, if Britain's voice is to be heard, it needs to be clear to our Community partners as well as in the House that our goal is to make European co-operation work in the interests of the people of Britain and of Europe, and not to sabotage it nor to wreck the treaty, which is the principal means to hand to give effect to that co-operation.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Essentially my hon. Friend is saying that the treaty does not quite mean what it says and that under a Labour Government it will be interpreted differently, although I would prefer—to paraphrase Aneurin Bevan—not to look at his crystal balls, but to read the text of the treaty. Can he answer this question? In the view of the Opposition Front Bench, does title II require us to go back into the ERM as a precondition of doing any of those things? What is the position on that?

Mr. Smith: I have already made that clear. I was talking about the way in which the convergence criteria will need to be redefined. The treaty places obligations on member states and on the Community to implement economic policies that will realise the objectives in article 2.

On the exchange rate mechanism, we have never made any secret of the fact that our party is committed to the principle of managed exchange rates. We have also set out the way in which the management of exchange rates needs to be changed to combat speculators.

6 pm

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I shall not give way as I am about to conclude.

Within the framework provided by the treaty—I emphasise that it must include the social chapter—the Committee should make clear our commitment to work for the full application of the provisions in article 2. That would give expression to the policies agreed at the founding conference of the party of European Socialists at the Hague, when we declared:

"We maintain the ideal of a democratic Europe that is both open to its citizens and to the world; a Europe that brings economic and social prosperity for all; a Europe where solidarity between and within nations as well as between generations is a guiding principle."

It would also put into practice, for the benefit of the people of Europe, as of Britain, the policy passed overwhelmingly at the Labour party conference, which

"reaffirms Labour's vision of Europe with Britain's future at the heart of a European Community which is economically prosperous and which has high standards of social and environmental protection and citizens' rights . . . believes that the Maastricht Treaty, while not perfect, is the best agreement that can currently be achieved."

As we debate this group of general amendments and more specific amendments later we shall make clear our commitment to closer economic and political co-operation in Europe and how we believe that the Maastricht treaty should be implemented with the social chapter. That must happen if the treaty is to be a decisive step towards the economic and social progress that Europe needs and the Labour party wants to see.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse, have you yet heard from the Government whether there will be a statement later tonight concerning the American attack on Iraq?

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):No. I call Mr. Garel-Jones.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash)——

Sir Russell Johnston: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Is it not the normal convention in Committee, particularly when that stage is taken in the Chamber, for spokesmen on both Front Benches to give way freely? Otherwise, how can we have a proper dialogue?

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman has been here for a long time, and he knows that it is a matter for those speaking to decide whether to give way.

Mr. Rowlands: Further to that point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I should like to refer to another convention that I thought was part and parcel of the Committee stage. I thought that Ministers did not reply to a debate in Committee before those who have tabled amendments selected with the main amendment have had an opportunity to speak. The second amendment, No. 323, in this group appears in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and other hon. Friends, but we have not had an opportunity to speak to it. It now appears, however, that the Minister is about to speak. I ask the right hon. Gentleman through you, Mr. Lofthouse, to obey the normal conventions in Committee and to allow us to speak to our amendment

The First Deputy Chairman: I know that the Chairman dealt with a similar point of order earlier when he called the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) to speak on behalf of the Labour Front Bench.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. You will recall that, in the Committee sittings before Christmas, a great deal of anxiety was expressed because about 20 hon. Members who had hoped to catch the Chair's eye could not do so. That group included hon. Members from Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. It seemed that a gentlemen's convention had been violated.

Fundamental questions were asked during those sittings. Normally, in Committee we follow an iterative process and such questions are answered. However, the closure was moved when a number of those fundamental questions had not been answered. I beg you, Mr. Lofthouse, to ensure that we now have a Committee debate in the truest sense of the word, so that we can proceed in good order and good-naturedly.

The First Deputy Chairman: I note the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I should just like to note that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) raised his point of order about those on the Front Benches failing to give way after I had spoken only about five words of my speech. I am sure that the Committee will concede that the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) was generous in giving way to hon. Members on both sides of the Committee. I will certainly seek to do the same.

Equally, I shall try not to detain the Committee for too long, so that I may follow the example of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford, who managed to reduce his speech to a quarter of that which he made at our last sitting. That may mean that more hon. Members on both sides of the Committee—in particular, my two countrymen, the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) and the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) who sat through all our last sitting and did not manage to intervene—can speak.

For the benefit of the Committee, I should say that the Financial Secretary will seek at some point to catch your eye, Mr. Lofthouse, to pick up points made by right hon. and hon. Members about economic and monetary union, convergence criteria, economic policy and so on.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way at this early stage. He has announced that, once he has seen the Bill through, he will retire from the Cabinet and leave the job. I am sorry to hear that, because I have always found him an accommodating Minister. His departure, however, poses the question whether someone who is, to coin the phrase, a "here today, gone tomorrow" Minister should shepherd through such a momentous Bill, which has such enormous constitutional and economic repercussions. His departure will call into question the nature of the answers that he will give to the difficult problems that will be raised in our proceedings. Surely such assurances could be cast aside by his successor as the responsibility of his predecessor.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I thank the hon. Gentleman for promoting me in a premature way to the Cabinet, of which I am not a member. [HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] I agree. I must tell the hon. Gentleman and the Committee that we are all here today, gone tomorrow. I assure my hon. Friend from the Whips Office who is sitting behind me that, when I return to the Back Benches, I intend to continue to take the same line as I have done in government.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. It has just gone up on the tapes that there has been American military action against Iraq. In view of what was said this afternoon in the Committee, I once again ask for a Government statement as soon as possible, particularly if British forces are involved.

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that that is a matter for the Government, but no doubt those on the Treasury Bench will have noted what he said.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I raised this matter with Madam Speaker when she was in the Chair before the House went into Committee, and she assured me that she would give careful consideration to any request by the Government to make a statement about this latest savage attack.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): It might be helpful, Mr. Lofthouse, if I said at once that we have arranged for the Secretary of State for Defence to make a statement at 10 o'clock.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. What will happen at 10 o'clock? What is the possible scenario? If the Government want to make a statement after 10 o'clock, will they have to suspend the 10 o'clock business motion first?

The First Deputy Chairman: We shall have to wait and see. Statements at 10 o'clock take precedence.

Mr. Marlow: My question is fairly straightforward.

The First Deputy Chairman: I gave a fairly straightforward answer—we shall have to wait and see.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The amendment that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford has moved is the same as one of the other amendments in the group tabled by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). It would delete from the scope of the Bill all amendments to the treaty of Rome.

It will not have escaped the notice of the Committee that this is a fairly sweeping amendment and that it is utterly at odds with the purpose of the Bill. The European Communities Act 1972 created a framework within our domestic law for recognising Community rights and obligations arising from the treaty of Rome. The Maastricht treaty amends the treaty of Rome, and, as has been pointed out from the Chair, we need to amend our legislation to take account of that fact. This amendment would prevent us from making that necessary change and would make it impossible for us to ratify the Maastricht treaty. It is, of course, in order, as it has been selected by the Chair, but it is clearly a wrecking amendment, which cannot be portrayed as anything else, and I shall ask the Committee to reject it.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. The Chair has already ruled that a wrecking amendment would not have been selected. How, therefore, can the Minister say that this is a wrecking amendment?

The First Deputy Chairman: I can support what the Chair has said: that at no time would a wrecking amendment have been accepted. I hope that the Minister will reconsider the word that he has just used.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Like my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), I was present in the Committee when that ruling was given from the Chair. That is why I have taken care to say that the amendment is, of course, in order. You, Mr. Lofthouse, have asked me to withdraw the word "wrecking". Naturally I do so.

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

The point that I am trying to make is that, if this amendment is approved, Her Majesty's Government will be rendered unable to ratify the treaty. If the amendment is pressed to a Division, I shall therefore ask the Committee to reject it.

Sir Russell Johnston: Surely there is a difference between wrecking in a technical sense, and wrecking in a rhetorical sense.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Indeed.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The hon. Gentleman has said that this amendment would make the treaty unratifiable. Does he not agree that any amendment resulting in the deletion of any part of the Maastricht treaty would make the treaty unratifiable?

Mr. Garel-Jones: That is the case, but there are on the Order Paper other amendments—the right hon. Gentleman must be well aware of them—which, if carried, would not make the treaty unratifiable. There is a distinction.

I turn to the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith). I am sure that, like me, the Committee is grateful for the hon. Gentleman's indication that these are probing amendments designed to provoke debate and discussion. I should like to treat and respond to them in that spirit.

Amendment No. 11, in the name of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), seeks to delete from the scope of the Bill the revised article 2 of the treaty of Rome, which describes the tasks of the Community. This article replaces the existing article 2 of the treaty of Rome—revising it for the first time since the formation of the Community, and expanding its original terms. Thus, it will include references to sustainable and non-inflationary growth respecting the environment, to convergence—a reference to economic and monetary union—to cohesion, and to the raising of the standard of living and the quality of life throughout the Community.

As the hon. Member for Oxford, East has said, these are all worthy aims for states members of the Community to pursue. They are certainly the aims of Her Majesty's Government. Of course, from time to time—this is a matter for debate between the two sides of the Committee—the ways in which we seek to pursue them will differ according to our respective political philosophies.

Article 2 of the treaty sets out in general terms the goals of the European Community. As amended, the article would make it clear that these aims are to be achieved through implementation of the common policies and activities detailed in the rest of the treaty. The article should therefore be read with articles 3 and 3a, which set out the detailed activities of the Community.

6.15 pm

The goal of article 2 should be seen as being to guide the Community as a whole. It is inevitable that, from time to time within the Community, there will be different views on how to attain this, but there will be no lack of agreement on the means set out in the body of the treaty.

Also in the name of the Leader of the Opposition is another probing amendment to delete article 138a from the scope of the Bill. As the Committee has been told, this amendment too is intended to stimulate debate on article 138a, which, in itself, is simply declaratory and recognises the importance of political parties at European level. I am glad to have an opportunity to debate the importance of European political parties, and I am relieved that the Opposition have no intention of pressing the amendment to a Division.

We have been told about Labour's commitment to the European socialist group in the European Parliament. I can confirm that the Conservative party, like the Christian Democrats, is an allied member of the European Parliament group of the European People's party. I myself cannot envisage the Conservative party's becoming a Christian Democratic party. Indeed, one of the interesting things about the enlargement of the Community—I think that I am right in saying this—is that, assuming, as we expect, that the four applicants will become members, those that are on the centre right and do not have a Christian Democratic tradition in their countries will be in the majority in the European Parliament.

The centre right in countries such as the United Kingdom, France and Spain—to mention just three of the larger countries in the Community that do not have a Christian Democratic tradition—is finding it easy to work alongside its Christian Democratic partners. However, each of us puts a unique spin on the ball of centre-right policies in Europe, and we, with our Christian Democratic allies, will seek to ensure that what we see as the free-market principles on which the European Community is based are upheld, not just in our national and domestic politics but also at a European level.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Surely the Minister's reservations about Christian democracy do not make it impossible for the Conservatives to move from being allied members to being full members. Surely what really prevents them from moving to full membership is that the group supports the common social policy, that its Governments have been prepared to sign the social chapter and, indeed, have criticised the British Conservative party for not going along with a positive social policy.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No. It goes much deeper. The European Community countries that do not have a Christian Democratic tradition—the United Kingdom is one of them—feel, for example, that Christian democracy has a slightly corporatist approach to life that other centre-right parties do not have. I do not say that in any critical sense. For example, in the main Christian Democratic countries in western Europe, there are, as it were, client trade unions. The Conservatives have no such thing. The only client trade unions that exist in this country are on the left of British politics.

There are some fundamental historical differences between Christian democracy and other centre-right parties, but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we have no difficulty in working with our Christian Democratic friends in Europe. Indeed, even though we are a minority in the European Parliament, we managed to defeat an absurd amendment from the European socialists, prompted by the European Labour party in the European Parliament—thanks to the skilful whipping of Mr. Tindemans and other members of the Conservative group.

Sir Russell Johnston: I thank the Minister for giving way so that I may provide some information for his benefit, but also for the benefit of the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), who was significantly less

willing to give way. We were told that the Labour party had consistently been in favour of strengthening the European Parliament. My recollection is that the socialist manifesto issued before the last European election did indeed say that, but the Labour party had a derogation from it.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman is very unkind. Thanks to the Conservative party's consistent stand as a pro-European party over the past 20 years, and the number of defeats that have been inflicted on the Labour party, not least because of its absurd commitment to withdraw from the European Economic Community, as it was then called, the Labour party has finally seen the light and become a pro-European party, albeit in socialist terms. The Liberal Democrat party and the Conservative party, which have consistently stood on that platform, must be grateful for small mercies. It is unkind of the hon. Gentleman to remind the Labour party of its past in that matter.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): Does the Minister recall the advertisement by the Conservative party at the European elections in 1989, which complained about the diet of Brussels? Did he endorse that campaign, which was aimed directly at opposing the European Community?

Mr. Garel-Jones: It is unfair to say that it was aimed in opposition to the European Community, because the Conservative party not only negotiated Britain's entry into the Community but has stood up against the onslaughts of the Labour party in the past 20 years and negotiated the Single European Act and the Maastricht treaty. I agree that that was not the most successful advertisement or campaign that the Conservative party has ever run, and I assure him that next time there is a European campaign, we shall run a much more successful and aggressive one.

As the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber has permitted himself an unkindness to the socialists, may I say that the political party in Britain that faces the greatest difficulty in European integration is the Liberal party. European Liberals remain Liberals in the sense that my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) would understand the term. Our Liberals, with one or two distinguished exceptions, of whom the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber is one, are really European Social Democrats. The difficulty that British Liberals have in signing up to any European Liberal principles is notorious in Europe. Most European Liberals regard them as watered-down Social Democrats.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am left virtually speechless. The Minister has well outbidded me in unkindness and inaccuracy.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The last of the probing amendments tabled by the Opposition seeks to delete article H from the Bill—that is, all the amendments to the European Coal and Steel Community included in title III. As the hon. Member for Oxford, East did not refer to that, am I right in assuming that the amendment was tabled early in the day, and that he is not asking me to reply to it?

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Garel-Jones: Before the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) speaks, may I refer to new clause 10, which is important and which the hon. Member for Oxford, East said that the Labour party might support. He was not firm about it, but said that he would be prepared to listen to arguments about it.

If accepted, new clause 10 would require the Government by law to publish and lay before Parliament reports produced by the European Council under article D of the union treaty and to publish at the same time a policy statement. The Committee will agree that the amendment is surprising. Drawing up procedures for parliamentary scrutiny should be a matter for this House alone. We should be going down a dangerous route if our practices were to be regulated by an international treaty or legislation tabled by the Executive. It would be quite a change if the working practices of the House were settled through the statute book, by a Bill introduced by the Executive.

Mr. Andrew Smith: I said that the new clause had a great deal to commend it and that, unless I heard compelling arguments to the contrary, I would be inclined to support it. I have heard no compelling arguments so far. The new clause amends legislation before the Committee and does not amend a treaty. It would extend to the House the same opportunity to scrutinise the reports of the European Council's work as would be available to the European Parliament. That would be a good thing.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am in the middle of making my argument. I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Oxford, East said, and that is why I am dealing carefully with new clause 10. I took it that the hon. Gentleman had an open mind on it and wanted to debate it.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall give way in a moment.

I hope that hon. Members will express their opinions on the new clause during the debate because it is a House of Commons matter, which is why we should listen to each other's arguments.

Apart from the principle that we should legislate on Standing Orders, Parliament already has full scope for detailed scrutiny of the Government's approach to the European Community. For example, the Prime Minister always reports the outcome of each European Council to the House and is questioned on that report. The conclusions produced at each European Council meeting are deposited in Parliament.

Parliament is also closely associated with the timetable of European Council meetings. At the House's request, a six-monthly debate takes place in the House before every European Council meeting and also looks ahead to future work and priorities. The Council also provides an annual report to the European Parliament on the Community's work, which is made available in the Library.

The debate is important because the Opposition have an open mind on it. The Committee should bear in mind the fact that, when these debates take place, which is quite often, some of my hon. Friends find it difficult to get enough Members to keep the debate going.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: May I finish my argument? Then I shall be pleased to give way to hon. Members.

On new clause 10, I contend that there will be no shortage of opportunities to examine the Government's

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policy on the activities and progress of the union, or to keep the House fully informed of the European Council's activities, both before and after each of those meetings. The procedures seem to be adequate in any case but, if the Committee felt that they were inadequate and wanted the Government to make further demarches through a Select Committee, it should decide about the matter, and it should not be subject to legislation introduced by the Executive.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney will no doubt wish to convince the Committee that the new clause is worthy of support. That is a matter for him, but the device is both cumbersome and unnecessary. If you, Mr. Lofthouse, were to allow a Division on it, unless arguments convince me otherwise, I will ask the Committee to reject it.

Mrs. Gorman: On the matter of my right hon. Friend's preamble on the subject of European parties and similarities between us, the Christian Democrats, the Liberals and God knows who else, is that not almost irrelevant? After all, the European Parliament, to which all these people and their parties are elected, has virtually no powers at all over the Commission except in the matter of approving the budget. Is it not true that the Council of Ministers makes the decisions and that it only reacts to what the bureaucracy has prepared for it? Its members simply do not have the time to consider and debate the ideas which we should be putting forward, so the whole

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not think that I agree with my hon. Friend. It is true that, in some areas, the Commission has the exclusive right of initiative where member states have agreed they should have it. But my hon. Friend is right: the key body is the Council of Ministers. Decisions are taken by the Council of Ministers, who are accountable to their national Parliaments, but we have, I think rightly, given additional powers to the European Parliament in the Maastricht treaty—mainly powers of supervision over the Commission and its activities, but also as a body to which the citizen can go to complain about injustices or maladministration by the Community. I think that that is a good thing. We have given it the power of negative assent, or rejection, at the end of the process in some carefully defined areas.

6.30 pm

Mr. George Robertson: Reverting to new clause 10 and to the Minister's case as to why we should not consider it sympathetically, he has given a number of examples of where the Government choose to consult the House to inform it of European Community business.

In that respect, it is largely correct, except that a lot of it is by custom and practice—custom and practice that the Government choose to deploy in that way. The six-monthly debate on the report of the European Community used to take place at the whim of the Government at various times during the six months; it was only brought to a point where it related to the European Council meeting because of the House's decision to try to anchor it at a specific point.

The Minister is right to say that the Prime Minister reports to the House after every full European Council meeting, but there was a time—it is within my parliamentary life—when it was an obligation on the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to report to the House after every Foreign Affairs Council meeting. We have not had such a report for many years now; it fell into disuse because the Foreign Office decided that it simply would not do it.

Surely, therefore, there is something to be said here, in such an important area, where there will be a statutory responsibility for the European Parliament to receive a report on the work of the union, for the British Parliament having a similarly anchored commitment to receive exactly the same information.

Mr. Garel-Jones: One of the differences between our Parliament and most others in Europe is that we do things by custom and practice. Having, as I do, some knowledge of Parliaments in other parts of Europe, I find that the way in which we organise our lives here is rather more efficient than people would expect.

I think that the statements from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office fell into desuetude because the demand for them was not there at the time. That is my understanding. The hon. Member is, however, well aware that, when the House wishes something to happen, and when something has become an established practice in the House, under the non-written constitutional arrangements that we have in this country, it is a pretty tight bet.

Here we are in Committee. It is true, Mr. Lofthouse, that I have no obligation to give way to any hon. Member, but if I were to stand up and read out my speech without giving way to hon. Members on both sides, it would be regarded as pretty outrageous. But it is not written down anywhere.

The Committee will decide when we come to a Division, and the hon. Member will talk to those in his party who are Whips, but I can remember in a former capacity rushing round the House on many occasions, trying to find hon. Members to come in so that a particular debate should not collapse before 10 o'clock.

I just warn the House against putting into statute what ought to be done through Standing Orders and by custom and practice. If the House genuinely believes that the present provisions for debate and discussion on these matters are inadequate, that is something that should be discussed through the usual channels and in the Select Committee on Procedure, in the way we normally do these things.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. He is suggesting almost that this is a matter of principle. There is a great deal of scrutiny of European legislation by the House at present, as my right hon. Friend knows, and I presume that this was established through legislation. All that is suggested——

Sir Russell Johnston: Through procedure.

Mr. Marlow: Through procedure? Not through legislation? Well, is there any damage or harm done by enshrining it in legislation? An increasing amount of information is made available to the House at the moment. My right hon. Friend, along with many others, agrees that there is a democratic deficit in the Community at present. Would it not be helpful in overcoming that democratic deficit to agree to this amendment?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am aware of my hon. Friend's views and temperament about the Community as a whole, but, in considering new clause 10, I urge him to look at it in a different light, as a House of Commons matter. For example, the two new Standing Committees that we have for scrutinising European Community legislation have in some respects been extremely successful, but the Committee will know that, after a year or so, discussions go on, through the usual channels and through the Select Committee on Procedure, and if the House feels that those arrangements are inadequate and have not met the House's ambitions in the matter, it is possible to change them.

I urge my hon. Friend, because he is anxious, as I think all hon. Members are, to ensure, as I see it, our enthusiastic co-operation in a European union, that we keep the traditions of the House about the way it organises its business, and that it should be done on a custom and practice basis that enables hon. Members, through the usual channels, to discuss these matters. On that basis, I would respectfully suggest to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney that his new clause is unnecessary.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way, as I am a signatory of the new clause. I have no doubt tha t my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney will give a substantive reply to this mini-debate, but I am rather surprised at the Minister's statement. Declaration 13 on page 127 of the treaty states:

"The Conference considers that it is important to encourage greater involvement of national Parliaments in the activities of the European Union."

The new clause does not call for a debate; it has nothing to do with the usual channels or time in this Chamber. The second and very important part of it is that, after the report has been made—the same one that goes to the European Parliament, so we are acting in parallel, as many hon. Members wish—says that the Government shall lay a statement

"as to their policy and performance in respect of the activities of the Union and their policies for its future."

Surely this is accountability of the Government to the House and to the country, written into a Bill or an Act, which is common in many Acts. It is a matter of democratic accountability and not of the procedures of debate in this House.

Mr. Garel-Jones: That is a matter that the Committee must decide. I believe tha t it would be inappropriate and inconsistent with the traditions of the House for its Standing Orders or for the way in which it chooses to scrutinise the Executive to be written into an Act of Parliament. That is my view.

Furthermore, as the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is probably more aware than any other hon. Member, over the next three or four years, the House will have to decide how it intends to scrutinise the activities in the intergovernmental pillars of the union. The common foreign and security policy will not present the House with a great many problems, because, as a general rule, foreign policy does not produce legislation; but the interior and justice pillar may—I very much hope that it will—produce legislation on matters of law and order, immigration, frontiers and so on on a European basis, and the House will need to decide how it is to inform itself in this matter. It is an area where, it seems to me, the House will come up with some ideas and will adjust them, and the beauty of operating by custom and practice in the House is precisely the ability to do so.

As for the declaration on the role of national Parliaments, the British Government insisted that it should be a declaration, not a protocol, because it was a matter for the House. How the House chooses to attend, represent itself and make its input in the discussions on the role of national Parliaments is a matter initiated by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, in consultation with his opposite number, through to the minority parties.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way again, but in doing so he can clarify matters now and obviate the need for later contributions. The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said that statements on Foreign Affairs Councils had fallen into desuetude. Presumably, according to what the Minister has just said, that was because no issues were raised through the usual channels.

In his introductory remarks when he called on us to reject new clause 10, the Minister said that such changes should not be introduced as part of a Bill presented by the Executive, but should be decided by Parliament. If Parliament decides to introduce the new clause tonight, that will constitute a decision of Parliament against the Executive.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Of course I accept that the new clause is not a wrecking clause—I do not use the word "wrecking" in the aggressive sense. If the new clause is carried, it will not mean that the Government are unable to ratify the Maastricht Bill. I want to make that clear to the Committee, which is why I am inviting my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), as well as other of my hon. Friends and some Opposition Members, to regard the subject as a House of Commons matter.

From my knowledge of other European Parliaments, I can assure the Committee—I am not necessarily speaking as a member of the Government—that the House carries out its business much more efficiently than people imagine. To pick up the issue raised by the hon. Member for Hamilton, at present, at the end of each European Council meeting we state what was discussed at the Council in reply to a parliamentary written question. If the House felt that it wanted a verbal statement, that desire would be raised through the usual channels and discussed and, if necessary, the Select Committee on Procedure could become involved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford was much exercised by the fact that the Maastricht treaty describes the European Community as the European Community, not the European Economic Community. The Maastricht treaty simply formalises what has been a general practice for many years. My hon. Friend seemed to be worried about that on the ground that he and some of my other hon. Friends have always regarded the European Community as a common market, so the removal of the word "economic" implied something broader to him.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford is not present. When he supported the Single European Act—he again confirmed today that he does not renege on that—that Act introduced an article on social policy. Therefore, it must have been clear to him then that

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we were engaged in something slightly more than casual encounters in the market place. The term "European Community" has long been used in the House by many people, including my right hon. Friend the Baroness Thatcher, as long ago as 1981. I hope that my hon. Friend will not regard the use of the term in the treaty as of special significance.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister made an understandable distinction and said that the Government had sought to ensure that there was a declaration, not a protocol, in relation to national Parliaments. Will he confirm what I assume to be true, which is that none of the declarations in the treaty falls within the scope of the Bill?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I think that they fall within the scope of the Bill but, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, a declaration is not legally binding on any member state. The declarations fall within the scope of the Bill, but they are not legally binding and are not, I am told, imported into domestic law. I shall take advice on that matter and reply to the hon. Gentleman later.

6.45 pm

Mr. Jenkin: It is ironic that we are changing the name of the European Economic Community to the European Community at the same time as Her Majesty's Government are insisting that the Community is an economic pillar in a union of separate pillars that relate to issues other than economics. As originally formulated in the Single European Act and the existing treaty of Rome, the Community is principally an economic community. However, the new article 2 mentions objectives such as social cohesion and solidarity. We know that the pillars are associated with the Community through various articles in the Maastricht treaty.

Therefore, in the European Economic Community, we are creating something much more than an economic pillar. That is the reason for the desire to change the name. We are the only country at odds with the objectives of the other 11 member Governments, who want to create a Community that includes the pillars in the fullest sense. That is why the Commission has just appointed new Commissioners to have responsibility for matters that we regard as outside their control—such as justice and home and foreign affairs.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The European Community is a developing and living institution. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) is being a little unfair to himself and others if he believes that the European Community has always been conceived as nothing more than a market. One only has to read the preamble to the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act to see that the Community was always more than that.

If we are successful in persuading many of our partners that there should be intergovernmentalism within the union, as I hope and believe we will be—that will be the debate for 1996 and beyond—I would not be surprised if, over the years, the term "European union" became more common than the term "European Community". I would not regard such a development as sinister. In essence, the treaty merely recognises what has become custom and practice. Almost everyone refers to the European Community as the European Community.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Is not the change of terminology much more significant than my right hon. Friend is making out? The word "union" is much more significant to Europeans than the word "Community". I accept the sincerity of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and his colleagues when they say that they are opposed to the Community being developed as a federal state. However, is it not a fact that all the other leaders —with the possible exception of the Danish Prime Minister—see Maastricht as a move towards a federal state? Is it not dangerous to sign a treaty that we think means one thing and the other 11 member states think means something else?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not want to deceive my hon. Friend. It is true that, during the past 30 years, a number of our partners have moved towards a single structure—I would almost go as far as to say that the whole thrust of the Community has been towards a single structure. In many ways, our reticence was due to the fact that we joined the Community late.

The beauty of the Maastricht treaty is that, for the first time, we have emerged from a set of negotiations not merely saying that we made the best of a bad job and managed to hold things back. I see that my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) is in his place—he played a significant part in the development. There was pressure to push all the Home Office business into a single structure. The crucial moment occurred at the time of the Dutch text, when the federalists fought what I hope will be their last battle in the development of the European Community. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) wishes to see a single structure. That is not a sin. It is almost the majority view in Europe, and it is the view of the Liberals.

We cannot be certain of anything, but the treaty gives us a chance to make intergovernmentalism work. Some countries in the Community now support that approach, but when the Dutch text was produced, only two countries were prepared to support it.

Part of my task is to persuade hon. Members who have perfectly understandable doubts about the matter that, if the Conservative party enthusiastically supports intergovernmentalism, considers law and order on a European scale and successfully presses ahead on common foreign and security policies, we can enter the 1996 intergovernmental conference with the enlarged membership increasingly beginning to shape the Europe that Conservatives have always wanted to see.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Perhaps my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not. It would be wrong if hon. Members who have sat here throughout the debate did not have time to speak.

The Danish decision has been mentioned, and the Committee has a right to hear the Government's view on it. The Government do not intend to amend the Bill to incorporate the decision on Denmark. That decision does not amend the Maastricht treaty or Community treaties; nor does it create any rights or obligations in EC law that require to be given effect in United Kingdom law. Therefore, it does not require to be incorporated in the Bill.

Mr. Marlow: To some extent my right hon. Friend is being a little less than frank with the Committee. He says that this great juggernaut has been turned around by the Government's heroic efforts, and that things are now moving our way. The reality is that, in areas where the Community already has competence, it is being given more, as well as more majority voting. We are dealing with new areas of policy where it does not have quite the competence that it had before, but they are new areas, and the Community now has new competences. In all those areas, the Commission will be present and will have rights of initiation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The European Community, the European union, is a developing institution. The Government, or at any rate British Conservatives, have rightly been uneasy over the past 30 years about the centripetal force driving the Community. At the very least, the Maastricht treaty can be said to have arrested that centripetalism.

The intergovernmentalism that has emerged, and the way in which the treaty is structured, gives British Conservatives for the first time an opportunity to gain morer allies for our vision of Europe. A British Prime Minister at that 1996 intergovernmental conference will, if we back the treaty enthusiastically, not be batting alone against the rest of the Community and picking up allies where he can. He will find that a substantial bloc, which I hope will contain some of the new members who have acceded—I am sure that it will also contain Denmark—will join us in shaping the Community in that way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North spoke about extended competences. As we debate the detailed articles, he will find that education, which he would no doubt describe as a new competence, is covered. The new article on education defines and limits the extent to which the Community can operate in education, and does it in a much stronger way than was allowed for in the Single European Act.

Under that Act, the Community attempted, under what we often saw as a false treaty basis, to move into education. Now, the specific areas are defined, and the article states that there shall be no harmonising measures. As we debate the Bill, I hope that my hon. Friend will find significant improvements compared with the Single European Act. I confirm that declarations are outside the Bill's scope.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Minister spoke about the Danish decision. The Government line, described by the Prime Minister, is that the Danish decision is binding in international law. Does that mean that the International Court of Justice at the Hague has jurisdiction and could enforce that decision if necessary?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Any binding international decision that is in dispute would go to the International Court of Justice at the Hague.

I have taken up enough of the Committee's time. My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will deal with economic and monetary union.

Mr. Spearing: I had hoped to speak to the amendment, but, because of the Chairman's choice in relation to the Edinburgh matter, I now have two tasks. I shall deal later with the Edinburgh issues. I am glad to pick up immediately the Minister's point about what he says has been a change in the centripetal authoritarian tendency in the Community. He and the Prime Minister claim not only to have halted but to have reversed that tendency. Many times the Minister has said that for the first time we have this or that. He nods in agreement. I shall try to prove what I said during the recommittal debate—if I can call it that. That is not true. If anything, the reverse is correct.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I hope that I have never said that Britain has won, because in the development of the Community there are never final victories or final defeats. Most objective observers and certainly everyone in Europe believe that the shape envisaged by the treaty is a substantial advance for those who take a nation state view of Europe rather than for those who seek to be integrationists in a single structure. The debate is continuing and we need the enthusiasm and dedication of all political parties in the United Kingdom if we are to punch our weight and win more points.

Mr. Spearing: I agree that the Minister has never spoken about victories, but he has said that there has been a change of attitude and a change of mood. He nods in agreement. I dissent from that view. I am sorry that the Minister was not able to reply to my letter of 15 December on some of these matters. Perhaps if he cannot reply to my questions in the debate he will write to me. I hope that he will deliver a winding-up speech, because he has not yet heard all the contributions.

The Minister will remember Maastricht mark I or, rather, the Dutch treaty which was hurriedly removed from the public eye when the Dutch presidency started. It was chucked away. Everybody said that it was going too far too fast and that it was too ambitious. A few days ago I asked the Minister which of the matters in the treaty that disappeared were not within the scope of the present treaty. We are debating what the Minister called the trunk of the treaty—titles II, III and IV—and the supporting

I suggest that that is not the right analogy. Instead, we have a single building with a few partitions inside it. It is all pretty flimsy, and some of the partitions might be paper rather than the real thing. I asked the Minister—he replied only the other day—to tell me what matters that were to be found in the treaty that was suddenly removed are not within the treaty that is before us. The Minister could not refer to any. In other words, the so-called treaty of Maastricht—the treaty of union that we have before us—is of similar scope to the treaty that was introduced during the Dutch presidency in September 1991, and was then hurriedly withdrawn.

7 pm

The difference between the two treaties, as the Minister correctly says, is in the scope of specific Community competence, as envisaged in the titles that we are discussing, and that which he claims to be entirely intergovernmental that surrounds it. Incidentally, this is of importance in respect of the Edinburgh decision, because the Edinburgh European Council was not the intergovernmental body which made the decision. There is a fine but important distinction to be made.

Why do I say that the union edifice is very different from the structure that the Minister wishes to project to us? The elements of the trunk and of the European Community that are to be found within the so-called pillars are manifold. I would like to go through them in detail, but I shall not do so because I know that others

wish to contribute to the debate. In title I, however, we find no fewer than eight references to institutions of the Community. They are not intergovernmental, because they are part of the trunk. There is one reference to the Council, four references to the Commission, two to the Parliament and one to the European Court of Justice. The elements within titles II, III and IV get into title I as well, and that was supposed to be entirely intergovernmental.

We were told that there would not be penetration into the other parts of the treaty. Article J deals with foreign and security matters. Within it there are 17 references to the Council and six to the Commission—23 in all. I am sorry that the Minister of State is not in his place to hear what I have to say because this is proveable stuff.

I move on to article K, which deals with judicial and home affairs. We cannot get more national than that. In the series of articles—it starts with K1—there are three references to the Council, four to the Commission, two to the Parliament and one provision for the European Court. If we take up cross-references—I shall not do so in detail—there are no fewer than 40 references to the Community's institutions as they are at present in the so-called pillars. Surprise, surprise, many of them refer to the ubiquitous Commission.

The Commission is there all the time, and that is because it is charged with making the whole outfit coherent. That is made clear in the early articles of the treaty. The Commission has the right to understand what the pie is doing, if it is not a finger steering the pie, as it were. This means that titles II and III are much expanded. I suggest that the union is the entire temple and not the single trunk with supporting pillars, and that the claims of the Prime Minister and the Minister of State are not correct. I shall prove that—I hope to be able to do so entirely within the terms of the debate—in relation to the powers of the European Court, which are established and are of the Community.

Migration and home affairs are covered in article K. Article K3.2 (c) reads:

"without prejudice to article 220 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, draw up conventions"—

this is a reference to the Council—

"which it shall recommend to the Member States for adoption in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.

Unless otherwise provided by such conventions, measures implementing them shall be adopted within the Council by a majority of two-thirds of the High Contracting Parties."

That is the Council. There it is. It is working within the so-called intergovernmental area. The article continues:

"Such conventions may stipulate that the Court of Justice shall have jurisdiction to interpret their provisions and to rule on any disputes regarding their application, in accordance with such arrangements as they may lay down."

Denmark is rather sensitive when it comes to matters relating to citizenship, for example, which one would think would be well outside the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. I suggest, however, with the support of quotations, that they certainly are not. Hon. Members may say that there is no compulsion on member states to be parties to the conventions. Tell that to those who were present at the Trevi discussions. Tell that to the Select Committee on Home Affairs. We all know that if we are to have effective laws relating to policing and drugs, for example—something which we all wish to see inside the possible union—we must have a certain amount of co-operation. The only way in which that can be achieved practically is by some sort of agreement. The pressure to adopt the conventions, subject to the European Court, will, I suggest, be politically impossible to resist.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): The hon. Gentleman has almost given the game away. I think that he is jumping at shadows in terms of the fears that he has expressed. Article K3.2 distinguishes the intergovernmental co-operation therein described from the procedures under the European Community by giving the initiative to member states as well as to the Commission. It makes it clear that agreement to any convention must be unanimous. There is no question of majority or qualified majority voting. It makes it clear that conventions can be referred to the European Court of Justice only where there is agreement by the states that happen to be parties to the convention. It is——

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Member is beginning to make a speech. I think that he knows that in my book interventions should be short.

Mr. Evans *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman: That is it.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans). I was saying that there is a channel of competence. It is true that agreement is required, but Ministers who have been to Brussels will know only too well that a ratchet applies to matters relating to European Community. Unanimity sounds fine; it sounds as though there is a veto once and for all. We know that it is difficult to withstand that procedure and that once there is agreement there is no going back. I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that there is sufficient inducement to agree to competence, to agree to an agreement within the ambit of the European Court. I use that as a trenchant illustration, I believe, of the degree to which the separation of the pillars and the trunk will not, in practice, be as people think.

The hon. Gentleman knows what happens when Ministers fly into Brussels having been briefed by civil servants at the last minute after a constituency meeting, worrying about this, that and the other. That is irrespective of party. The hon. Gentleman knows the Commission, the Council and the central institutions of the Community, with their staffing, knowledge and the Committee of Permanent Representatives, and all the things that go on. That is the effective centripetal drawing in of effective power which, I fear, will be given a boost by the treaty.

The process may have been even faster under the Dutch mark I treaty. The Government have probably slowed down the rate of acceleration that would otherwise have taken place, but there is still that progression to centrality.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): What concerns me about what the hon. Gentleman is saying, along with so many of his colleagues on both sides of the Committee who are against the Community, is that they lack flair and imagination in seeing what the Community could do. For the Community to draw power to the centre for certain purposes is not necessarily a bad thing. After all, in the past two weeks we have seen that we have no control over the merchant shipping fleets which pass through our waters and may come to grief on the rocks creating great

disasters. A European market into which the world has to sell is a much more powerful entity than a merely British one, is it not?

Mr. Spearing: I am surprised to be accused of not having much imagination. My trouble is that I have rather too much. However, I think that I am realistic. I do not see hobgoblins.

What is there to prevent every European nation, whether a member of the Community or not, acting separately by intergovernmental action, saying that they will not accept any tanker discharging in any of their ports unless, unless, unless, unless? We do not need a European Community to be able to do that. That could be done fairly soon. It could be done if the Ministers responsible to the House took action. Why do they not? It does not require a centralised Community bureaucracy.

I was not going to make this point because I wanted to be brief, but I shall do so in answer to the hon. Gentleman. British farmers find themselves having to demonstrate against the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Do not the poor farmers realise that the power to decide what we do with our soil in agricultural terms went from the House in 1973 by majority vote? Apparently they do not.

During the enormously important worldwide negotiation on the economy under GATT, the Minister, then the President of the Agriculture Council, had to book into a hotel under an assumed name and bite his nails while an unnamed, virtually unaccountable EC official negotiated on behalf of all the members of the Community. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that that is right, let him get up and say so.

Mr. Devlin: He thinks that it is right. It is far better for the Community to negotiate GATT as a whole than to spin out the whole arrangement by perhaps another 10 or 15 years on each round simply because there are that many more parties to the agreement. Of course it is better that we negotiate as a single market.

7.15 pm

On the hon. Gentleman's earlier point about shipping, he simply described the position as it is now. The disaster that we are faced with at the moment occurred because a ship going from Norway, which is not in the Community, to Canada, which is not in the Community, did not have to meet the standards required in a British port because it was not going to a British port.

Mr. Spearing: There is nothing to prevent the Norwegians, if they so wish—I should have thought that they might, being a maritime power—agreeing to anything whether inside or outside the EC. I shall take up the matter with the Canadian High Commission because Canada is worried about the environment.

On the other point, the hon. Gentleman mistook what I was saying. If there is a single market by law and there is a negotiation under GATT, of course we must—unfortunately, from my point of view—negotiate as a Community. But we do not have to send in an unnamed official while the President of the Council of Ministers concerned has almost the status of an office boy on the edge, or so it looked. Is that what the hon. Gentleman wants? I do not think so. That separates the elected person responsible to the people in this Parliament and in other Parliaments, accountable in some way or another, from the officials of the Commission who have far too much power.

Mr. Devlin *rose*——

Mr. Spearing: I said that I would not give way again and, in order to assist other colleagues, I must move on to the second part of my remarks relating to the so-called decision at Edinburgh.

I was at Edinburgh during the summit. I spent one evening in the company of the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) and 200 other people. We were both making our views known about the succession of treaties. One member of the multinational audience asked me what the hon. Lady was like. I said that she was Baroness Thatcher times two. That was met with disbelief, but I was believed when she made her speech. She was not in favour of these matters. Everyone knows my views. She said that we needed to get rid of the Community because it was a socialist plot. I said that the hon. Lady was wrong because I thought that it was a capitalist plot. I had the words of the treaty on my side. It requires

"the free movement of capital and labour unless authorised to the contrary."

However, I said that we should compromise because we both agreed that it was a plot. We must remember the old succession, "I plan, you scheme and they plot". I suppose that that is what we all say about each other.

The decision at Edinburgh was surely about political power, because that is what the treaties are about. They are a map of political power; a proto-constitution taken as a library of treaties, including the Single European Act, bits of which are also lying around.

What does the Edinburgh decision do? Does it modify political union? I should have thought that it must; otherwise Mr. Schluter would not have been able to go back to Copenhagen satisfied that he had enough to be able to recommend a second round in Denmark. It must make some change. On the other hand, we are told that the decision does not change the wording of the treaty. If that is so, how can it have a different effect? I should like the Minister to explain that conundrum when he replies.

Many people say that the decision makes no difference. Earlier in the debate the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) quoted the German Chancellor and I shall do so again. In the *Financial Times* on 4 January 1993 the Chancellor is quoted as saying:

"the European Community expressed their sympathy for Denmark's special reservations, but decided not to change the Maastricht treaty. Reopening negotiations was not, and is not, on our agenda."

I do not know who "our" is. Presumably it does not include Denmark. He continued:

"In Edinburgh we therefore could go no further than to clarify the relevant treaty clauses to respond to the main Danish concerns. This purely declaratory 'decision' neither changes nor complements the treaty, and therefore does not require ratification by member states."

I think that everyone who is present now was present when, in reply to a point made by one of my hon. Friends, the Minister—having received some information—confirmed that declarations were not legally binding. There may be a problem in the translation, but it is clear that Chancellor Kohl does not want the declaratory decision that we are discussing to be legally binding in the sense that we have been told it is.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The hon. Gentleman quoted my right hon. Friend as having said that declarations were not legally binding. That is not quite what my right hon. Friend said. He was asked specifically whether the declarations attached to the treaty came within the ambit of the Bill, and the answer to that very precise question is an equally precise no.

Mr. Spearing: Well, we shall consult *Hansard*. I believe, however—although I am subject to correction—that, while protocols are legally binding, declarations in a treaty are not. That is laid down in the Vienna convention. Declarations of hope or intent, for example, cannot be legally binding, because people can change their minds—and that is quite right. None the less, some of us expected a protocol at least: I think that the Danes expected that. Such a protocol could have been added, and it need not have been very long.

Following what may have been skilful negotiation by our Prime Minister, we have secured certain clauses and derogations. Some people object to them, and I understand why. The Danes, however, want much more; they suggested, for instance, that changes applying to Denmark could also be applied to applicant states of the Nordic union, if they wished it. I understand that the decision concerned extends to no country other than Denmark, so one of its requirements has already gone out of the window.

Having asked questions about the declaration, I discovered that it did not need ratification. I was told by the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office—a junior Minister—

"The decision does not require ratification".

He went on to say that the decision had been made not by the European Council, but by

"Heads of State and Government meeting within the European Council."—[*Official Report*, 17 December 1992; Vol. 216, c. *356*.]

As recently as 11 January, I asked the Prime Minister who had signed the decision, on behalf of all the nations involved. The Prime Minister replied:

"The decision relating to Denmark was not signed."—[*Official Report*, 11 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. *554*.]

I am not suggesting that every international treaty should be signed, but if I take a guest into the Strangers Cafeteria, I sign for it. We all sign for things all the time, do we not? We have to sign even for small transactions. Why did no one sign that decision? One would have thought that, if it is to be effective and applicable in international law—as the Prime Minister told us several times that it would be on 14 December—all possible steps would have been taken to ensure that.

According to information that we received recently, a ruling of the European Court of Justice—to which the Prime Minister referred repeatedly on 14 December; it sounds good, does it not?—currently binds only seven of the 12 members of the Community. Somone might ask, "How far are titles II, III and IV exclusively the Community's provenance, and how far are the other titles exclusively within the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice?" What if there are conflicting judgments about the interpretation of this so-called decision? Who will win?

My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) asked a pertinent question: whether the decision was registered with the United Nations as an international treaty. According to the most recent information that I have received, my right hon. Friend asked the Foreign Office that question before Christmas, in which case it has had plenty of time to find the answer.

Mr. Denzil Davies: I can confirm that. I asked whether the decision, or treaty, was registerable, and whether it had been registered. I have not yet received even a holding answer, although I believe that it will arrive by van today, three days late. I do not know when the substantive answer will arrive.

Mr. Spearing: I do not see a Foreign Office Minister in the Chamber. I am sorry that the great Foreign Office, with all its Ministers, cannot provide someone to listen to what we are saying; but I am not surprised that, in a rather strange speech, the Minister made it clear that he did not want the matter to be reported to Parliament.

Mr. Shore: On a point of order, Dame Janet. Is it not extraordinary that no Foreign Office Minister is present? My hon. Friend is raising points that are clearly not within the competence of the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who is here to deal with European monetary union. These are serious matters, and it is outrageous that no Foreign Office Minister is listening.

The Second Deputy Chairman: The question of whom the Government put up to listen, or to speak on their behalf, is not a point of order for the Chair. No doubt Ministers will have noted the right hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Spearing: Thank you, Dame Janet—and I also thank my right hon. Friend for reinforcing my point. On an earlier occasion, I raised a point of order asking for a separate debate on these important matters; we are having that debate now. I pointed out then that I had written to the Attorney-General on 15 December, seeking information about the Edinburgh summit. I also asked him about the failure of the Foreign Office Minister to reply to points made in the previous debate. Many hon. Members will recall that famous occasion, when the Minister was apparently unable to reply to questions about justiciability. No wonder the poor chap could not answer; I did not think that there was an answer.

I took it on myself to write to the Attorney-General because I thought that he would know the answers to my questions. I requested a reply in time for today's debate, but so far it has not arrived. I believe that it will come tomorrow, but I am told that it will come not from the Attorney-General but from a Minister of State at the Foreign Office. It looks as though I shall have to write another letter. Not only have I had to write to the Attorney-General, who was not present for the previous debate, but no Foreign Office Minister is present today.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: The hon. Gentleman referred to the status of the declarations relating to Denmark. Many of us are concerned about what is happening in Denmark, and interested in the outcome of the next referendum. We do not know when that will take place; it will depend on what Government Denmark has after its current difficulties.

Is the hon. Gentleman implying that the Danish people may be faced with a false prospectus? They may well be given certain assurances which have no validity in law. If the matters concerned come before the European Court in the first instance, the declarations may well be set aside and

the Danish people may find that they have participated in a referendum on the basis of various assurances given to them by the Government of the moment which have no legal validity and could be dismissed by the European Court with the stroke of a pen.

7.30 pm

Mr. Spearing: I am not sure that it would necessarily be for the European Court or even for the International Court of Justice at the Hague. That matter has yet to be decided—we do not know. If the House of Commons does not know, I fail to understand how the Folketing can know either. The House is surely entitled, as a provisional signatory to the treaty, to the same information as the people of Denmark. We have yet to decide whether we will have the same opportunities in the future—that comes in a different part of the Bill—to put the same question that was put to the people of Denmark. We may yet do that.

If Denmark is treated in that way—at least by a possible con; I put it in colloquial language—we, as members of the European Community concerned with the quality of democracy in the Community, have just as much right to know whether the decision taken at Edinburgh was genuine.

On the evidence before us, the chances are that it was not genuine. My evidence is the words of the Prime Minister himself. On 14 December, I asked him how the nature of the European union could not be affected if the declaration at Edinburgh was to be legally and justiciably effective. If it is not to have an effect on the treaty, what has it to be effective and justiciable about? There cannot be one without the other. The Prime Minister replied:

"The hon. Gentleman began with a fallacy . . . What was agreed was an intergovernmental binding decision, not a treaty. There is a clear distinction between the two."—[*Official Report*, 14 December 1992; Vol. 216, c. 37.]

I do not see a clear distinction between an intergovernmental, binding decision and what we know as an international treaty. Perhaps I had better ask the Prime Minister about that. It seems that we are in dangerous waters.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Is not the most distressing part of much of this debate that we, as the tribunes of the people, are unable to decide such matters for ourselves? At every twist and turn, one is looking to the legal profession to tell us what it is that we think that we have decided in the name of the people. It seems that we have effectively copped out of making decisions on behalf of the people that we represent.

Mr. Spearing: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, but I will try to be a little imaginative and optimistic. In Britain, other than by treaty, the highest court is this House and another place. Is it not suspicious that, despite the hon. Gentleman's assertion about asking lawyers—I like to ask them things and obtain full explanations—no representative of the Lord Chancellor's Department is in his place? We can tell the people of this country that the fact of that absence should cause them to think very hard.

It may be that the Attorney-General's office would say, "This isn't really for us. We only deal with domestic law. International law is a job for the Foreign Office." That may be true, but where are the representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office? Is it not the height of ministerial arrogance that, during 10 or 15 minutes of debate, the people of this country did not have a Foreign Office Minister present on the Government Front Bench to hear our remarks about international law?

Mr. Gill: Is it not almost irrelevant whether Ministers are present, because in the final analysis neither my right hon. Friend the Minister of State nor my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will be the final arbiter? A court beyond our shores will decide such matters.

Mr. Spearing: That may be terrible at the moment, but if the House does not pass the Bill, that is not entirely a matter for the Executive in Whitehall—the princes of politics. It is a matter for right hon. and hon. Members. If we say no to any important part of the Bill, there is nothing to prevent an improved treaty coming before us next time. That has already happened in the case of Denmark—or is it an improved treaty? The very fact that we do not know about the change that the people of Denmark managed to effect, if it is a change, is itself important. That the whole thing was not dropped straightaway because there was no unanimity is also a tell-tale sign.

One major constitutional matter has so far eluded the House, the media, and most of the public. It is of such stratospheric constitutional significance that is is not visible from the Floor of the Committee. The treaty was discussed for 18 months or two years at intergovernmental conferences, summits, conclaves and other meetings. The mind boggles at the man hours that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office must have put in. We had one version of the treaty, and then another. Then we had the treaty on European union, and a modification or not from the Danes. It went on and on.

That treaty of 134 pages was subject to ratification by the due constitutional procedures of each member state under article 236, but then one member said no. A few gentlemen and perhaps one or two ladies—I am not sure whether there are any lady Ministers—met for two days in Edinburgh and reached an overnight decision, without signature. They said, "We are going to change the treaty in respect of the obligations placed on one of our members."

If the Prime Minister is to be believed, they effectively changed the nature of the treaty, which is not to be ratified by the House or any other assembly of the people of the member states. If the Prime Minister is right and the nature of the change is justiciable, the treaty was changed—changed overnight by a group of people sitting in Edinburgh and deciding the way that the treaty should be changed.

It is not just a question of legislation. They do that in the Council, probably every week. It is not just the justiciability of the European Court or tax—they have those already. It is a matter of changing the effective constitution of the union. If that can be done virtually overnight by people sitting in Edinburgh, doing a deal, and changing the constitution of the total union that may be, surely that strikes more of the philosophy of ancient Rome than of the revolutionary and forward-looking philosophy that drove the people of Philadelphia into a different sort of constitution—had it been otherwise, I might not be speaking like this today.

Mr. Michael Spicer: First, let me say in response to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) that I, too, recollect the Minister of State saying that declarations

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[Mr. Michael Spicer]

were not legally binding. I listened rather carefully to that assertion. The hon. Member for Newham, South may have heard it before, but it was the first time that I had heard it said, certainly from the Dispatch Box. Perhaps the Minister of State made a mistake. I am sure that he will not wish to change the record, but he may wish to correct himself. I agree with the hon. Member for Newham, South: the Minister of State certainly said that in my hearing.

I support amendment No. 40 because title II is the instrument by which the jump is made irrevocably—which means for ever—towards a federal state of Europe. Hon. Members asked my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) what was the fundamental difference between the passage through the House of the Single European Act —and of earlier legislation in connection with that treaty —and the passage of the Maastricht Bill. The answer is precisely the word "irrevocable". We are to pass legislation that will bind future Parliaments. If there is a central element to our unwritten constitution, it is that one Parliament should not bind another. That is the new step that we are taking and it is the fundamental difference between the present Bill and everything that has happened before. That is the answer that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford should have given in response to those who teased him by asking why he had voted in favour of previous legislation but proposed to vote against the Bill. It is a perfectly logical position to adopt.

For the most part, those in Britain who defend the treaty avoid conceding that to accept Maastricht is inevitably and irrevocably to accept the formation of a united states of Europe. As has been said already, others in Europe have no such reservations about accepting the essential federalist nature of the treaty. Indeed, to them, the federalist intent of Maastricht is its chief attraction. That was clearly stated by Chancellor Kohl in a speech made at the Bertelsmann forum on 3 April last:

> "In Maastricht we laid the foundation-stone for the completion of the European union. The European union treaty introduces a new and decisive stage in the process of European union which within a few years will lead to the creation of what founder fathers of modern Europe dreamed of following the last war: the united states of Europe."

The Chancellor of Germany is in no doubt about the intent of the Maastricht treaty and his interpretation of the treaty must readily be accepted as the correct one: article 8 of title II establishes the rights and duties of union citizenship. To be a citizen, one has to be a citizen of something; there must exist a state to which one belongs.

The path by which the federal state is to be established under Maastricht is clearly laid out—it is through the formation of a single currency.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend has rightly referred to a statement made by Chancellor Helmut Kohl, in which he stated that it was his clear intention that there should be a united states of Europe. What Chancellor Kohl did not add—although it was certainly mentioned by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing)—is that the process will be irreversible. That is surely the fundamental point for the Committee to remember: what happens under Maastricht will be irrevocable and future Parliaments will not be able to overturn or change it. That is why this debate is so fundamental and why it is critical that the people of Britain should have a say, by way of a referendum, in that decision.

Mr. Spicer: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Maastricht is different from everything that has come before it because it is irreversible and irrevocable.

7.45 pm

Mr. Dorrell: I am listening carefully to what my hon. Friend is saying. I understood him to say that the obligations that we are to take on under the Maastricht treaty are fundamentally different from the obligations that we took on under earlier treaties because they were irrevocable. Perhaps he would like to turn his attention to article 240 of the treaty of Rome, which says:

> "This treaty"—

the treaty of Rome—

> "is concluded for an unlimited period".

Mr. Spicer: The fundamental difference is clearly related to the single currency. Until now, it has always been open to Parliament—because it has not been bound by any previous Parliament—to pass legislation that has the effect of revoking earlier decisions made here. There are at least three qualities attached to the single currency which make its creation the fundamental step towards a federalist state.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): My hon. Friend appears to have left the point that he was making earlier. So far, we have had about six or eight "crucial steps". My hon. Friend places far too much emphasis on what Chancellor Kohl said back in April; anyone can produce lots of speeches and high-falutin' rhetoric, but they do not necessarily signify. Moreover, the word "irrevocable" means little. Every piece of legislation that the House passes is irrevocable until it is changed. We do not have to start again with all the legislation on the first day of each Parliament. Finally, one does not need to have a state of which to be a citizen. The citizenship referred to in the treaty gives us certain additional rights on top of our British citizenship—in particular, the right to vote in local and European elections wherever one lives in Europe.

Mr. Spicer: I shall try to deal with my hon. Friend's points in sequence. She spoke of rhetoric. I sought to stress that people in Britain on the whole tried to avoid references to the federalist objective of the treaty—for obvious reasons, because, if the federalist objective were clearly pointed out, it would make the treaty extremely unattractive to most people in the country and, I suspect, to most in the House. I was merely saying that no such coyness exists in other countries or among their leaders —including, in the example that I picked, Chancellor Kohl of Germany.

I accept that if we were merely playing with words, my hon. Friend's point about the word "irrevocable" might have some validity. But the word is attached to the concept of a single currency and that is what will make the great difference, for the following reasons. Under most definitions of sovereignty, when a country passes over control of its coinage, all other forms of money or credit and its banking system, it has taken the essential step towards giving away sovereignty and the control of its economy. Moreover, in this case, it does so irrevocably. The establishment of a single currency is a meaningless

concept unless it is for ever—for eternity. That has profound implications for the sovereignty, rights and history of this Parliament.

Mrs. Currie: The word "irrevocable" needs to be challenged. We regularly sign treaties containing such words. The most significant treaty that we ever signed was that by which we acceded to NATO. That really changed a lot and constituents of mine have died doing what they could, as members of the armed forces, for NATO. That sort of thing was done without thorough debate in the House. I put it to my hon. Friend that nothing is irrevocable. It is often a good idea to get stuck into something, join in and be part of alliances, and do our utmost to make them work in our interests.

Mr. Spicer: I am in favour of alliances, but there is all the difference in the world. If my hon. Friend is basing her case on that particular argument, she has totally misunderstood the whole thrust of this treaty and the treaty of Rome. We are talking about a change in the law, which is a fundamentally different concept from an alliance such as NATO. We are talking about something which is totally and generically different.

It is extraordinary that my hon. Friend, who is intelligent and coherent on such matters, should raise the matter of NATO, which is an example of how we have created circumstances in the past which were open to change. This is different. We are about to determine the law of the land in a context in which we will be bound for ever.

Mr. Bill Walker: When the people of England and Scotland previously signed a similar treaty for a union they knew what union meant, and we meant it. That is exactly what union means today. Anyone who doubts the meaning of union should remember the reassurances that were given during discussions on the 1972 Act and the Single European Act in 1985. We were given assurances that union did not mean union. We now know that union does mean union because we are creating it.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend makes an extremely good point.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Spicer: I shall continue, but I will give way in a moment.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend is enjoying himself.

Mr. Spicer: I am certainly enjoying myself, although I am not sure whether others will let me go on protractedly for too long.

One implication of the irrevocable nature of what is involved in the treaty, and the fact that the sovereignty of Parliament will be removed, especially one Parliament's ability not to bind another, is to make spurious the argument that has been used against a referendum.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Spicer: I will give way in a moment. The argument against a referendum which has been used is that we should do everything through the House. I would certainly prefer that. However, part of the objective of the treaty is to destroy the sovereignty of the House by removing the convention and history by which no Parliament binds its successor——

Mrs. Currie: That is nonsense.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend may say that it is nonsense. However, I give my views to the House and that is precisely what I think.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I hope that we will maintain the tradition of the House that each hon. Member has the freedom to say what he or she likes, even if it is not popular with others.

Mr. Spicer: That particular freedom will be maintained. As I said, the freedom of the House to be totally sovereign within itself will be removed if we set up something irrevocably and for ever. That is the simple point that I am making. Therefore, to argue against a referendum on the grounds that the sovereignty of Parliament must continue is spurious.

Mr. Quentin Davies: I am surprised by the argument that my hon. Friend has adopted because I know him well and I know that he has considerable constitutional experience. Does he not realise that it is a fundamental part of our constitution that no Parliament can bind its successor? Even if we sought to use this treaty or any other instrument passed through the House to try to bind our successors, we would not be able to do so. Therefore, it does not matter whether any treaty or any other obligation that we accept may or may not be without any time limit. By definition, it is impossible in practice and in theory to overturn the principle of the British constitution that no Parliament can bind its successor.

Mr. Spicer: I do not think that the European Court will accept what my hon. Friend has said. Once the European Court is faced with the law as defined under the Maastricht treaty, it will apply that law. Indeed, the Commission will also apply the law in so far as it has the legislative power to do so.

There is no question but that we are creating a law which will exist unless we build in some new powers of secession. If new powers of secession are not built in, we will have to comply with the law for ever because that is what the treaty and the single currency mean. That would be the case unless the law was changed by unanimous vote and a new treaty negotiated.

Mr. Dorrell: I am grateful that my hon. Friend has reinforced the point made by my hon. Friends the Members for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) and for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies). Perhaps my hon. Friend could tell the Committee what he thought would be the legal effect, as interpreted by the English courts, of the repeal of the European Community Act 1972.

While my hon. Friend is addressing that question, can he come back to what I asked him earlier? He argued that the Maastricht treaty imported a new principle in that it was irrevocable. My point was that exactly the same principle is contained in the treaty of Rome. There is no new precedent in the Maastricht treaty on the point that he is developing.

Mr. Spicer: I know that some lawyers take the view that we have already gone beyond the point at which we remain a sovereign country. The Minister has just said that he is

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one of them. I think that most lawyers still take the view that the process of refining, withdrawing and revising parts of legislation which have been passed by the House remains open to us. Other lawyers dispute that. I simply believe that we have not yet passed the point at which we lose sovereignty.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Will my hon. Friend give way?

The Second Deputy Chairman: Can I be clear to whom the hon. Gentleman is giving way?

Mr. Spicer: I give way to the Minister and then to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It is difficult to understand the new precendents which my hon. Friend seems to be reading into the Maastricht treaty. He has just referred to one of them. He will recall that in the Single European Act, which he and I supported, we approved the objective of the progressive realisation of economic and monetary union. What did my hon. Friend think he was voting for at that time?

Mr. Spicer: If my hon. Friend is saying——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Before the hon. Gentleman continues, could I make the point that hon. Members must address the Chair? I have been treated to a succession of ministerial backs.

Mr. Spicer: If my hon. Friend the Minister is saying that, in effect, the single currency commitment already exists as a result of previous legislation, why did he make such a play on the opt-out clause which he achieved? I certainly do not accept it.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Spicer: No.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Perhaps the Minister should take note of article 5 of the Maastricht treaty. This will assist my hon. Friend. It says:

"Member states shall take all appropriate measures to ensure fulfilment of the obligations arising out of this treaty or resulting from action taken by the institutions of the Community. They shall facilitate the achievement of the Community's tasks. They shall abstain from any action which could jeopardise the attainment of the objectives in this treaty."

Of course, if we are bound by the Maastricht treaty, we are bound.

Mr. Spicer: I agree with my hon. Friend. There is a further point in the context of a single currency and its effect on the federal objective. If there is a single currency, there is, by implication, a single pricing system throughout the new federal state which is being established. There will be a single pricing system and a single currency, but not single wage levels. Indeed, there will be different wage levels and different economic states of development.

There will be misery and political disruption throughout the new state unless a single central compensatory authority with taxation and expenditure powers is established in association with a single currency. It is as logical as night follows day that the establishment of a single currency should involve the establishment of a single taxation authority and a single economic authority. If that is not the foundation, the makings and the essence of a new sovereign state, I do not know what is.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Spicer: I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, but after that I will not give way to anyone else for the time being.

8 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: I wish to clarify the point that I sought to make to my hon. Friend and to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet). When my hon. Friend and I voted for the Single European Act, we approved the objective of the progressive realisation of economic and monetary union. The route to that economic and monetary union was not defined. Therefore, we were at risk that under article 235 progress would be made towards EMU. The advantage of Maastricht is that it defines what EMU is. Furthermore—this is the point that I wish to make to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North—every time that EMU or a single currency is referred to either in the preamble or in the treaty itself, it is followed by eight magic words:

"in accordance with the provisions of this Treaty".

That is a direct reference to our ability to opt out of that union. So we are in a stronger position now than when we voted for the Single European Act.

Mr. Spicer: I shall deal with the matter of opt-outs in a few moments. My hon. Friend answered his own point about whether everything was set in concrete. It was not. Some general objectives were set down in previous treaties and legislation. However, in the Maastricht treaty we are presented with the objective of a single currency.

The only point that I am making at the moment is that clear qualities are associated with the objective of a single currency which add up to a new federal state of Europe. That seems absolutely clear to me, especially on my last point about the essential addition to the single currency of a single economic authority with single taxation and expenditure powers. If that is not the essence of a single state, I do not know what is.

The question in my mind is therefore not whether Maastricht leads towards a federal state of Europe, but whether such a state and such a loss of national sovereignty is a good thing. I certainly recognise that the nation state is a relatively recent invention and that there is no eternal quality about the nation state. I suppose that in Britain it goes back to Henry VIII under certain interpretations. When Henry VIII said, "This realm of England is an empire", it was an act of rebellion. That was the formation of the nation state. I do not base my case on the eternity of the nation state.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Spicer: If my hon. Friend will allow me to finish this point, I shall certainly give way. The question which I shall address after I have allowed my hon. Friend to intervene is whether now is the right point at which to abolish the nation state and move across to some other formation.

Mr. Marlow: I wonder whether we can knock a little issue on the head early on in the debate. The Government

have a little list of those who supported the Single European Act who now take a different view because they have learnt from experience that things are not as they were said to be at the time. If I could take my hon. Friend back to that time, when he was safely enmeshed in Government, those of us who opposed the Single European Act were told not to worry. The Government said, "It is only about a single market. There is a certain amount of qualified majority voting, but let us have a single market, which is greatly to the benefit of the United Kingdom. We have a veto on everything else. Do not worry, boys. There is nothing in it."

Now the Government are saying about the Maastricht treaty, "We have won all the arguments. We are going there. It is going our way." But look at the details, the text and the small print, because in two years the Government will come back and say, "You agreed to it at the time of the Maastricht debate."

Mr. Spicer: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. It is a variant of the Lord Denning argument. A tidal wave of legislation is about to swamp us. Some people take the view—I do not know whether the Minister of State is one of them, but he seemed to imply it at one point—that we have already crossed the point at which we retain any real sovereignty. Indeed, there are legal precedents for suggesting that, when this Parliament passes legislation, it is inferior to legislation which comes out of the legal institutions of the European Community.

So I agree with my hon. Friend entirely that because we are dealing with law—this is the difference between treaties and alliances—the words matter. That is particularly so because we are dealing with an alien form of law—Roman law. As it is codified law, the words matter. That is the essence of the argument that we deploy. It so happens that the proposed new law sets up certain patterns which undermine the sovereignty of this Parliament. It sets up a new federal state of Europe. However, few Members of Parliament are prepared to accept publicly that that is what the Bill does, even though they support the treaty.

The question is whether the nation state still has a role. At a practical level, the idea of converging our economies —for example, by means of fixed exchange rates—must now have been discredited. Events surrounding the ERM and throughout the history of this century have proved that. The attempts to follow the gold standard were completely disastrous. One way of considering the single currency must be to consider it as an ERM in perpetuity.

As the concept of managing one's economy according to the objectives of someone else's economy has singularly failed, the idea that at this stage we can merge our economies through a single currency is foolish on the basis of historical precedent and practicality. However, there is surely a much more fundamental point. It is that we must ask what benefit we gain from the transfer to a new federal organisation.

Let us take the issue of democracy, which above all must concern Members of Parliament. Transferring the sovereignty and undermining the position of this Parliament in favour of an unelected central bank, an unelected Commission and an unelected court of law under Maastricht cannot be done lightly under any circumstances without some massive trade-off.

We know that the economic trade-offs of our arrangements with Europe are dubious. At present we have a £10 billion trade deficit with Europe. I cannot see what benefits we shall achieve out of political union and the transfer of sovereignty

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend talks about the transfer of sovereignty, but perhaps as important in the short term is the transfer of resources. Is my hon. Friend aware that, for example, our membership of the ERM cost Britain 1 million jobs, with all the poverty and problems that that creates? Under the convergence and other proposals in the Maastricht treaty, we shall transfer further resources to Portugal, Spain and Greece—countries which are already depriving us of jobs and part of our manufacturing base. Does my hon. Friend consider that that is a sensible way to represent the interests of the people of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Spicer: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend that the costs are enormous. It is not just the £10 billion trading deficit with Europe. It is the £2 billion that we pay under various budgetary arrangements. My hon. Friend is correct that enormous costs were associated with the ERM. Some people have estimated that the most recent attempts to bolster the ERM cost more than £20 billion. So my hon. Friend has a good point.

Mr. Devlin: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Spicer: No. I shall make some progress and give way later if my hon. Friend still wishes to intervene.

It is sometimes said that the process laid down by Maastricht is so unrealistic and premature that it will fall apart under the weight of its own absurdity. It is said that the Germans in particular ultimately will not wear it, so we do not need to bother too much about what is going on.

The fallacy in that argument is simple; we have been debating it for the past 10 minutes. Once Maastricht is signed its provisions become the law of the land. The Commission and the European Court will take over from the politicians to ensure that the rules are applied. There seems to be much misunderstanding on that point both in Britain and in other countries. Let us take the example of the decision by the German Bundestag to ratify, subject to further consideration, the terms of the monetary union.

Germany's position would not be legal after ratification of the treaty. Unlike Britain and Denmark, Germany has no opt-out clause and it will be bound, for instance, by paragraph 4 of article 109j, which states clearly:

"If by the end of 1997 the date for the beginning of the third stage has not been set, the third stage shall start on 1 January 1999."

There are no ifs and buts and no clauses built in to allow the Bundestag to have its say. That will become the law in Germany as well as here, which brings me to the question of the British opt-out. It is unimaginable to me that if Britain accepts Maastricht it will be able to opt out of the single currency. Other hon. Friends may develop a more legalistic argument on the matter, but it is common sense that it will be unimaginable for us to opt out.

If we ratify the Maastricht treaty, one of the tragic consequences will be that Britain will face the choice of sacrificing control over its economy, in the way that I have tried to describe, or of leaving the European Community. I cannot see how we could remain within the EC as the only country—other than Denmark, perhaps—committed to staying outside the single currency. In any event, it would be meaningless to do so because article 109m of title

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II forces us to comply with EC monetary policy as if we were within the single currency. That is my answer to people who say that we will not have to go back into the ERM.

Mr. Dalyell: If all this is so imaginable, how are we to imagine that the hon. Gentleman remained a Minister in Mrs. Thatcher's Government for so long?

Mr. Spicer: I have been trying to answer precisely that question. In my view—and it is only one person's view—the treaty is fundamentally different from any other legislation that we have passed. Other people take a different view and even the lawyers argue about it. I am with the lawyers who say that we are about to take a step which, because of its irrevocable nature, will mean that we will lose our sovereignty. Ministers keep popping up and down and have said that some of the provisions go back a long way, but I take a different view. The treaty is a fundamentally different step.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Does not Lady Thatcher take exactly that view—that the Single European Act, which she passed as Prime Minister, was entirely different because it was devoted to economics, whereas the treaty is intended to make us part of a federal political union? If Lady Thatcher takes that view, her Ministers of the day are also entitled to do so.

Mr. Spicer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention.

On the question of whether we will have to re-enter the ERM, one aspect of the Maastricht treaty which worries me is that it will force us to rejoin. Some hon. Members have said that that is not true, but article 109m clearly states:

"Until the beginning of the third stage, each Member State shall treat its exchange rate policy as a matter of common interest . . . From the beginning of the third stage and for as long as a Member State has derogation, paragraph 1 shall apply by analogy to the exchange rate policy of that Member State."

The opt-out in the appropriate protocol makes us fall within the category of member states who have derogations, so there seems to be little doubt that we will have to re-enter the ERM if we sign the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Dorrell: I should like to hear my hon. Friend develop that argument. He seems to interpret meaning in the words of article 109m that is not there. He says that it is accepted that if the United Kingdom exercises its right under the protocol and does not join monetary union, the provisions of article 109m would apply: that "exchange rate policy" is

"a matter of common interest."

That does not mean that, merely because exchange rate policy is a matter of common interest, member states are obliged to join the ERM, nor does it state that anywhere in the treaty.

Secondly, paragraph 4 of the protocol governing the United Kingdom's position states, totally unambiguously, that if we choose not to join monetary union

"the United Kingdom shall retain its powers in the field of monetary policy according to national law."

Our national law makes no provision for an obligation to join the ERM.

8.15 pm

Mr. Spicer: I am gratified at the way in which Ministers are popping up and down like yo-yos to join in the debate because they have been rather reluctant to debate these matters in public. That at least is a good development.

In answer to my hon. Friend the Minister on the question of the protocol, in paragraph 6 he will find that article 109m

"shall apply to the United Kingdom as if it had a derogation."

Mr. Dorrell *indicated assent.*

Mr. Spicer: Precisely. That means that from the beginning of the third stage, and for as long as a member state has a derogation, paragraph 1 shall apply by analogy to the exchange rate policy of that member state. Paragraph 1 talks about the common interest.

My hon. Friend the Minister may give us his opinion that the common interest does not mean that we will have to re-enter the ERM, but after we ratify the treaty his views will not matter. That is one of the problems. The views of the judges and of those people to whom the matter is appealed are what will count.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend invite the Government to get some independent advice? It is all very well for us to act as though we were well-qualified amateur lawyers. Most of us are doing so out of ignorance and prejudice. A definitive statement of how the Commission and the European Court interpret the matter is required. Mr. Martin Howe argues forcefully that we shall be obliged to join the ERM—after all, he comes from a family which has some prejudices on the issue. However, the Minister says that there is no chance of the United Kingdom being forced into the ERM. Definitive and objective advice is required, either from the Commission's legal department or from the European Court, so that we know what will happen.

Mr. Spicer: The one thing that cannot be said of my hon. Friend is that he is an amateur lawyer—he is extremely knowledgeable on the matter. After we have analysed the question, it will be handed to the European Court and to the Commission to determine. It will be for lawyers to figure out how to determine it, but it seems to me that the "common interest" could be interpreted by the court to mean that we would have to rejoin the ERM as other countries are doing so. My views are no more worth while than the Minister's, because ultimately the matter will be determined by the court.

Mr. Denzil Davies: I am sure that the question of whether there is a legal requirement for us to rejoin the ERM is an interesting argument, but, in practical political terms, does the hon. Gentleman agree that if the Maastricht treaty were ratified and the Bill were to become law, the Government would rejoin the ERM around the turn of the year because there would be no logic in their being part of the exercise without doing so?

Mr. Spicer: Yes, I agree that that would be part of the logic and part of the new Maastricht philosophy which would have been accepted.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): My hon. Friend is being very generous in allowing interventions. I invite him to return to the phrase that is causing him so much serious

concern—article 109m. Is he saying that he foresees a court or an amateur or professional lawyer interpreting the phrase,

"each Member State shall treat its exchange rate policy as a matter of common interest"

as the same as saying that each member state shall enter the ERM?

Mr. Spicer: That is one interpretation. I did not want to bore the Committee by reading out all of article 109m, but the next sentence states:

"In so doing, Members States shall take account of the experience acquired in co-operation within the framework of the European Monetary System and in developing the ECU, and shall respect existing powers in this field."

In that context I could understand why lawyers might decide that that was tantamount to an instruction to go back into the ERM.

Mr. Marlow: The problem with all these treaties is that the same point is addressed in several different places within them. Article 102a, under the title "Economic Policy", states:

"Member States shall conduct their economic policies with a view to contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the Community, as defined in Article 2".

If we ratify the treaty we will commit ourselves to that. Article 2 states:

"The Community shall have as its task, by establishing a common market and an economic and monetary union".

How are we to have such an economic and monetary union without passing through the ERM first? Whatever the other opt-outs and bits in the treaty, if we agreed and ratified that part of the treaty it would be used against us by European institutions that want us to come along with them more quickly than we would want. They would say that we would have to get back into the ERM.

Mr. Spicer: That is why it is unimaginable that, having signed up to the treaty and become part of it all, we would then be able to exert opt-outs. We would have signed up to the objectives and philosophy set out in the treaty and to those institutions.

Mr. John Townend: Does my hon. Friend agree that something in the way in which the Government are putting over their case does not ring true? On the one hand, they have said that they intend that Britain shall be at the centre of Europe, but, on the other, they say, "Haven't we done well? We have got an opt-out from the single currency." If we exercise that opt-out and there is a single currency or even a joint currency of member countries and we are neither in that currency nor part of the ERM, we will not be able to claim that we are in the centre of Europe. We will be on the edge of Europe, as we always have been and always will be.

Mr. Spicer: One of the paradoxes of the entire debate on this matter and one of my major criticisms of it is that the full logic of what has been done has never been spelt out. Despite everything that I have said and the strong arguments held by many of my hon. Friends and by others, the question remains as to whether, politically, matters are now so sewn up in this country as to make further resistance and debate a waste of time.

In the weeks that lie ahead some people may wonder why those of us who oppose ratification of the Maastricht treaty will continue to argue our position hard and in great detail. We have powerful arguments to place on record. One of the features of the entire debate—acknowledged by most dispassionate observers—is the fact that those of us who do not support Maastricht have made most of the running with the arguments in the past months. That has not necessarily happened because we are more assiduous than the treaty's defenders, but because that defence has been flawed in one crucial respect. Its defenders have not been prepared to argue for it in the only terms possible —on the basis that its avowed objective is a new, federalist state of Europe. There has not been so much coyness in other countries. I can respect the federalist position, but I do not accept it for the reasons that I have already given. I cannot accept or respect, however, the position of those who say that we can have Maastricht while at the same time retaining the sovereignty and independence of our democratic institutions.

People may still ask what is the point of resisting the united determination of those occupying the Front Benches to plough ahead with this treaty. It is a fact that the leaders of the three major parties are working together, either explicitly or implicitly, as they did, some might say to disastrous effect, over the ERM, and as they did in years gone by, with even more disastrous consequences, over the gold standard. I am beginning to wonder whether a new law of politics is about to emerge which dictates that when those on the Front Benches agree they are almost invariably wrong.

Mr. Dorrell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his generosity in giving way. Earlier my hon. Friend sought to explain what the common concern concept meant in the context of exchange rate policy. He said that under article 109m the exchange rate would remain a matter of common concern even if we exercised our right to stay outside monetary union. He said that he feared that lawyers might interpret that as a commitment to rejoin the ERM against our will. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) also suggested that we should take legal advice on that point.

I can tell the Committee that we have, today, published legal advice on precisely that subject in the form of a memorandum to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. My hon. Friend may also like to consider that the commitment by member states to regard their exchange rate as a matter of common concern is not a recent invention, but was contained in article 107 of the treaty of Rome, which was signed more than 20 years before the ERM was invented. Therefore, it would be rather difficult to interpret that commitment, which dates back to 1958, as a commitment to join the ERM.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend may make that interpretation——

Sir Russell Johnston: On a point of order, Dame Janet. May I respectfully say that your instructions to Ministers to face you has also had the consequence of their turning their backs on the microphone. While it may, for reasons of your own, be an advantage for you, Dame Janet, to see Ministers, it is also desirable that we should be able to hear them.

The Second Deputy Chairman: When I made my request I was thinking in terms of a back clearly shown to me. I have not the slightest objection if Ministers face what I call the normal way. Perhaps, for the purposes of the microphone, that would be better.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: On a point of order, Dame Janet. The Financial Secretary has drawn the attention of the Committee to a memorandum that the Treasury has apparently published. Is that document available to the Committee, which is currently debating this rather important matter? I should be very pleased to hear that it is, but could I have your confirmation as to whether you are aware that that document is available not just to members of the Select Committee, but to this Committee?

The Second Deputy Chairman: I have no knowledge of that and, if I heard aright, I am not sure that that is entirely a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I believe that I can help you, Dame Janet. The first report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee was published today and the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) will be able to obtain a copy of it from the Vote Office if he goes there now.

The Second Deputy Chairman: That seems to have settled the matter satisfactorily. Is the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) still speaking to the amendment?

Mr. Spicer: I am trying to draw my remarks to a close, but I have been intervened upon many times by my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench—obviously they are trying to filibuster.

Given the collusion, or at least the firm agreement, that seems to exist on broad matters of policy, particularly the issue now under debate, among those on the three Front Benches, one must ask why we do not recognise reality and accept that the best way in which to keep a secret is to make a speech in the House on Europe. One may ask why we do not shut up and get on with Third Reading. I venture to suggest that, were we to do so, no one would be more embarrassed than members of the Government who are committed to not having that Third Reading before the Danish referendum.

8.30 pm

Of course, the Danish referendum will now largely determine whether the treaty is ratified. The Danish Government are hard at work trying to persuade their countrymen of two things. The first is that at Edinburgh they achieved some sort of victory for Denmark. However, no less a person than Chancellor Helmut Kohl recently knocked that idea on the head in the article that was quoted earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). Today the Minister of State confirmed that there was absolutely no change in the treaty as a result of Edinburgh. Therefore, the question to be put to the Danish people will be precisely the same one and it will be about precisely the treaty to which they earlier said no.

Perhaps recognising the paucity of what was achieved at Edinburgh from their own point of view, the Danish Government have a fallback position—to persuade the Danish people of the dangers of standing alone against the rest of Europe. Fortunately, in this context, the British Government have already said very clearly that if Denmark rejects Maastricht, they, too, will reject it. In the meantime, the Danish people need to know that the debate goes on in Britain and in its Parliament—that in the run-up to their referendum they are not on their own. The candle of democracy still burns in the British Parliament. That will be the message that will go out in the next few weeks. It is a very sorry state of affairs that it has come to this—that we shall now, in large measure, be playing the role of cheerleaders, depending for our future on the will of the electorate of another country. This choice has not been of my making or that of my colleagues. We must, however, work with events—whether they be the Danish referendum, the crumbling facade of the ERM, the growing unwillingness of the Germans to sacrifice control of the deutschmark, or the increasingly anxious expressions of the British people.

Time is required for these events to unfold and, in this country, for the details of the Maastricht treaty to be better understood. That is what the forthcoming debates will be all about. Let me state my position and what I take to be the position of my colleagues. Far from being a "little Englander", I am concerned, above all, to set the relationships between Britain and the other countries of Europe in the context of the high seas, of well-established international alliances and of a commitment to free trade and democracy.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): I hope that the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) will not mind if I do not follow on directly from his very lengthy and interesting tirade against the Maastricht treaty. No doubt, however, I shall pick up some of the points that he has made.

I want to begin by addressing those articles of the treaty that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends and I consider to be at the heart of what Britain stands to gain from the treaty and from what has come to be known as the Maastricht process—notably the aims expressed in title II of the treaty. Amid the seemingly never-ending torrent of prejudiced and selective information on this subject, people can be forgiven for overlooking—they may never even have been told—the content of this vital provision. I regard it as so important and so admirable that I shall quote it in full:

"to promote throughout the Community a harmonious and balanced development of economic activities, sustainable and non-inflationary growth respecting the environment, a high degree of convergence of economic performance, a high level of employment and social protection, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life, and economic and social cohesion and solidarity among Member States."

That is an absolutely superb set of aims at the heart of the treaty. From Labour's point of view, it must be the most important part of the treaty. Indeed, as has already been said, it could have come straight from a Labour party manifesto. Any of my right hon. or hon. Friends could have written it. In fact, some probably have done when composing manifestos in the past. It is no surprise that this has caused such problems for Conservative Members.

The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who moved amendment No. 40 a very long time ago and whom I regard as the authentic voice of Conservative Members who oppose all matters Maastricht and European, rubbished these aims. He did so in the most eloquent, albeit disagreeable, terms. The heart of his argument was that article 2 seeks to fetter free markets and to prevent proper and responsible Government intervention in order to secure these very important objectives.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: The hon. Gentleman has talked, quite rightly, about the attraction of article 2. Surely he is aware that one of the weapons to be used to achieve these desirable objectives is the ERM. But the

ERM has created poverty, unemployment and industrial collapse in many parts of the European Community—not least in the United Kingdom. Perhaps as a result of the ERM the United Kingdom has lost 1 million jobs.

Mr. Mandelson: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to his opinion, but many Labour Members take the view that poverty and unemployment in the United Kingdom has more to do with the policies of the Government and the Conservative party than with our membership of the ERM.

Mr. Shore: I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees that there is a mixture of factors here. Undoubtedly one of these is the failure of Government policies over a long period, but another is the obligations of the treaties that we have entered into. The failure of Government policies, the appalling weakness of the British economy and the consequent total inability of Britain to stay in a fixed exchange rate system without sustaining massively high and unnecessary unemployment is a peculiar and lethal mixture. My hon. Friend's declaration about article 2 is fine—nobody objects to that—but the trouble about the mention of high employment as an objective is that nowhere else in the 130-odd pages are those words repeated. All the rest is about particular policies of economic and monetary union that would work absolutely in the opposite direction.

Mr. Mandelson: I respect the views of my right hon. Friend—indeed, he is a genuine and long-standing friend. However, others take the view that the economic problems that he describes are due equally to the failure of Ministers to use the opportunities that are available through greater European integration and co-operation between Governments, which is precisely what the Maastricht treaty seeks to expand and strengthen.

Mr. Butcher: If Ministers fail, if the electorate does not like what they do, they can be sacked at a general election. But after this treaty has added to the rolling progress of Europe we shall not be able to sack the Ministers responsible for ruining the economy. The point is that our being one twentieth of a democracy will eliminate a major part of our power to control our own rate of employment or unemployment, our own interest rates and our own dynamic activity in the economy. The Labour party, the Conservative party and the Liberal party will lose that right for ever.

Mr. Mandelson: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's view. I do not believe that we are simply victims of economic circumstances. I do not think that we are offering ourselves as corks to bob along the surface of the stormy Maastricht treaty, unable to formulate policies within the framework offered by the treaty to overcome precisely the economic and employment difficulties that the hon. Gentleman has identified. Political hands are indeed very important, and I believe that political hands other than those currently in power in this country, resting on a ratified Maastricht treaty, would create very many more opportunities for economic and social progress. For that we must wait for the next election.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) implied that nowhere else in the document on Maastricht is there a reference to the goal of lasting high employment. However, there is an agreement on social policy which has that precise aim, which the Government have opted out of but which a future Labour Government can opt into. Article 1 of the agreement on social policy says:

> "The Community and the Member States shall have as their objectives the promotion of employment, improved living and working conditions, proper social protection, dialogue between management and labour, the development of human resources with a view to lasting high employment."

Mr. Mandelson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend who, characteristically, has his finger and eye on all the provisions of the treaty, not just those which some other hon. Members would selectively pick out to serve their jaundiced points of view.

Mr. Budgen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mandelson: The hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I make a little progress.

If the points which my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) has brought out so successfully from the treaty were at the front of Ministers' minds at recent European Council meetings, we would have had a different outcome from those meetings. It is shameful that Ministers, both at Birmingham and subsequently at Edinburgh, did not have those provisions at the forefront of their minds when addressing the appalling mass unemployment that exists throughout Europe. Instead of following that course, at the Birmingham summit our Government and the President of the Council refused even to place the need for European recovery on the agenda. At Edinburgh, the self-same President relegated discussions on unemployment and the need for economic recovery to talks over lunch and then forced the Council to agree a diluted set of measures and a diluted European recovery programme, which the Commission had originally sought to put before the Council for agreement. That is a shameful record and a tragic indictment of the Government's economic policies. Moreover, it is a disagreeable and disgraceful indictment of their record throughout their presidency of the European Council and how they seek to lead policy and debate on European matters in this country.

Possibly to an extent against their better judgment and will, the Government have been forced to sign up to first-rate articles at the head of that treaty which Opposition Members should applaud. We should not jeopardise that very important gain but should do everything in our power to strengthen and further it. However, it is only a start. The treaty provides us with a framework for further progress. I do not regard the treaty as an end in itself. I do not put out the flags and celebrate with beer and sandwiches the fact that we have arrived at last and have full employment and social progress now and for ever more simply because we have signed on the dotted line. The treaty is a framework—a start.

Articles 2 and 3, which some hon. Members have subjected to so much textual and literal analysis, are not a set of policies. They must now be hammered out on the basis of the articles and titles that have been agreed. They depend in turn on the policies that stem from the treaty—the policies that allow national Governments to develop and implement them within the framework of the treaty. They must now be hammered out within national Parliaments and Governments and between national Governments. The fight for the full implementation of the

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treaty following its ratification will only begin once ratification has taken place. The way in which national Governments take those decisions and seek to implement the treaty will shape economic policy making post-Maastricht, and so much depends on that if we are to realise the treaty's aims.

The treaty is permissive and sets a direction. It encourages and directs us to hammer out policies of a particular nature, with goals to which we strongly subscribe, but the proof of Maastricht will be in its implementation.

8.45 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies: My hon. Friend says that the treaty is permissive. Does he agree that, on economic and monetary union, leaving aside the opt-out negotiated by the Government, it is certainly not permissive? It means irrevocable progress towards economic and monetary union.

Mr. Mandelson: Yes, which I strongly support.

Mr. Davies: But it is not permissive.

Mr. Mandelson: The framework permits the hammering out of economic policies, guidelines and decisions which have yet to be discussed. My right hon. Friend must allow me to continue to make the case as I wish—*[Interruption.]* I believe that the attainment of economic and monetary union is desirable and necessary. I remind my right hon. Friend that that view is shared by the overwhelming majority of those who attended and were represented at the Labour party conference last autumn —*[Interruption.]* I shall not be disrupted by points about how we arrive at our votes. Some people like to trumpet votes in favour of matters with which they agree but when they disagree with the vote, they prefer to hide it under the nearest seat. I am at least consistent in those matters. It has been my privilege for a long time to adhere to and trumpet party policy in the series of roles that I have had within my party.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point about the mandatory obligations under the second article, but if he refers back to the treaty of Rome he will find similar mandatory obligations there. That treaty was ratified 36 years ago and there has been ample time to hammer it out, but what has been achieved?

Mr. Mandelson: I am not sure what point the hon. Gentleman is making. However, I shall take from it a reinforcement of my view, which is that those matters are in political hands and depend on political judgments and decisions. If the politicians are lacking, so will be the implementation of agreements forged between Governments.

The priority to be given to growth, employment and closing the gap between rich and poor regions is important to the Labour party.

Mr. Budgen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mandelson: I am sorry, but I must carry on. I shall give way later.

The means of achieving those priorities must be fought for in the implementation of the Maastricht treaty. All is to play for, but one makes a decision, one forms a judgment, about a treaty like this: will the treaty and its implementation help or hinder in the attainment of those goals? The judgment that I and my party have reached is that the treaty will help us in pursuit of those goals—growth, employment and closing the gap between the rich and poor regions. That, I believe, is and will remain a settled policy for my party.

Therefore, the platform upon which the Labour party stands is not simply the treaty's articles or titles alone. They are the skeleton of the treaty. The platform on which we stand is what I could describe as "Maastricht-plus", the flesh which must be added to the skeleton of the treaty —the economic policies that are required in Britain and throughout Europe to enable our country to compete and to grow without being blown off course, as we have so often been before, by recurrent currency speculation, by inflation risks and by deflationary pressures, and in the process to rid the continent and, above all, our own country of the scourge of mass unemployment.

For the goals of economic and monetary union to be fully realised, there must be a strategy—I fully accept this and believe it to be the case—to build on the treaty's strengths as well as to combat its weaknesses. What is the key to this? What is the Maastricht-plus that we need to put in place, round which core we can construct a strategy to attain those economic and employment goals which are the end of the creation of economic and monetary union? The answer lies, in my view, in the economic as opposed to the monetary wing of the provisions of economic and monetary union, economic provisions and proposals which for some reason are frequently and conveniently ignored by some of the treaty's opponents in making their rather prejudiced case against the treaty.

The key is the requirement of member states, set out in the treaty, its provisions and protocols, to co-ordinate their economic policies within a framework called the economic policy guidelines which national Governments are obliged to draw up in the framework provided for in the treaty, drawn up by the Commission and adopted by qualified majority vote in the Council. These guidelines will be set in accordance with the treaty, with a view to advancing those economic objectives of the treaty which are set out in article 2, which is certainly not monetarist or Thatcherite or rightist in any shape or form and one which could have come from the lips of any of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Moreover, the treaty provides for a regular evaluation of the extent to which these policies, which have been hammered out and put together within the economic policy guidelines that are a feature of the Maastricht process, and the economic developments throughout the Community are consistent with these guidelines. In other words, they will keep under permanent review—the Commission working together with the Parliament and the Council—how these goals are being realised, whether we are making progress towards them, how well we are performing in attaining the objectives set out in article 2, and whether we need to make any adjustments to our policy in order to boost that performance and realise those objectives.

Furthermore, there will be crucial opportunities for political pressure—because this is what it is all about—to be exerted to achieve economic policy making, both by national Governments and Governments working in concert throughout the Community, not only in the

interests of individual countries but in the interests of the Community as a whole. It is not hard, for example, to see how this kind of economic policy making, based on a commitment to policy co-ordination and conducted within the framework of common objectives set out in the treaty, would have produced a very different course for German fiscal policy and interest rates from the damaging one followed in recent months.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath) *rose*——

Mr. Mandelson: I will give way in a moment. If we had had that framework in place, if we had secured that co-ordination and that altogether saner way of conducting our policies, we would not have the economic problems that have been generated by German policies. We would, on the contrary, have had a Europeanising of German policy which would certainly have served us and Europe very much better and also, in the medium and long term, the German people themselves.

Mr. Hain: The comments of my hon. Friend about the Europeanisation of Germany's economic policy are welcome and I agree with them, but he is quoting selectively from the treaty. He has referred to article 2, what I call the "sunny weather and cold ice cream" clause, the kind of clause that no one can disagree with because its general sentiments are admirable. Let us look at the implementation of the economic policy to which he refers, and particularly paragraph 2 of Article 3a. It refers to an economic policy based on

"the irrevocable fixing of exchange rates leading to the introduction of a single currency, the ECU, and the definition and conduct of a single monetary policy and exchange rate policy the primary objective of both of which shall be to maintain price stability"——

The Chairman: Order. The whole point of interventions is that they are brief, succinct and certainly not repetitious.

Mr. Hain: I take your guidance, Mr. Morris, but——

The Chairman: Order. Mr. Mandelson.

Mr. Mandelson: Thank you, Mr. Morris. I am sure that this is an argument that my hon. Friend and I can pursue at greater length, possibly over a cup of tea, later.

The point that I would like to stress now is that in the macro-economic sphere, in macro-economic policy-making, Maastricht offers us clear gains for sane and enlightened conduct of policy. The extent to which we are successful in cobbling together sane and enlightened policies depends on the actions, decisions and judgments of politicians; everyone is fallible, we are only human. But what we are talking about is a framework and whether we have in place a framework that allows us to behave in a sane, rational and enlightened way. I believe that the treaty gives us that framework.

Mr. Denzil Davies: My hon. Friend talks about economic policy. Does he not agree that the problem with the Maastricht treaty, as with Germany, is that monetary policy is not in the hands of politicians, but economic policy is? That policy is codified in the Maastricht treaty, which will present the problem.

Mr. Mandelson: Whatever the advertised strengths and independence of the Bundesbank, I think that politicians in Germany would be surprised to hear that they have absolutely no influence in German monetary policies.

Mr. Radice: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. German politicians fixed the terms of the German monetary union, which has been so disastrous, not the Bundesbank, which had a sensible policy.

9 pm

Mr. Mandelson: I recognise that some of my right hon. and hon. Friends have fears about the monetary policy. Anxieties about the possible deflationary effect of the treaty have been expressed in the debate, as they have been before and will no doubt be on many occasions in future.

I understand those fears, which are real, but are hugely exaggerated to serve a political argument. They represent a highly partisan and coloured view of the treaty and the Maastricht process. Those fears exist, although we should separate them in our minds from the parody of objections contrived by those who are not just anti-Maastricht, but fundamentally anti-Europe and are refighting a battle over our entry in the European Community that was won 20 years ago.

Many such fears focus on convergence and the terms under which we move towards economic and monetary union. I do not wish to speak at great length on the convergence criteria as that issue was addressed in detail and with considerable eloquence by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) when he spoke from the Front Bench. However, I shall reinforce his views. I strongly believe that member states' readiness for EMU must be tested, not only by the narrow, financial criteria based on interest and inflation rates, and the fiscal deficit —which are constantly mentioned by the treaty's opponents—but on the readiness and convergence of the real economy.

Two important additional criteria must be considered and must lie at the heart of the convergence process and our approach to it. Those criteria relate to the performance of our economy, notably the levels of unemployment and investment. I strongly echo the repeated calls from Opposition Members for precisely those economic, industrial, training and skill-raising policies of investment in the infrastructure and human resources throughout our economy, which will improve the performance and strength of our economy. That will enable convergence to take place expeditiously and smoothly.

Fulfilling those crucial additional criteria relating to employment and investment is central to the Maastricht-plus programme advocated by Opposition Members. We must ensure the full implementation of the Delors 2 proposals for financing regional development and social cohesion—factors which are so important for the regions of our country, such as the northern district which contains my Hartlepool constituency. We must raise the level of investment and employment throughout the country if we are to secure convergence and succeed in meeting the criteria that will be applied as we move towards economic and monetary union. I hope that Conservative Members and, certainly, Opposition Members will share my view and support the crucial initiatives required to strengthen the competitiveness, performance and investment of the real economy in this country.

In addition to the views and fears expressed about the convergence criteria, two other types of fears and principal objections to the treaty are made, particularly by some of

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my right hon. and hon. Friends. The first is that EMU would mean a Europe dominated by unaccountable bankers and the second is that, under the treaty's provisions, member states would have to cut public expenditure.

First, I shall address the issue of the so-called bankers' Europe. It is said that the proposed central bank system would have the primary objective of maintaining price stability and counter-inflation policies which, in the view of those who advance that argument, would be deflationary. The system's independence would ensure that it followed policies that could not be influenced. The arguments are presented in a way that leads one to assume that the policies would be uninfluenced by any other economic goal or consideration. Therefore, the entire central banking system would be biased against growth and employment and in favour of tight and rigidly applied monetary policies whose sole aim was deflation. Finally, the relevant national central banks, rather than the European system of central banks, would have to mirror those provisions and be equally independent.

To the best of my ability, I have looked into the matter with care. I have read the treaty and all the comment on it. The argument that I have outlined is based on a selective and misleading reading of the treaty. The proponents of the argument speak about the primary objective of the European central bank system and some have said that that is its only objective. It is easy to slip from one word to the other, from primary to only, transforming the meaning and intent of the treaty.

Article 105 sets out the price stability objective. It also states that the European system of central banks

"shall support the general economic policies".

It does not mention only the narrow monetary aim of attaining price stability but refers to

"the general economic policies in the Community . . . as laid down in Article 2."

I quoted that at the beginning of my speech.

Mr. Shore: The important words are the connecting ones to

"the objective of price stability"

and the other aims of the Community. Those important words are

"without prejudice to the objective of price stability".

That is not to say that that is the only aim, but it clearly establishes that it is the major aim, the primary aim, of the European bank.

Mr. Mandelson: I quoted the article properly. It refers to

"The primary objective".

I hope that my right hon. Friend will not argue, as was argued earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), that price instability is almost desirable. It has never been my party's approach to policy making to regard price instability as going hand in hand with fast growth and high employment. In my experience, precisely the opposite is the case. Price instability goes hand in hand with unemployment and subsequent deflation.

Mr. Shore: That experience is an inevitable consequence of my hon. Friend's age. The only period of price stability that I can remember was during the 1930s when there was mass unemployment. We have not had price stability under any post-war Government and, as we all know, all periods of price stability have been brought about by massive deflation.

Mr. Mandelson: Not for the first time, my right hon. Friend has outclassed or upstaged me in terms of his years. I cannot compete with him on that basis.

Mr. Radice: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Mandelson: Of course.

Mr. Radice: I remind my hon. Friend of the experience of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) when he was a Minister in the 1960s. At that time inflation was low, as was unemployment. There can be a relatively stable price system at the same time as relatively low unemployment. That is the experience of our respected right hon. Friend.

Mr. Mandelson: I readily——

The Chairman: Order. I hope that we shall not explore the 1960s. We are on amendment No. 40.

Mr. Mandelson: Speaking on behalf of the forward-looking and modernising——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): In advance of the 1960s, in the days of Selwyn Lloyd, we had precisely the same phenomenon of stable prices and a prosperous country.

Mr. Mandelson: Bring back Selwyn Lloyd, in whatever guise.

Dr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): What policies would my hon. Friend pursue to achieve price stability or zero inflation, and what would be the effect on employment and economic growth of those policies?

Mr. Mandelson: I think that that would——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Member should not be tempted down that route.

Mr. Mandelson: I shall not be tempted to follow that course, Mr. Morris. I merely refer my hon. Friend to the latest policy documents that have been issued by the Labour party and the policies that will be revealed next week as we prepare our ground for our pre-Budget campaign. I am sure that enlightenment will follow.

Mr. Andrew Smith *rose*——

Mr. Mandelson: I give way to my hon. Friend on the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Smith: I return to the 1930s, as it were, and to the intervention of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). Is it not the case that in the 1930s prices were falling? A central bank operating under the injunction to sustain price stability would have had to adopt an expansionary monetary policy, which would have regenerated the economy, stopped prices falling and been good for employment.

Mr. Mandelson: With respect for you, Mr. Morris, I shall not pursue the matter any further. I merely say that the points that have been made in interventions are absolutely right and apposite.

I shall move on to make two final points——

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Mandelson: I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Corbyn: It is an apposite point——

Mr. Mandelson: I am sure that it is.

Mr. Corbyn: Will my hon. Friend tell us how he proposes to influence a European central bank that is composed of bankers who are appointed for eight years, who are answerable and accountable to nobody and whose policy objective has been set down? How does he propose to influence them when there is no mechanism to allow that to happen?

Mr. Mandelson: My hon. Friend's intervention was genuinely apposite. It can be dealt with now and not over a cup of tea later.

First, decisions and jugments will be taken and made within the framework of a politically determined economic strategy within economic policy guidelines in a way that I have already described. I do not know whether my hon. Friend was present for the earlier part of my speech. These matters would be considered politically within the economic policy guidelines that are a feature of the treaty.

Secondly, such matters would be co-ordinated through the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers. Thirdly, important decisions, such as the control of the exchange rate, would remain with those Ministers, and would be politically controllable to a large extent, albeit in a different way. At the end of the day, decisions would be determined politically and would be in the hands of Ministers. The question is which Ministers, and that is a wider and separate issue which we have dealt with during the debate.

My next point concerns not the system of European central banks but our national central bank. I can imagine no circumstances, and certainly no reading of the treaty, that yields the conclusion or inference that our own national central bank, however independent, would go entirely unconstrained by some element of political control under any Government of any party, just as the German Bundesbank does not go entirely unconstrained by political influence exercised by duly and properly elected Ministers.

9.15 pm

Mr. Marlow: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He is being very patient and decent. I draw his attention to article 107 which says:

> "When exercising the powers and carrying out the tasks and duties conferred upon them by this Treaty . . . neither the ECB, nor a national central bank, nor any member of their decision-making bodies shall seek or take instructions from Community institutions or bodies, from any government of a Member State or from any other body."

So how accountable are they?

Mr. Mandelson: The truth is that they are somewhat accountable and should be more accountable. It is precisely the aim of the Opposition's policies and proposed amendments to the Bill to increase and enhance that political accountability and to strengthen that political framework within which decisions and the operation of the national central bank, as well as the system, take place.

Just as the German Bundesbank has, by law, to take account of the views of duly elected Ministers and politicians, so would our own independent national central bank, and so, too, would the European system of central banks as a whole.

Mr. Budgen: I hope that the hon. Gentleman realises that if that part of the treaty to which my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) referred was amended by the House and the matter was taken back to the German people, they, in their legitimate pride in the independence of the Bundesbank, would without doubt reject the treaty. It is no good pretending and fuzzing this over. Is it not the case that the Bundesbank has an obligation to take account of political views, but it is an independent bank? If the hon. Gentleman and the Labour party seek to alter that independence in the European central bank that will be the end of the treaty.

Mr. Mandelson: I do not accept the premise of what the hon. Gentleman says. It is a myth that the Bundesbank is totally independent and entirely uninfluenced by Ministers and by political considerations. I understand why the hon. Gentleman wishes to create that view. He wishes to present the treaty and the Maastricht process as some sort of appalling monster that will devour Economic and Employment Ministers and lay bare the continent of Europe so that the outcome of the implementation of the treaty and the Maastricht process is the exact reverse of what we want to achieve, and what I firmly believe we will achieve if we move towards economic and monetary union and the full and proper implementation of the treaty.

Mr. Macdonald: I do not expect my hon. Friend necessarily to agree with my view here, but sometimes the whole question of independence of the central bank is rather exaggerated and overrated. My hon. Friend has already given the example of the German Bundesbank and the way in which it undoubtedly takes some guidance from the German Government. The independence of the American Federal Reserve did not impede the pursuit of a new deal programme in the 1930s by the Democratic party. The Swedish central bank has been independent since, I think, the 16th or the 17th century and that has not impeded the pursuit of socialism in that country. Therefore, the question of independence is sometimes rather exaggerated.

Mr. Mandelson: My hon. Friend makes a good point. There is nothing automatic in the creation of a set of institutions which means, as sure as day follows night, that the policy prescriptions will be negative, deflationary or whatever. The fact is that institutions do not automatically or inevitably lead to any development; the political decisions that are made within the economic and monetary framework that is clearly established in the treaty will determine how those institutions perform, and whether they help or hinder the process of employment creation and growth that Opposition Members want.

The first principal objection to the treaty related to the establishment of a "bankers' Europe"—not an attractive term, but one with which we have effectively dealt. *[Interruption.]* It may not have been dealt with to the satisfaction of all my right hon. and hon. Friends, but it has certainly been dealt with to the satisfaction of my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), whom I regard as a bit of a pushover. The second principal objection relates to the argument that the implementation of the treaty would result in a cut in public spending.

That, too, does not strike me as an automatic or inevitable consequence of the treaty. It is our job to ensure that it is not. The argument is based on article 104c, which establishes restrictions on Government borrowing under

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economic and monetary union and sets a target for the deficit: it should not exceed 3 per cent. of gross domestic product. Overall Government debt should not exceed 60 per cent. of GDP.

It is clear, however, from any reasonable reading of the treaty, and from any reasonable interpretation of the way in which politicians—separately, jointly and severally—might seek to implement its provisions, that the rules are very flexible. The main requirement in relation to the deficit is for progress to be made towards the target.

Mr. Rowlands: IMF!

Mr. Mandelson: I must say that I would rather have the economic policy guidelines of the European Community and the framework of joint policy making prescribed by the Maastricht treaty than the IMF on my back again.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Denzil Davies *rose*——

Mr. Mandelson: I give way.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman must pay attention, and make it clear to whom he is giving way. He sat down without making it clear whom he wished to take the Floor.

The hon. Gentleman has been speaking for nearly an hour. I must ask him to concentrate—but I now understand that he wishes to give way to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

Mr. Winnick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It should be said, in all fairness, that he has been subjected to many interventions.

The treaty prescribes a 3 per cent. limit, along with the penalties that would be incurred by Governments who exceeded that limit. The employment position is spelt out in very general terms, but the same does not apply to the 3 per cent. limit. In recent months, a socialist Government in Spain decided to cut public spending substantially, using the 3 per cent. limit although the treaty is not yet in force. They say that they want to implement economic convergence as quickly as possible. If a socialist Government are willing to do that, what would a Government such as ours do if the treaty were in force?

Mr. Mandelson: It is an illustration of what the politicians and Ministers in the Spanish Government chose to do. The operative word is "may"—they chose to do it for whatever reason that was relevant either to the circumstances of their domestic economy or to any other consideration. If they pray in aid the treaty's terms, provisions and convergence criteria to justify their actions, that is up to them. The crucial point is that those are political decisions—judgments formed by Ministers.

Such decisions should not be taken under the treaty in isolation from any other consideration of the economic policy, guidelines, and framework prescribed by the treaty, and it is up to national Governments to make it clear that they see the 3 per cent. deficit target as something at which they will aim and make progress towards, but which will not be rigidly applied—as is their right. It would only be operable over the time of an economic cycle.

Mr. Denzil Davies *rose*——

Mr. Mandelson: I am sorry, but it is 25 minutes past nine—and although you, Mr. Morris, were not fair when you said that I had been speaking for one hour——

The Chairman: Order. I said that the hon. Gentleman had been speaking for nearly one hour.

Mr. Mandelson: Nearly right, Mr. Morris. Before I use up any more of your patience, I will conclude—if you do not mind.—*[Laughter.]* I said "if you do not mind" because I have received some encouragement to speak considerably longer, with what ulterior motive I do not know and can only guess at.

I will make three points in conclusion. First, our overriding aim is to make the treaty and the whole Maastricht process into what most of its authors wanted —an engine for sustainable growth, not an instrument of deflation in this country or any other member state. Taking the requirement of economic policy co-ordination, a medium length of time, and the properly defined nature of the convergence criteria described gives us the scope to pursue policies that will achieve that objective in practice.

Secondly, the treaty is not a set of commands. It is not immutable. Its terms are not set in tablets of stone. The treaty specifically provides for the further development of its provisions—for example, the replacement of the protocol of convergence by appropriate measures to govern the operation of convergence in practice. The treaty is capable of change, of evolving, and of being turned into an instrument of our need and desire to serve our national purposes and those of the Community.

Above all—and I make no apology for concluding on this point—it is the political nature of national Governments and the political balance of forces within Europe that will determine the success or otherwise of the Maastricht project. It is not the dots, commas, and every letter of the treaty's articles and titles that will determine whether the project is a success. That will depend on politicians taking political decisions, having formed political judgments.

Maastricht is an instrument to be used, honed, developed and bent to the economic needs of the Community. On that basis, I regard it not only as a wholly necessary and desirable further stage in the evolution of the Community of which I want this country to be at the heart but an absolutely necessary and important condition for the economic progress within this country that I and members of my party want to achieve.

Mr. Whitney: I am happy to join the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) in welcoming the Maastricht agreement and to endorse the emphasis that he placed throughout on the need to fight unemployment. But that objective—which all Conservative Members share—is in direct conflict with the support of the hon. Gentleman and his party for the provisions of the social chapter: whatever the extent of its impact, that chapter will undoubtedly have a negative impact on employment.

I agree that the Committee should reject the amendments in the group, which are of a broad and sweeping nature and which, in effect, amount to a rejection of the Bill. I find that surprising, given that not so long ago, on Second Reading, the House voted by a majority of 244 for the principle of the Bill. Moreover, all three major parties fought the general election on a campaign programme that endorsed the Maastricht treaty.

Both today and in our debates before Christmas we have heard hon. Members—and some right hon. Members—on both sides of the House attempt not only to stop the clock but actually to move it back. Some hon. Members have a long tradition of being wrong about Britain's role in Europe. I am more concerned about the position of hon. Members who, over the years, have voted to support Britain's adherence to the treaty of Rome, the Single European Act, qualified majority voting and the rest—which we have already discussed at length this evening and on which I shall not therefore dwell—but who are now finding excuses to move away from the position that they endorsed.

9.30 pm

Mr. Bill Walker: I do not rise to defend myself, because I am not one whose position has changed. I should have thought, however, that the essential ingredient of parliamentary democracy is that when hon. Members think that something is wrong, they should admit to it and say, "Perhaps I made a mistake." If we do not do that, what is the point of our debates?

Mr. Whitney: I am happy to agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). But most of us find those hon. Members' position odd because at the time when they voted to support Britain's involvement, the arguments for our playing a positive role in Europe were somewhat weaker than they are now. As the years go by and as views in Europe develop, the argument for Britain's playing the part in Europe that the Government advocate for it grows stronger.

Of course we understand concerns about "federalism", which I would call centralisation—there is a translation problem because the word "federal" means different things to different nationalities. But there is and always will be an unashamed battle between those who envisage a centralist western Europe and those of us who do not. We should remember the lessons of the past 12 months—the success of Maastricht and the achievement of turning it away from the direction in which the original Dutch draft was headed and into the agreement that finally emerged. Public opinion has been demonstrated not only in the Danish referendum and the French vote but in Germany and in many other parts of Europe and there is clearly a strong feeling that people do not wish their national identities to be submerged. That should encourage my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North and any other doubter who believes that the Maastricht process is a remorseless juggernaut moving in one direction alone.

Some of my hon. Friends give the impression that they are living in a cloud of their own making. For example, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) spoke of the abolition of the nation state. I wonder where he has been for the past 10 or 12 months. Let him go to France and tell any Frenchman that he voted for Maastricht, albeit narrowly. We understand that the French referendum involved many other issues and was certainly not on the Maastricht treaty. If my hon. Friends suggested to any Frenchman that he was moving towards the evolution of the nation state, my hon. Friends know the sort of answer that they would get. The achievements must not be underrated.

The concept of subsidiarity was an easy concept to mock. Subsidiarity is a difficult word. No one could find a satisfactory substitute for it. Gradually, as a result of the steps that were taken and the efforts led by my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench, the concept of subsidiarity has been accepted as part of the European scene, and increasingly will be so. We should take account of that and take pleasure in it. No one can deny that there will be difficulties in converging the existing 12 member states and in enlarging the Community in the future, but the objective is worth while and important.

It is important that the House considers carefully this Bill, which, although it is short, is undoubtedly crucial. The procedural difficulties in the Bill are not great, and the impact of unnecessary delays in the passage of the Bill is sometimes overlooked by some hon. Members.

Mr. Spearing: I agree that the Bill is short. Does the hon. Gentleman agree with the analogy that it is nothing but a pipeline which connects us legally to the obligations in the treaty? Does that not mean that we need to examine carefully the complex legal obligations, especially those contained in the titles which we are now debating? Ideally, we should re-examine the treaty line by line and find out what it is about. Without such an examination, we do not know what the treaty is about.

Mr. Whitney: We all know that too much logic leads to serious trouble. If the hon. Gentleman pursued his argument to the logical conclusion, we would not stop at the 130 pages in the Maastricht treaty. Almost every paragraph in the treaty takes us back to the treaty of Rome, so this treaty must be limited. We want to amend the appropriate parts of the British law. Although that fundamental is important, no one argues with it. The fundamentals are finite and manageable in parliamentary terms within a reasonable number of hours. They do not extend the time unnecessarily. We have been extremely generous in the progress that we have already made.

It is important for those hon. and right hon. Members on both sides who are inclined to delay such events to take into account the national interests of Britain. In a letter to *The Times* on 2 November 1992, the president of the Confederation of British Industry and 27 top leaders of British industry asked for an early passage of the Bill. In the letter they pointed out:

> "Continuing uncertainty over the Maastricht treaty and our future in Europe is already having a damaging effect. Without a clear message soon from Parliament, political uncertainty will translate into more lost output and unemployment."

I beseech my hon. Friends to take account of that message. Sir Michael Angus and his friends speak from the business and commercial point of view. While I dwell on the letter, I point out that Sir Michael Angus and his friends also emphasise:

> "The single market is more than a free trade area: it requires regulation and enforcement to ensure that barriers to competition are removed. The ratification of Maastricht will assist the development of that regulatory framework and will help to ensure that the single market continues to move forward."

Since then we have passed the date at which the single market is, at least theoretically, in operation. Yet we have still to make significant progress in the ratification of the treaty.

That plea from the leaders of British industry about the economy and tackling unemployment should not go unheard by any of us in the House. Some of the comments that we have heard today and in earlier debates from those who are doubtful about and hostile to Maastricht betray

[Mr. Whitney]

a lack of confidence in our country. I know that they wish to stand up for British interests, but they display a lack of faith in our ability to do so.

For example, I reject the idea that for years to come we shall never put the economy of Britain into a state in which we can look in the eye the economies of continental Europe and, therefore, in due course rejoin the ERM and adopt a single currency. But that is for the future. Certainly, today we must ensure that we do not retreat and say that we cannot compete with our partners in the European Community. We most definitely can.

It is an odd arrangement that some of my hon. Friends say, "This is going too far; all that we would like is a free trade area", when our erstwhile partners in the European Free Trade Association are passing us coming the other way. Just as we seem to want to move into the outer corridors of the European Community, we meet the Swedes and all the rest coming in. They have understood the benefits of the European Community as it now is. It would be odd if we moved in the opposite direction.

The concept that the European Community has only ever involved trade and economic affairs is false. The treaty of Rome, for accession to which virtually all my hon. Friends who now object to Maastricht voted, referred to an ever closer union. That was the original concept of the treaty of Rome in 1958.

I refer the Committee to a far-sighted statement made by a Head of Government some eight or nine years ago which said:

"It must be our objective to aim beyond the Common Commercial Policy through Political Cooperation towards a common approach to external affairs . . . This means giving greater depth to the Community both in its internal and external activities."

The message concluded that we should

"take the necessary steps to strengthen the voice of the Community and make its influence felt in the world; heighten the consciousness among our citizens of what united us".

The current word is vision. That was a statement of vision. That statement was made on 25 June 1984 by Baroness Thatcher. She was right then. Those aims should certainly remain our objective. I hope that from time to time Lady Thatcher will take down from her archives that memorandum and remind herself of the foresight and vision that she demonstrated to the other Heads of Government eight and a half years ago.

In the interests of furthering the debate, I do not wish to prolong my speech. I merely wish to say that the single market that we have put into operation has underlined even more the need to make progress on ratification of the Maastricht treaty. It underlines the dangers that unnecessary delay would cause to Britain's national interests.

Finally, we must concentrate on Britain's national interests and not on those of Denmark—they are the responsibility of the Danish legislators and their people. We have our own interests and we should have our own timetable, which should be a steady, but relatively rapid, approval of this excellent treaty.

9.45 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies: Because of the nature of the amendments, the debate has ranged over practically all of title II. Someone like myself, who has been in the House for 20 years and has sat through many such debates, may be surprised at the transformation in the attitude of so many hon. Members on both sides of the House to the European Economic Community, or the Common Market as it used to be called when I came to the House.

I remember 1972, when a demoralised Conservative party, frightened of the unions at Upper Clyde and having ditched Selsdon Man in the first two years of the Administration, was persuaded by the then Prime Minister and a few of the zealots around him that the treaty of Rome was only about trade and economics. They believed him for some time.

We moved on to the Single European Act—as it is rather oddly called—and again a Conservative Prime Minister was able to convince himself, perhaps, and the rest of the Conservative party that the Single European Act was only about free trade. Somewhere between that Act and the Maastricht treaty, a large section of the Conservative party has realised that it is all about union. The treaty may be about economics and about trade, but it is far more than that—it is about union.

I remember saying that the Celts recognise unions—they can sniff them out and they know them when they see them. The English do not know much about unions, but a large section of the Conservative party has now realised that the Maastricht treaty is about union, as was the Single European Act and the original treaty of Rome.

The hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), who is not in the Chamber, tried to justify—as other Conservative Members who were in the House in 1972 have—his support for the treaty of Rome and for the Single European Act and his opposition to the Maastricht treaty. I understand his attempts at justification.

The treaty is a substantial step on the road to union, but it is not basically very different from what went on before. Perhaps I shall be in the House for the single European final act—the final solution. There will be another Act—there has to be, because the structure that is being set up is neither fish nor fowl.

We have spent a long time arguing whether the treaty is federal. What is it? No one quite knows, except that we know that it will mean the transfer of a substantial amount of democracy. We do not have to use the old-fashioned word sovereignty if we do not want to. The treaty will transfer a substantial amount of democracy from the Parliaments and elected Governments of all 12 countries to non-democratic institutions. That is a fact and it may or may not be a good thing for some people. There will be a significant transfer of power to the European central bank and to the Commission to the detriment of democratic accountability.

Matters have been mapped out in a brilliant fashion. Those who are behind the policy know that pressure is bound to increase to relieve the democratic deficit, as it is called. They will attempt to do that by increasing the powers of the European Parliament and by setting up some kind of executive. All that will reduce still further the powers of national Parliaments. That will lie behind the final Act and I may still be in the House when it is introduced. If we still have a Conservative Government then, no doubt the Prime Minister will make speeches at Tory party conferences to assure people that, although our sovereignty may go, our national identity will be retained. I remember the little old lady from the Scilly Isles who asked the present Prime Minister not to lose our national identity in a federal Europe; he was happy to reassure her about that.

The Scots will still be able to wear funny skirts and Welsh ladies will still be able to wear their top hats. All the trappings of national identity will remain, but the object of the exercise will be the transfer of sovereignty.

We have seen a transformation in attitudes in the Conservative party and we have seen a similar transformation within the Labour party, as was evident from excellent speeches tonight. That transformation has come about because of the demoralisation of our party. Apparently, somehow, salvation now lies in economic and monetary union.

The amendments tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) relate to article 2, which has come as manna from heaven for some of our pro-marketeers. We have all seen the briefings —they were not very good—that have been distributed about it. Article 2 is the one on to which the pro-marketeers have decided to latch and to speak. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) made a fair fist of it, as did a number of my other hon. Friends. In fact, considering how bad the case is for that article, my hon. Friends did remarkably well.

Perhaps my hon. Friends should take a close look at the language of that article because they will discover that it does not help them very much. They may think that it does, but let us consider the three phrases that deal with economic matters. First, we are told that everyone agrees with a great degree of convergence, but convergence is defined only later in the treaty. There is no convergence on unemployment—*[Interruption.]*

The Chairman: Order. I ask hon. Members to recognise that the Committee has grown somewhat in size. They should have the courtesy to listen to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies).

Mr. Davies: I am grateful for that protection and assistance, Mr. Morris.

The only convergence with which the treaty deals is the convergence of inflation and budget deficits. I do not believe that there can be any other "meaningful" convergence, because if the intention is to arrive, finally, at a single currency—basically that is what economic and monetary union is about—those are the only convergence indicators that we can have.

My hon. Friends who are in favour of article 2 are attempting to write another treaty. They have attempted to convince themselves that if the Labour party had negotiated this treaty, it would have included different convergence indicators. However, we would never have come to a common or single currency with any other convergence indicators, because that would have made no sense. We would never have reached the goal that some of my hon. Friends and many in the Conservative party now, apparently, wish to achieve.

Only two basic convergence indicators are relevant to a single currency—practically abolishing inflation in all member states, and locking the currencies together, thus reducing the budget deficits so that we can move towards a single currency. On the question of a high degree of convergence, we on this side of the argument are whistling in the wind. Some of my hon. Friends believe that, somehow, we can slide out of the convergence indicators.

Much has been made of the term "price stability". Indeed, one or two of my hon. Friends said, "Surely you are not in favour of price instability." Of course we are not in favour of price instability. The whole section of this treaty dealing with economic and monetary union is lifted from the treaty of the German Bundesbank. The words are exactly the same. The term "price stability" is to be found there, and there is nothing wrong in that. Price stability is what we are going to have here. But it will take effort and pain to achieve the goal of economic and monetary union. Price stability is essential and it means no inflation—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. The right hon. Gentleman who is addressing the Committee has been a distinguished Labour party spokesman on Treasury matters and hon. Members are entitled to hear him. He is making a very valuable contribution to the debate and I hope that right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the Committee will behave in a more seemly manner.

The Chairman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his remarks.

Mr. Davies: Price stability is obviously essential to the treaty. I submit that the words "high degree of convergence" do not assist my hon. Friends who have mounted this exercise of pretending that, somehow, the Maastricht treaty is something that the Labour party can support.

The next part of article 2 refers to "non-inflationary growth". We are all in favour of non-inflationary growth. It is marvellous. I am sure that this is not the right time for a philosophical discussion of inflation and growth, but I see that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is present. People in the Treasury read and talk about these things all the time. It is very doubtful whether Essex man or woman or western society is really prepared to accept non-inflationary growth. Indeed, is it possible to have non-inflationary growth in consumer-based, service-based economies such as we have today?

I am glad to see that the Prime Minister has arrived. He does not believe in non-inflationary growth. He did at one time, but he became frightened. He realised that, as inflation came down, growth stopped and unemployment increased. The southern England constituency—not northern England or middle England or south Wales or Scotland, but the whole great service industry, consumer constituency of the south of England—suddenly realised that it wanted inflation. Essex man and Essex woman cannot live without inflation. They need to see house prices going up. The service industries for which they work cannot increase productivity, so if is they are to have more money they must have inflation. So the Prime Minister does not believe in non-inflationary growth. But apparently the Labour party does. Apparently, many of my hon. Friends now believe in non-inflationary growth. The choice in the treaty is not between inflationary and non-inflationary growth but between low inflation and no growth. That is what is really behind the words of the treaty. If we cannot have growth without inflation, we shall have no growth. Some people believe that, provided that inflation can be reduced to zero, jobs will magically be created.

Mr. Dorrell *indicated assent.*

Mr. Davies: The Financial Secretary nods again. The Treasury has obviously been holding seminars and has been converted. The Prime Minister does not agree with

[Mr. Davies]

any of it, but the present Financial Secretary apparently does. We cannot have non-inflationary growth in today's western capitalist economies. In the 1930s, it was possible to have some growth and deflation.

Mr. Dorrell *indicated assent.*

Mr. Davies: The Financial Secretary nods again. The lessons have been going well. Perhaps the same people have been briefing us.

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

Iraq (Military Action)

10 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, I should like to make a statement on allied military action against Iraq.

At 18.15 hours GMT tonight, four RAF Tornado GR1 aircraft and two Victor tankers took part in a coalition operation, involving some 114 United States, British and French aircraft, against Iraqi military targets in southern Iraq. The action was taken to ensure the safety of coalition aircraft patrolling the no-fly zone below the 32nd parallel in support of United Nations Security Council resolution 688. Early indications are that serious damage was inflicted and assessment of the results is continuing. No losses were sustained by coalition forces.

This coalition action was taken in self defence under international law and is both a necessary and proportionate response to the serious threat posed to the safety of coalition aircraft. The coalition action took the form of air strikes against air defence facilities and command and control facilities. Attacks were also carried out to suppress air defence installations which threatened the security of coalition aircraft participating in the operation. United Kingdom forces participated in attacks against command and control facilities at Al Amarah, with RAF Tornado GR1 aircraft, using 1,000 lb laser-guided bombs against targets designated by the thermal imaging airborne laser designator, known as TIALD, carried by two of the four aircraft.

The action is to be seen against the background of recent Iraqi violations of the no-fly zone and their deployment of SAM 2 and SAM 3 missiles in a threatening posture below the 32nd parallel, south of the airfield used by Iraqi aircraft which were violating the no-fly zone. These posed a new and unacceptable threat to the security of coalition aircraft. A strongly worded demarche was issued to Iraq in New York on 6 January by the United States, United Kingdom, France and Russia, which demanded that the SAM systems recently established south of the 32nd parallel be returned to their previous locations and configurations and that violations of the no-fly zone should cease. The demarche went on to say that, should Iraq fail to comply, the coalition would respond appropriately and decisively, without further warning.

The demarche elaborated on an earlier one on 26 August 1992 which announced the creation of the no-fly zone south of the 32nd parallel. The no-fly zone was necessitated by a situation of severe humanitarian need in southern Iraq arising from Iraq's failure to comply with the terms of United Nations Security Council resolution 688, which calls on Iraq to refrain from further repressing its civilian population. Iraq largely respected the no-fly zone until late December 1992, when Iraqi military aircraft began deliberate and systematic violations. This resulted in an Iraqi fighter aircraft being shot down on 27 December by coalition aircraft.

Following the demarche there were no indications that Saddam Hussein was backing down. There were no fresh violations of the no-fly zone and the missiles were dispersing. However, despite the clear warning issued on 6 January, Iraq moved SAM 3 missiles, which were the subject of the demarche, to new locations south of the 32nd parallel where they posed a significant threat to

coalition aircraft. Other missile systems in the south were placed on an operational footing, also threatening the safety of coalition aircraft. The coalition action was in direct response to this threat.

The Baghdad regime can now be in no doubt about our determination to maintain the no-fly zone south of the 32nd parallel, in support of United Nations Security Council resolution 688. Should the need arise, the Government will consider the need for further action in consultation with coalition partners.

The House will also be aware of the deep concern expressed by the United Nations Security Council, following Iraqi incursions into the demilitarised zone on the border with Kuwait and Iraq's violation of land and premises operated and occupied by the United Nations Iraq/Kuwait Observer Mission. The Security Council has also expressed alarm at Iraq's refusal to allow UNIKOM and United Nations special commission flights into Iraq using UN aircraft. The Government will continue to participate fully in consideration of these matters within the Security Council and report developments to the House.

I am sure that the House will wish to join me in expressing admiration for the bravery and professionalism of the personnel of all the coalition forces who participated in this operation and in particular to the men and women of Her Majesty's armed forces serving in the Gulf. They have once again demonstrated the high degree of dedication and the ability that we have learned to expect from them and have contributed immeasurably to the success of this operation.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): May I say how relieved Opposition Members are that all the allied personnel have returned safely. We salute their skill and their bravery. It is worth reminding ourselves in the comfort of the House tonight that the mission was not without danger, as we know from other theatres of operation in the world only this afternoon.

The Opposition have supported the objective of this operation which was to ensure that allied aircraft could patrol the no-fly zone in Iraq, thereby ensuring that the Kurds and, in the south, the Shi'ite Muslims were not subjected to the genocide that they might otherwise have been. That is why the no-fly zones were established, and that is why they had to be enforced.

As allied aircraft could not fly in those zones without threat because of the missiles, it was clearly correct that the missiles should be removed. Saddam Hussein was warned, he was requested, and he refused to move them. The only course of action was to take out the missiles.

We are all aware that increasingly in the past few weeks Saddam Hussein has tried to challenge the resolutions of the United Nations. That cannot be tolerated. We cannot have the will of the United Nations challenged with impunity. Let us just hope now that Saddam Hussein fully understands the resolve of the world to ensure that the resolutions of the United Nations to protect the minorities in the world are upheld. I hope that he has heard what the rest of the world has said.

We are also reassured that the action in the operation was against military targets in the no-fly zone. We are relieved that there have been no civilian targets and, we hope, no civilian casualties. I think that I speak for the House when I express the hope that the casualties on the Iraqi side are absolutely minimal, whether civilian or not.

May I just ask the Secretary of State for an assurance that there will be intense diplomatic efforts to explain, with the coalition Gulf allies, the reason for this mission, because it is imperative, if we are to make progress—and we must make peaceful progress—that we have as broad a consensus as possible. That is vital if this operation is not to be wasted.

We fully appreciate that the Secretary of State is not in a position now to tell us how effective the operation has been. We hope that he will be able to do so tomorrow, and will then give the assurance that the House will be kept fully informed and he will come to the House if he has further information.

I shall end where I began and say that if we are to have a secure world order it must be based on the United Nations. If United Nations resolutions are passed, they must be adhered to and accepted by all sides. That was the reason for today's operation and why we are so pleased that it was so successful.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his remarks. It will make a powerful impact if the House speaks with a single voice on the matter.

It was right for the hon. Gentleman to remind the House that the personnel of the RAF who participated in the operation did so at significant personal risk and it is a matter of considerable relief that they all returned safely. It was also right for the hon. Gentleman to emphasise the importance of maintaining the closest contact, co-operation and dialogue with our allies in the Gulf. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we recognise the great importance of ensuring that not only those who participated in the operation, but all who have an interest in peace and stability in the Gulf are able to speak in a single and united manner.

The hon. Gentleman commented on the likely effects of the operation. The early signs are encouraging, but it will be some time before we can describe with certainty the detailed consequences. Of course, we shall keep the House informed when we receive such information.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for coming to the House so speedily to give us the reassurances that we have heard. We warmly support his praise for the coalition forces, especially those that formed part of the Royal Air Force. Many of us felt that more than a diplomatic slap on the wrist of Saddam Hussein was much needed. We warmly support our Government in their resolution to support what we believe to be the will of the United Nations and the coalition alliance that successfully won the war. If we are to secure peace, it is vital that we make it clear to Saddam Hussein that there can be no more such incursions.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. It is becoming increasingly clear that Saddam Hussein does not respond simply to diplomatic representations and it is, regrettably, often necessary for the international community to back up its representations with the use of force in appropriate circumstances. We now face such circumstances, which was why the present action was necessary.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Does the Minister accept that the success of the action will be determined not only by the effectiveness of the weapons used, and the professionalism and bravery of our forces,

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

but by the extent to which it dissuades Saddam Hussein from further acts of provocation in breach of the United Nations resolutions? If further military action is required—it cannot be ruled out—the Government will continue to enjoy our support and, I believe, that of the British public as long as such action is in accordance with international law, taken in consultation with our coalition partners and uses no more force than necessary.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman and I can assure him that the criteria against which we judge possible action are those to which he referred.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Having heard the comments from the hon. Member for South Shields (Mr. Clark) and the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), will my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence feel fortified by the knowledge that the actions taken have the overwhelming support of the House and the country, both of which would wish to join him in paying tribute to the service personnel involved?

Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall the effectiveness of the cruise missiles during the previous Gulf conflict? Were cruise missiles used today? If it should, unfortunately, be necessary to take further action, will cruise missiles, which can be used with relative lack of danger to service personnel, be available in the area?

Mr. Rifkind: I should like to confine myself to speaking about the contribution of the Royal Air Force. Obviously it is for the United States Government to give details of the operations for which they were responsible. I thank my right hon. Friend for his comments and assure him that the weapons that may be used in any operation will be those that are thought most suitable to achieve the desired result.

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): Most hon. Members believe that Saddam had it coming. In the words of an anonymous Pentagon official, it was a spanking rather than a beating. What part did we play in determining that it was a spanking rather than a beating? Is it right that the overwhelming force was supplied by the United States? Is it not politically important for the balance of numbers to be different from what it was? We provided six aircraft out of more than 100 and the French probably supplied a similar number. Would it not be more correct to have a better balance in any future world order?

Mr. Rifkind: In the action we attached great importance to the fact that the choice of targets and the severity of our response should be proportionate to the gravity of the offence by the Iraqi Government. As I said earlier, the targets for which the Royal Air Force was responsible were the Al Amarah base and the command and control functions there.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the integrity of Kuwait is just as valid a reason for international intervention now as it was two years ago? In the meantime, of course, Saddam Hussein has continued to commit atrocities against his own people. Will my right hon. and learned Friend affirm the Government's commitment in conjunction with all right-minded nations to work to bring peace to that unfortunate region?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. It is a matter of great concern that only today Iraqi spokesmen continued to claim that Kuwait was part of Iraq and, clearly, continued to refuse to recognise Kuwait's sovereignty and independence. It is crucial for the international community to speak with a single voice and to ensure that Saddam Hussein's regime is completely isolated in its continuing aggression and provocation.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): From this Bench on a day when we have mourned the killing of a British service man in Bosnia, may I say that we are delighted at the news that there have been no fatalities among the allied Gulf forces. However, there is some concern that the statement referred to the protection of our aircraft. Resolution 688 was clearly designed by the United Nations Security Council to protect the Shi'ites in the south and the Kurds in the north. Has any thought been given to how we can give them better protection? They are suffering, and to some of us it seems that minds are conditioned to reaction rather than proaction in dealing with these issues.

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, the original reason for the no-fly zone was to reduce and, we hoped, to eliminate the use of aircraft as a means of oppressing the Shia population in southern Iraq, and there is significant evidence that it has had a positive and beneficial effect. Of course, we continue to look to further ways of ensuring that all oppression of the population in southern Iraq can be totally ended.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Further to what the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) has said, should not the Minister be emphasising that this strike was to defend defenceless people whom Saddam Hussein has marked down for genocide? Does he not think that we now need to concentrate on the battle for the minds of the people of Iraq and that they need to get the truth about what this matter is really about?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, the hon. Gentleman is correct. We are aware that, because of the Iraqi regime's oppression of its own people, there are limited opportunities for those people to express their true feelings. The hon. Gentleman is right to emphasise that their views are as important as the views of other countries in the region in emphasising the hostility and repugnance that we all feel about the behaviour of the Iraqi Government.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Secretary of State aware that his statement describing this action as a coalition response confirms that it had no authority whatever from the United Nations Security Council, and nor has the Secretary-General endorsed it? Given the Palestinians who were thrown into the desert and Matrix Churchill, it underlines the double standards that have been followed by the Government.

Is the Secretary of State aware also that this will be seen worldwide as the last example of gunboat diplomacy by a lame duck President, and that it will almost certainly strengthen Saddam Hussein? Is he further aware that it is bound to stimulate Arab hostility to the west, with the growth of fundamentalism? Two years ago we probably killed 300,000 Iraqis. The right hon. and learned

Gentleman may have noticed on the news tonight that a UNICEF spokesman said that typhoid and cholera were still rampant in Iraq because of the bombing of the water supply. In those circumstances, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman realise that, whatever may be said in the House, world opinion will not take the view that he asks us to accept?

Mr. Rifkind: It is more likely that the right hon. Gentleman's remarks will be seen as those of a lame duck Member of Parliament who does not speak for anyone in the House. I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether he would have preferred the Iraqi regime to be able to use its aircraft and its missile installations to shoot down coalition aircraft and to make the no-fly zone inoperative, and thereby to ensure that the Iraqi regime continued its oppression against the people of southern Iraq. Is that the objective that he would have liked to seek? If so, he speaks for no one but himself.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, without the slightest shadow of doubt, the first item of news on the Iraqi broadcast tomorrow will be the remarks of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)? The Iraqis will take comfort from them.

I return briefly to the point about acting against acts of provocation by the Saddam Hussein regime. We all know in the House that he will come again looking for more repression of the Kurds and the Shi'ites. Perhaps this is not the occasion, but will my right hon. and learned Friend give an assurance that if that repression comes in greater strength against the Kurds in the north and the Shi'ites in the south, more—and more positive—action will be taken?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, it is clear that Saddam Hussein will use any opportunity to probe for a lack of will among the international community. I believe that today's action will have demonstrated to him that, far from lack of resolve, the international community is determined to ensure that the no-fly zone will continue to operate and that the people of southern Iraq will be protected as a consequence.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Secretary of State and, I think, most of the House would agree that Saddam Hussein has repeatedly and deliberately flouted the authority of the United Nations and the purposes of the various United Nations resolutions that were passed to protect the important minorities in the north and the south of Iraq. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman satisfied that by confining action to the no-fly zones he is able significantly to lift the threat from the peoples oppressed in southern and northern Iraq?

Mr. Rifkind: It is important that we comply with international law and that any action that we take is proportionate to the nature of the offence that has been committed. We made a demarche to the Iraqis, which referred specifically to their introduction of missile installations in the no-fly zone and the use of combat aircraft in that zone. It was therefore entirely correct and appropriate in our judgment that the response that was taken today should be limited to those particular matters.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that an earlier United Kingdom Government, in 1948, committed unarmed Royal Air Force aircraft, at great cost to the aircrews involved. I am pleased to say that that is not the policy of this Government. Is my right hon. and learned Friend able to assure me that in future operations, as tonight, the concern will be to ensure that professional and brave crews are capable of returning home after the operations? That surely is the essence of it—to make sure that our people return having completed the exercise properly.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, my hon. Friend is correct to draw attention to those matters. I mentioned in my original statement that some 114 aircraft took part in the operation. There was such a large number because many aircraft were involved in ensuring proper protection for the aircraft that were involved in the actual attack on the ground installations. It was by such preparation and presentation that we were able to ensure the safe return of all the crews of all the countries concerned.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Does not the immediate support for this action by the President of Egypt and other Arab leaders demonstrate that there is a wide range of support in the world for the determination that United Nations Security Council resolutions should be upheld? Is it not a fact that that action has been brought upon Iraq by Saddam Hussein's recklessness two years after the end of the war in continuing to defy United Nations resolutions?

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman assure the House that not only will sanctions be maintained in all their severity until Saddam Hussein demonstrates that he is ready to obey international law and the United Nations Security Council resolutions, but that the coalition will not hesitate to take further military action to demonstrate that, and that until Saddam Hussein conforms to international law he will be treated as the outlaw that he is?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, it is important that Arab Governments as well as western Governments are expressing their support for the action that has been taken. The action taken by the coalition today was not simply taken on behalf of the countries which directly participated, but on behalf of the international community. That is why there has been the warm response to which the right hon. Gentleman referred. I also endorse the right hon. Gentleman's later comments.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Is it not a cause for deep gratitude that, in the Royal Air Force, Britain has a reliable, courageous and efficient instrument for the imposition of international justice and order? Can my right hon. and learned Friend give an assurance that if Saddam Hussein is foolish enough again to permit incursions by his personnel into the demilitarised zone in Kuwait or to inhibit the flight of United Nations inspectors into his territories, Her Majesty's Government and coalition partners will, without any shadow of doubt, impose punitive action?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, what my hon. Friend says is correct. It is worth remembering that not only have RAF crews shown bravery and courage today, but they have been applying the no-fly zone for some months in circumstances when, on any day during that period, they could have been subject to attack by Iraqi missiles or aircraft. Therefore, the RAF's professionalism and dedication have been

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demonstrated during the last few months in the application of the no-fly zone in southern Iraq and in the parallel zone in the north of the country as well.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the Minister accept that the Government are highly selective in their support for the United Nations? They continue to ignore breaches by Israel and are themselves continuously in breach of the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Does he accept that in all probability this action will strengthen, not weaken, Saddam Hussein's position, and that it will solve nothing? The right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot claim that all hon. Members support the action which in my view is entirely misguided and will do nothing to solve the problems of the middle east.

Mr. Rifkind: I reject entirely the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that Britain does not observe United Nations non-proliferation requirements. The hon. Gentleman might see himself as a friend and ally of Saddam Hussein, but—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order.

Mr. Rifkind *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order.

Mr. Rifkind *rose——*

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will have heard—as, doubtless, did many other hon. Members—the Secretary of State for Defence describe my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) as a friend and ally of Saddam Hussein. You, and many other hon. Members, will know that that allegation is entirely untrue. That being the case, I respectfully ask you to ask the Defence Secretary to withdraw his unfounded and disgraceful allegation.

Madam Speaker: What the Secretary of State said was not unparliamentary. Ministers and other right hon. and hon. Members are responsible for their own comments in the House.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. The remark was entirely wrong and inaccurate. The Secretary of State was being economical with the truth if he was suggesting that I am a friend and ally of Saddam Hussein. It is quite wrong for any Minister to try to make such a smear, given that [illegible] Members are entitled to make legitimate criticisms of what appears to be a consensus position. It is utterly outrageous. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The point has been made.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. There are no further points of order. I have had enough. Has the Secretary of State finished?

Mr. Rifkind *indicated assent.*

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): The action taken by Britain and other countries will be warmly welcomed by all who believe that the Baghdad bully is the greatest threat to peace in the middle east. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is a scandal that right hon. and hon. Members should give succour to Saddam Hussein tonight?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right. If we are to have the maximum impact on the behaviour of the Iraqi Government, it is important for the views of the House to be presented with great strength and unanimity.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that I despair of this Government, with their obvious limitations, ever comprehending that this sort of action simply ensures the survival of Saddam and that, much more dangerous, every such action makes millions of converts to Islamic fundamentalism across the globe.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman must reflect on the consequences of the coalition's not having taken action. He appears to be willing to acquiesce in a situation in which the effectiveness of the no-fly zone would have been destroyed and oppression of the Shia by the Iraqi air force would have been reintroduced. That would have fundamentally damaged the interests that I am sure the hon. Gentleman would like to represent.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Given that Saddam Hussein has also been violating the land border of Kuwait, will my right hon. and learned Friend tell us what action, if any, is being taken to improve the defences of that border?

Mr. Rifkind: The Security Council has told the Iraqi Government that that behaviour is unacceptable. I understand that the United States Government have said today that they are deploying a battalion group to Kuwait, to emphasise the importance attached to the security of that country.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): How many wars and military strikes are the Government prepared to allow that punish Iraqi people but do not resolve anything? How many deaths are to be added to the 100,000 that resulted from the Gulf war? When will the Government show a readiness to save the lives of Iraqi children, whose death rate has tripled since the Gulf war, instead of engaging in this sort of jingoism?

Mr. Rifkind: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the targets against which action was taken today were exclusively military. He should be the first to appreciate that the best contribution that could be made to the welfare of the Iraqi people would be Saddam Hussein's giving up power in that country, and allowing his own people to be represented in a more acceptable way.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Will the Government be pursuing United Nations resolution 799 with equal vigour?

Mr. Rifkind: The Government give their support to all United Nations resolutions.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): In view of the statement made earlier tonight by Sir David Hannay, our ambassador to the United Nations, that the British Government believe in the enforcement of all United

Nations resolutions without priority and differentation, will the Secretary of State explain to the House and to the international community—particularly the international Islamic community—why such swift, heavy military action was taken in this case, whereas western powers seem to stand by and turn a blind eye to ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and to the transportation of more than 400 Palestinians to a freezing desert in no man's land? Is that not an example of pathetic double standards? Are not the real friends and allies of Saddam Hussein people such as the Secretary of State, who is a member of a Government who supplied arms to Saddam Hussein?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman talks typical nonsense. He should be aware, in making comparisons with the situation in Bosnia, that not only has the United Nations introduced a no-fly zone resolution for Bosnia but that since its inception no combat aircraft have flown. It is precisely because of the use of combat aircraft by the Iraqi Government that today's action was necessary.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Will my right hon. and learned Friend pass on to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, and to those brave men and women in the Royal Air Force, the fervent thanks of those people on the ground in the marshes in southern Iraq—from whom I have received this evening messages of gratitude?

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): I do not believe it.

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must hear the hon. Lady.

Miss Nicholson: My right hon. and learned Friend may like to remind the House that the BBC World Service is heard in the marshes of Iraq and that the telephone service is usable. Some of us have regular contacts there, and it is derisory of the hon. Gentleman to question that particular point.

I remind my right hon. and learned Friend and his colleagues of the grave difficulties under which the people of southern Iraq are suffering. For example, the sewage disposal in Basra is 80 per cent. raw ditch disposal—and has been for many years, because of Saddam Hussein. There is no education in the south and no medicine in the marshes, and the people are deprived of all the usual human facilities and all possibility of leading any kind of a normal life. That is due to Saddam Hussein, and has nothing to do with the actions of the allies in the Gulf war. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to make absolutely certain that we do everything possible on the ground to relieve those poor people from the devilry that Saddam Hussein constantly inflicts on them, out of sight of western cameras.

Mr. Rifkind: I listened with great care to my hon. Friend's remarks, because I know that she has made a number of courageous visits to the marshlands of southern Iraq, to make her own outstanding contribution to the welfare of the oppressed people in that area. We are not only pleased that the no-fly zone has helped to reduce that oppression but are always anxious to explore other ways of assisting the people to whom she has given such a high degree of personal commitment.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): Can the Secretary of State give the House an assurance that the Government will seek ways to strengthen the United Nations forces currently patrolling the demilitarised zone around Kuwait? Can he confirm that large amounts of weaponry have already been retrieved by the Iraqis, including four Silkworm missiles that could be used against coalition forces? Can he assure the House that any remaining weaponry in former Iraqi territory that is now part of the demilitarised zone will be moved out of the reach of the invading Iraqis?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is right to refer to that particular problem. There is considerable difficulty in that United Nations personnel are not normally armed and therefore have been unable to resist incursions by armed Iraqis who removed assets, including Silkworm missiles. It is clearly important to draw the appropriate conclusions from those incidents, to ensure that they do not recur.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): It is clear that the overwhelming majority of right hon. and hon. Members are entirely convinced that it was vital, in the interests of world peace, to prevent the United Nations from being made a fool of by Saddam Hussein. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is no less vital that the United Nations should not be made a fool of in Bosnia and Serbia?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course. That is, indeed, a very important objective. The way in which we try to prosecute the interests of the United Nations has to take account of the particular circumstances of each country. We try to use the most effective means available to us to achieve those objectives.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): The Secretary of State should be aware that the action taken tonight is worse than a crime—it is a blunder. It is a blunder because, when the fog of war clears tomorrow, we shall find that the people who have been not "spanked", as my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) had it, but torn limb from limb and incinerated under the bombs—smart or otherwise—will be people who never voted for Saddam Hussein and who are not responsible for the crimes that he has committed down the years, including all the years during which the British Government were selling him arms.

The radicalisation and Islamicisation that is occurring across the Arab area and the broader Muslim world will be greatly intensified by what will be regarded as western double standards, whereby the west is ready, at a moment's notice, to pulverise Iraq, but unable, over decades, to do anything about Israel's rejecting and ignoring international law and international standards, or to do anything to save the lives of the tens of thousands of Bosnian Muslims who have died in the current campaign in former Yugoslavia.

Is not the Secretary of State aware that, across the Arab world, Saddam Hussein has been made into a hero by those double standards, and that the blunder and crime that was committed this evening will come back to haunt us in years to come?

Mr. Rifkind: I must first tell the hon. Gentleman that his views are not the views of Arab Governments in the region, who are already welcoming the action that has been taken today. I must also remind the hon. Gentleman that, whereas the coalition today restricted itself

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deliberately to military targets, the no-fly zone was introduced to prevent Iraqi aircraft, ultimately commanded by Saddam Hussein, from bombing innocent civilians —innocent men, women and children—in southern Iraq. If the hon. Gentleman's advice were accepted, it would lead directly to the non-continuation of the no-fly zone restrictions and to the resumption of the bombing of innocent people. That is where the hon. Gentleman's policy would appear to lead.

Sir George Gardiner (Reigate): My right hon. and learned Friend will already know that the bulk of the British population will support the rather limited counter action that has been taken against Saddam Hussein. Will he acknowledge that, in the perception of the bulk of our citizens, the time will come when we will need not only to give Saddam Hussein a bloody nose but to go for his throat?

Mr. Rifkind: Clearly, if the Iraqi regime continues to ignore United Nations resolutions and to take aggressive action, it will invite further action by the international community. That would be not only proportionate but necessary if such circumstances arose.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does the Secretary of State accept that he will have my party's support for action undertaken to uphold United Nations Security Council resolutions because we believe that to do other than enforce those resolutions would be to be ineffective and to follow the rather sad example of the League of Nations which was the precursor of the United Nations? However, we believe that all Security Council resolutions should be pursued with equal vigour and not on a selective basis.

As an hon. Member who represents a constituency with a substantial number of armed forces personnel, may I ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman what mechanisms are being established to ensure that, should further action be undertaken, the families are aware of the circumstances? He will be well aware of the problems that families face in such circumstances. I remind him, too, that I speak as an hon. Member who lost a constituent in the previous Gulf conflict.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. Lady and her colleagues for their support for today's action. We are always anxious to give maximum information to families. It is in the nature of such operations that they have to be kept entirely confidential and secret until they have taken place. Thereafter, however, we try to provide as much information as is consistent with normal security considerations.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My right hon. and learned Friend has quite properly reassured the House that our Arab friends have welcomed the action today. But our Arab friends would be further reassured if we were to take proportionate action to make sure that Israel also abided by international resolutions. What action do the Government intend to take to provide that reassurance?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend must put specific questions of that sort to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. I know that my hon. Friend has done so in the past, and that he has been impressed by the answers which he has received.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why does the Secretary of State not admit that the action taken today has more to do with the vanity of the lame duck President Bush than anything else, and that the British Government tagged along like lap dogs, as they did in the Gulf war? How many of the installations which were knocked out were provided with British technology?

The Secretary of State has some cheek to attack my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) or anyone else about being an ally of Saddam Hussein when he is a member of a Government who could not tell the difference between an Iraqi gun and an oil pipeline until the truth emerged and we found that the Government were involved in squalid deals to enable Saddam Hussein to carry out genocide against his people.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his typically robust intervention in these matters. His views are not unexpected, although they are based on a complete misunderstanding of the facts. However, a complete misunderstanding of the facts has never deterred the hon. Gentleman in the past, and there is no reason to suspect that it would have a different effect today.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Why is it that the Government of Turkey have denied the use of bases? Is it not a fact that the Government of Jordan have deplored the action and asked for a negotiated settlement?

On a question of fact, do the British have any control whatever over a decision of the United States to use some of the 400 Patriot missiles that have been installed? What is the position on the increased number of American troops in Kuwait? Can the British Government give an assurance that the American troops will be consulted if there is to be any land action?

Do the Government know that there are more Shia Muslims than Sunni Muslims in Baghdad and that this is far from a cut-and-dried situation?

Mr. Rifkind: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that Turkey is giving its full co-operation to the imposition of the no-fly zone in the north of Iraq. Indeed, British Royal Air Force planes and United States aircraft are based in Turkey with the full support of the Turkish Government.

On the hon. Gentleman's latter comments, we had the closest consultation with the United States and with France on the particular operation that I have described today. Such consultation will also apply to any other possible action that might be taken in support of the United Nations or the international community.

Mr. Dalyell: And Jordan?

Mr. Rifkind: We shall have to examine exactly what the Jordanian Government said. We all hope that there are prospects for negotiated agreements. Regrettably, force is sometimes required precisely because Saddam Hussein has shown scant respect for diplomacy and because he only appears willing to acknowledge the use of force.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, contrary to what various Opposition Members have said, this is an attack on not the people of Iraq but the regime of Saddam Hussein? Does he

also agree that the vast majority of the people of Iraq, be they Sunnis from Baghdad, Shi'ites from the south or Kurds from the north, will warmly applaud this action and hope that it will hasten the downfall of the evil regime of Saddam Hussein?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to remind the House of those who have been oppressed by the Iraqi regime. None have been more oppressed than the Iraqi people themselves.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I, as I did two years ago, welcome military action against this dictator in the middle east? Although a majority of hon. Members are required, and are willing, to support military action, is it not strangely ironic that only two weeks ago officials of the Baghdad regime were in the United Kingdom negotiating with a major British defence contractor for the supply of telecommunications equipment to Baghdad? Surely Ministers should give honest and open answers to Parliament on that matter.

Mr. Rifkind: While I note what the hon. Gentleman says, I would wish to examine the basis of the comments that he has made before making any further comment on them. They are serious matters. I would wish to see the evidence that he has for that allegation.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): May I ask the Minister to be factual in his answer to my questions? First, did the strikes against the Iraqi forces take place inside or outside the no-fly zone? I understood that the United Nations resolution was about a no-fly zone, not a no-walk zone, no-run zone or no-missiles zone. Did the United Nations resolution specifically authorise the coalition forces to bomb missiles which might be inside the no-fly zone?

Mr. Rifkind: On the hon. Gentleman's first question, I can confirm that all the targets that were the subject of attack by coalition forces were in the no-fly zone. On the hon. Gentleman's second question, once a no-fly zone has been authorised in accordance with international law, it is entirely appropriate to act in self-defence to ensure the safety of those who are imposing the no-fly zone. It is because the Iraqi Government introduced SAM missiles in the no-fly zone which represented a very serious threat indeed to the safety of those air force crews from the various countries concerned that it is entirely justifiable and in accordance with international law to take the action that was taken today.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): Is it not a matter of great satisfaction that the allies have shown such resolve in this matter? May we congratulate President Bush in the last few days of his presidency on the actions that he has taken, together with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the President of France? Is the action not something for which Saddam Hussein bears full responsibility for bringing against his own people and for which he should pay the price?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. I would add that President Bush can be congratulated on the resolute way in which he has acted throughout his presidency. He has been a superb President in the contribution that he has made to dealing with the aggression represented by the Iraqi regime. That has been to the benefit of the international community as a whole.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Can the Secretary of State give the House estimated Iraqi casualties in the strike tonight? Did the Iraqis return fire?

Mr. Rifkind: At this stage we cannot estimate casualties. But I emphasise that all the targets were military. The operation took place at night. Therefore, it is unlikely that the casualties were substantial in number. On the question about any resistance to the allied effort, I can inform the House that some radar activity was noted during the operation. There was also some anti-aircraft activity in the area of the target and it is possible that some surface-to-air missiles were fired. But it is difficult to be certain at this stage. I can assure the House that there were no casualties and none of the coalition aircraft was hit or damaged in any way.

Dr. Norman A Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): It is surely the case that throughout the United Kingdom people of all political persuasions share a deep detestation of Saddam Hussein and his evil regime. However, the dramatic decisiveness shown by the coalition nations in this action stands in stark contrast to the craven reluctance of the United Nations and so-called coalition nations to take such decisive action on behalf of the people of Tibet, who have suffered something close to genocide at the hands of those ancient men in Peking. They have also shown craven reluctance to help the people of Serbia. Surely what is needed in the United Nations is a unified military command structure and an honourable consistency in the organisation's peacekeeping and peace making activities.

Mr. Rifkind: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that the United Nations has dramatically extended its peacekeeping activities during the past three or four years. In the first 40 years of its existence, it was able to initiate only about 13 peacekeeping operations; a further 13 have been authorised in the past three or four years, which shows that the objectives to which the hon. Gentleman aspires are clearly resulting in some significant enhancement of the UN's ability to influence events and to try to reduce oppression.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Secretary of State for Defence admit that for many years Her Majesty's Government have been the greatest friend and ally of Saddam Hussein, as they have succeeded in arming him to the teeth? Will he also admit that the likely consequences of his statement are that Saddam Hussein will renew his persecution of Kurds and Shias, that the people of Iraq will unify behind him and that the alienation of the Arab and Islamic countries against the west is likely to intensify further, and accusations of double standards against the west, because of its eagerness to bomb Iraq but to appease Serbia, will be made time and again? I therefore ask the Secretary of State to apologise and to withdraw his earlier remark against an Opposition Member who—like many other Opposition Members—is merely guilty of opposing the Government's dreadful record on oppression, Saddam Hussein and double standards.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman's suggestion that Saddam Hussein oppresses the Kurds and the Shias only in response to actions by the international community is a most extraordinary proposition. The reality is that nothing would be more likely to lead to a resumption of oppression

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against the Shias and the Kurds than if the no-fly zone imposed by the international community had to cease because of our unwillingness to take effective action when there have been transgressions against it by the Iraqi Government.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Could the Secretary of State bear to admit that many Opposition Members have never supported Saddam Hussein and have consistently stood up for human rights in Iraq, including my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Madden)? What appalls us is that the British and American strategy has resulted in 300,000 deaths, poverty throughout Iraq and cholera in the streets. What is the objective—is it further bombardment, or is there a serious political objective of bringing peace to that region?

Mr. Rifkind: The international action has led to the liberation of Kuwait and the protection of the Kurds in northern Iraq and of the Shias in southern Iraq, and the hon. Gentleman should be doing all in his power to help to lead that international action towards the eventual disappearance of Saddam Hussein as ruler of Baghdad.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): May I join the Secretary of State in congratulating our personnel on their courage and proficiency in an operation which was successful and probably inevitable? May I also invite him to admit that they are the fall guys for the failure and bankruptcy of the policies of the Government and their allies in the Gulf? First, the Government armed Saddam Hussein and then they prosecuted a war that caused devastation to the infrastructure, the people and the environment of the region, but Saddam Hussein and his odious tyranny is still there, killing the Kurds and Shi'ites and committing acts of aggression against the Kuwaitis and others in the region. The fact is that the allies' policy has failed abysmally and the Secretary of State should have the honesty to admit it.

Mr. Rifkind: I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman says. The allied policy has led to the renewed independence of Kuwait and the protection that is being given to the Shias and the Kurds. I waited with interest, but without success, to hear the hon. Gentleman's scenario as to what would have been more likely to achieve those results.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Security Council resolutions are quite wordy and in some ways rather precise, such as resolution 688. Which detail of the resolution justifies the action that the Americans and the Government have been involved in in Iraq? Can the Secretary of State quote the detail that allows that to have taken place and justifies it?

Mr. Rifkind: Security Council resolution 688 calls on Iraq to refrain from further repression of its civilian population. It was in pursuance of that resolution that the no-fly zone was introduced in accordance with international law. In accordance with international law, it is appropriate to take action to defend those who have the responsibility of applying that policy.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): Will the Secretary of State tell us what action is now planned to protect the Kurds should there be further attempts by Saddam to strangle and harass the Kurdish people? Can he assure us that, as well as thinking about military action, the Government are serious about trying to bring about democratic change in Iraq? The Iraqi opposition wants that rather than a stand-off that keeps Saddam in power.

Mr. Rifkind: We attach importance to the rights of the Kurdish population in northern Iraq and that is why we have a no-fly zone in that part of the country as well. It has been successfully applied and any transgressions against it by the Iraqi regime would be treated with great seriousness.

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham): The Secretary of State's robust defence of the United Nations resolution would ring a lot more true if we pursued others as vigorously as we have done this one. No doubt he will be aware of the violations of human rights that are everyday occurrences in Kashmir, yet United Nations resolutions, outstanding from 1947 and 1948, have never been acted upon. We have not had any explanation from the right hon. and learned Gentleman of who authorised today's action. Who authorised it?

Mr. Rifkind: The action was obviously the responsibility of the countries that participated in the operation. They are the countries which have applied the no-fly zone and, in accordance with international law, they are entitled to take action in defence of their own aircrews. I must ask the hon. Gentleman whether he would have preferred a situation where the RAF would have been exposed to attack by the Iraqi air force without the right to defend itself. If that is the action which the hon. Gentleman is suggesting, it would have been consistent with discontinuing the no-fly zone, with all the consequences that that would have meant for the Shia population.

Mr. Boyce: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. There is no point of order at this stage; we are in the middle of questions on the statement.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): In the interests of maintaining international authority, will the Secretary of State assure the House that attention will not be restricted purely to the no-fly zones, at least until the United Nations aircraft are able to fly into Baghdad and United Nations inspection teams can complete their work there?

Mr. Rifkind: I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. The Security Council also attaches the gravest importance to the refusal of the Iraqi Government to allow those missions to proceed to Baghdad in United Nations aircraft. Earlier today, there was a report that the Iraqi deputy Prime Minister had said that United Nations planes might be permitted. We hope that that is to be the Iraqi policy, which would be a welcome reversal of the stance that it has taken recently.

Dr. David Clark: In view of what I said previously, I do not think that the House or the Secretary of State can be in any doubt of my support for the operation or, indeed, can be in any doubt that my judgment is at variance with that of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). However, on reflection, the Secretary of State may have slightly misjudged the issue by saying that my hon. Friend was an ally and friend of Saddam Hussein. I must say to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that I do not think that it helps the House for the message to go out

that Saddam Hussein has any friends at all in the House. I wonder whether the Secretary of State would consider reflecting upon his earlier comment and withdrawing it?

Mr. Rifkind: I must remind the hon. Gentleman that the remark that I made was that the hon. Member for Bradford, South might think of himself as an ally and friend of Saddam Hussein. If the hon. Gentleman does not think of himself in those terms, I and the House would be delighted to hear that. I must repeat the fact that I believe that the policies that he espouses work to the advantage of Saddam Hussein and will be well received in Baghdad tonight.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Let me make absolutely plain my position on this matter, which the Secretary of State raised directly. I do not regard, and have never regarded, myself as a friend and ally of Saddam Hussein. Now that I have said so, will the Secretary of State completely withdraw his slur against me? I have never sold guns to Saddam Hussein or anybody else.

Mr. Boyce: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. What redress is available to an ordinary Back Bencher who puts a legitimate question to the Secretary of State and is replied to with a question containing serious allegations about that Member's personal stand on the action taken today? Are we to understand that the Secretary of State may answer questions with questions and that Back Benchers have no redress?

Madam Speaker: Back Benchers learn very quickly to pursue matters by various methods. I have been a Member of this House for 20 years. When the hon. Gentleman has been here long enough, he will find ways and means of doing this.

PETITION

Disabled People

11.5 pm

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): I should like to present a petition from a large number of members of Mencap in Birmingham. It reads as follows:

SUPPORT CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The humble petition of supporters of Birmingham Mencap shows.

That people who are disabled or perceived to be disabled (for whatever reason) are continually having to face widespread, unjustifiable discrimination.

That legislation is necessary to outlaw this discrimination.

Therefore, your petitioners pray that your honourable House introduce legislation to outlaw unjustifiable discrimination against people who are disabled or perceived to be disabled as soon as possible.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Aujeszky's Disease

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

11.6 pm

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I am extremely grateful to have been granted an Adjournment debate on the subject of Aujeszky's disease and its effect on the pig industry in the United Kingdom. My county—Suffolk—has more pig producers than most. The obvious exception is Humberside, as is shown by the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) and other hon. Members who feel very strongly about this issue.

The need for this debate was made urgent by the increased risk of the importation of Aujeszky's disease into this country, and by recent Government proposals to take over the remains of the fund established to eliminate the disease here. In many ways, the issues raised encapsulate the problems that membership of the European Community increasingly poses for the agricultural community. Those who understand the pig industry in this country will know that it is not subsidised as many other sectors of agriculture are. It is efficient, competitive and self-reliant. This self-reliance has never been better demonstrated than by the pig producers' determination to eliminate Aujeszky's disease from this country some years ago.

This debate is about how Aujeszky's disease was eradicated, the money that was used to do it, the likelihood of the reintroduction of the disease from other Community countries, and what should be done with the money left over from the eradication scheme.

Aujeszky's disease is a viral disease that causes high mortality and unthriftiness in both breeding and finishing pigs. Between 1983 and 1990, pig producers funded the eradication of Aujeszky's disease from Great Britain through a compulsory slaughter policy. The scheme followed a poll of producers in 1982, and had the full approval of Ministers. The Government recognised the strong case for eradicating the disease, but were unable to finance the programme. However, they agreed to provide the services of the state veterinary service for the purpose of having the compulsory slaughter policy carried out, and having the necessary blood testing conducted.

The total cost of the programme was £38 million, and after recovery of money through carcase sales, the net cost to pig farmers was £27 million, financed by a levy of 30p per pig, which was collected through the Meat and Livestock Commission and was held in the pig disease eradication fund. Complete freedom from the disease was declared in May 1991 and £780,000 now remains in the pig disease eradication fund, which belongs to the nation's pig producers.

Two recent changes have necessitated tonight's debate: first, imports of live pigs are to be permitted from January 1993, increasing the risk of reintroducing Aujeszky's disease into this country; secondly, the Government's stated intention to take over the money remaining in the fund, which belongs to pig producers. So, having eradicated the disease from this country, there is a renewed threat of it returning from Europe, and the money that could have been used to deal with that eventuality is to be taken over by the Ministry and used as it sees fit.

[Mr. Michael Lord]

Because the Minister understands the matter well, he will appreciate the unique animal and plant health record of this country, helped to a large extent by the fact that we are an island and have been zealous in policing imports and maintaining the highest possible standards. From January this year, that position has changed; we are now obliged to allow the import of live pigs from other European countries in a way that was not previously permitted.

Time does not allow me to go into the various categories of pigs to be imported or how they will be checked and tested. Suffice it to say that the EC Standing Veterinary Committee in Brussels has agreed various rules and our Ministry has been working hard to make things as tight as possible. Nevertheless, pigs will now be allowed in not just for breeding purposes but for further fattening and slaughter. They will be allowed in from all those Community countries where Aujeszky's is a notifiable disease. Although we are obliged under EC rules to allow those imports, all veterinary advice suggests that it will be a retrograde step and will increase the likelihood of importing diseases such as Aujeszky's.

The new rules governing the import of pigs for breeding are reasonably strict; those for pigs for further fattening are less so; and the rules on pigs for immediate slaughter are the least strict of all. How can we be certain that all those rules and regulations will be obeyed? More important, how can we be certain that, even with the closest possible control, infected pigs will not somehow slip through the net?

Aujeszky's is often difficult to spot in pigs without testing and there must be a real possibility, with greatly increased numbers of pigs of all kinds entering the country, that the disease will come with them. It is a sad day when our membership of the Community means lower standards of animal hygiene for this country. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to look again at the import of live pigs and ask himself, given our excellent national record in the matter, whether those changes can be justified. He will recall that the Government intended to bring the standards of European farmers up to ours, not lower our standards to theirs or endanger our herds and flocks with imported problems.

Given the real dangers of importing Aujeszky's disease which I have described, one would have thought that the Government would have been only too happy to leave the £780,000 belonging to pig producers in the pig disease eradication fund against the eventuality that it may be needed again for its original purpose, which was to slaughter infected pigs and keep this country Aujeszky's-free. It is pig producers' money, raised for a specific purpose, and there is every indication that it might one day have to be used again for the same purpose. I understand that the Minister has said that, in the event of the reappearance of Aujeszky's disease, a slaughter policy would be immediately implemented and the levy system reactivated. Pig producers insist that those funds have been raised for a specific purpose and should be held available, should the need arise.

In November, the Minister announced that, following the latest review of public spending, he would take the money from the pig disease eradication fund and use it for "some of the Agriculture Department's activities".

In fairness, the Ministry has always said that the money would be used to defray costs relating to the testing for, and control of, Aujeszky's disease. The Minister will no doubt tell the House that, under the Pig Industry Levy Act 1983, he is only using powers made available to him which allow him to use the pig producers' fund in this way, but those in the pig industry are deeply concerned about this proposal, and their concerns fall under a number of headings.

Most important, they believe—I agree with them—that this money belongs to them, the pig producers. Ministers have always recognised that this money was under the control of pig producers and operated through the industry by the Pig Disease Eradication Fund Board. Pig producers argue that the ministerial powers set out in the Pig Industry Levy Act 1983 were essentially public expenditure safeguards, and it was never envisaged that the powers would be used in this way, although the Minister has suggested from time to time to the industry that these funds could be spent on other purposes.

People in the industry are also deeply concerned that the Minister failed to consult them before the decision was taken, and they see it as being very much against the whole spirit of the Aujeszky's eradication scheme. The Government have talked of using the money to test for or monitor Aujeszky's disease, but the British Pig Producers Association, with which I have had discussions, has put to me the important point that, in its view, the Government have a statutory obligation to meet the conditions of Aujeszky's disease-free status as required by the European Commission decision on trade guarantees. Given this obligation, the BPPA believes that it would be quite wrong to expect the industry to bear the cost of any surveillance work.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I am very grateful to the hon. Member for giving way in an Adjournment debate. I would like to say a brief word of support for the excellent case that is being put forward, not only as an Opposition speaker but also as a Humberside Member with a significant pig industry in my constituency. Would the hon. Member care to speculate whether, if the Government do use this money for purposes not connected with either testing or eliminating Aujeszky's disease, and if we reach the position that he has outlined, in which, with the change to the single market, there may be an outbreak, the Government have a moral obligation to replace an equal amount of money in order to combat any such outbreak?

Mr. Lord: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, because, as I mentioned earlier, Humberside is one of the places where there is great worry about this matter. I take very much the point that he makes—that if, at the end of our pleas to the Minister, it is decided that the money will not be used for the purposes for which it should be used, then there ought to be some very firm commitment that, if it is needed, it will be replaced exactly as it is now, at the appropriate time and without delay.

The BPPA is also concerned about discrimination against the pig industry in the way I was describing earlier when it comes to testing, because similar health monitoring arrangements by the state veterinary service are conducted for other livestock sectors out of public funds.

Finally, and perhaps most important, the pig industry believes that it is being penalised for its self-reliance and far-sightedness because of public spending demands now in other agricultural sectors. It is greatly concerned that the proposed action could be counter-productive and could discourage pig farmers and farmers in other agricultural sectors from embarking on industry-financed schemes. Perhaps most important of all, it feels that there is a grave danger of damaging the trust which should and, I believe, does exist between pig producers and our Government.

On a personal note, I find that hardly a day passes without my hearing of some new and complex regulation which will damage some section of our agriculture industry—whether it is the amount of set-aside for our cereal farmers, the cost of veterinary inspection for our chicken producers, the closure of our small slaughter-houses, the effects of salmonella regulations on our egg producers or the subject of our debate tonight, Aujeszky's disease—all in the name of Europe and progress. Time unfortunately does not allow me to develop this theme too far, and I have no doubt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you would call me to order if I did, but I object very strongly when Ministers return from negotiations in Brussels to tell us that they have triumphed yet again and that we are to be allowed to go on doing what we were doing quite happily before—only now we will not be able to do it quite as well as we used to.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): As a Humberside Member, I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) for initiating tonight's debate. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) represents more pigs than humans. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central agree that the most important action that my hon. Friend the Minister can take is to continue the dialogue that he had with the British Pig Breeders Association before Christmas, when its members were courteously received by him, and continue that consultation process? The association feels deeply about the fact that there has been no consultation on the issue.

Mr. Lord: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. It is vital that our ministerial team maintains close contact with the pig producers. I know that they have spoken to my hon. Friend the Minister already, and I am sure that they will continue to do so, as they place much importance on it.

I urge my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary—who the House knows is a fair man, concerned to do all he can to help agriculture—to hold further consultations with the pig industry with two objectives in mind. First, he should ensure that everything possible has been done to keep Aujeszky's disease out of the country. Secondly, we should leave the pig producers' money where it is, to be used if the industry is faced with Aujeszky's disease again. Above all, he must ensure that the money is not used for any other purposes unless and until the pig producers agree on the alternative course of action.

11.22 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): My hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) was kind enough to invite me to speak for a moment, because he knows how strongly I support his case. I thank him for giving me this brief opportunity, and shall curtail my remarks still further, as all I need to do is say what a powerful case my hon. Friend has made, how wonderfully he has presented it and how important the subject is that he has chosen.

I thank the Minister for his courtesy in allowing me to bring to see him in early December the most important pig producer in my constituency, Mr. Brian Jones, chairman of the pig committee of the National Farmers Union, together with the upcoming chairman of the British Pig Breeders Association. The subject is important to many hon. Members and their constituents. Today there are, alas, too few farming Members of Parliament, but we are fortunate in having outstanding Ministers in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Their dedication is shown by the fact that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary are both present for tonight's important debate. Pig farmers are of great importance to many of us, and we are deeply unhappy that our Government seem to have mistreated that important group.

11.23 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) on securing tonight's important Adjournment debate. I am extremely grateful to him for providing me with an opportunity to underline Her Majesty's Government's firm commitment to a healthy future for the excellent pig industry in this country.

I note the interest in the debate of my hon. Friends the Members for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) and for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), who, as she said, has already brought a delegation to see me with whom I discussed some of the issues. I endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West that this is an extremely important debate, and as such is vested with the presence of my right hon. Friend the Minister.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central said, the eradication of Aujeszky's disease in the United Kingdom was an outstanding success, achieved by a determined co-operative effort between industry and Government. The co-operative instinct that gave rise to that effort is perhaps less well developed in this country than it is among some of our major competitors, and it is a tribute to the United Kingdom pig industry—which we freely give—that it should have taken such an important initiative.

Although many people have made important contributions to the effort, I am sure that the House would join me in paying particular tribute to the efforts of Jim Blanchard, whose services were deservedly recognised with an award in the latest honours list.

Before I speak in some detail about the decision to use the outstanding funds, it may be helpful briefly to describe the disease and its history in the United Kingdom, although I do not intend to go over ground that has already been covered by my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central.

Aujeszky's was first recorded in this country in 1953, and was made notifiable in 1979 when there were only 34

[Mr. Nicholas Soames]

cases. The presence of Aujeszky's was nevertheless a cause for great concern in those areas where our pig population is concentrated.

A survey in 1982 suggested that the disease was spreading within the United Kingdom, and as a result an eradication programme was introduced.

I should perhaps stress that the disease has no implications whatever for human health, and that therefore disease control benefits only the producer. As a consequence, the Government did not consider it appropriate for taxpayers in general to meet the whole cost of the eradication programme. For that reason, it was agreed that action would depend upon the willingness of producers to fund the costs which would arise from the need to compensate farmers whose stock was subject to compulsory slaughter for animal health purposes.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): The Minister makes an eloquent case for identifying the levy funds, which came from this sector for agriculture and were not part of the Ministry's general funds. That is the nub of the argument. As hon. Members from all parties who signed the early-day motion have said, this was an identifiable sum that came straight from the industry and should go back to that sector.

Mr. Soames: If the hon. Gentleman had allowed me to develop my argument for a little longer than one minute and 35 seconds, he would have heard me cover that ground.

A poll of producers confirmed the industry's willingness to proceed on the basis that I have described. The Pig Industry Levy Act 1983 provided for the establishment of a levy to be collected by the Meat and Livestock Commission. The Act extended the powers of the commission under the Agriculture Act 1967 so as to meet the costs incurred by the Minister as a consequence of exercising his general powers under the Animal Health Act 1981, specifically in relation to Aujeszky's disease. This levy amounted to 30p per pig slaughtered or exported live. The money was held by the Pig Disease Eradication Fund Ltd. which was created solely for this purpose, as my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central said.

The cost of the compensation payable on slaughtered pigs under the Aujeszky's eradication programme was recovered from those funds. In addition, the fund provided compensation to owners for consequential losses, the Government's contribution being to undertake the key tasks of the eradication programme—investigating suspect cases and implementing control measures, which led to substantial costs in terms of administration, staff and veterinary services.

About £27 million was collected over the six-year period of active Aujeszky's eradication measures and 432,262 pigs were slaughtered, from 523 herds. That was double the initial estimate of 250 herds which it was believed would need to be slaughtered when the eradication programme was launched. The last confirmed case occurred in September 1989. Freedom from Aujeszky's disease was formally declared in May 1991, bringing the eradication programme to a highly successful conclusion, and greatly enhancing the marketability of British pigs.

Once the disease had been eradicated and the levy had ceased to be collected, there remained, as my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central said, a balance of some £700,000, which has grown with interest. There are provisions within the Act for any such money to be used at the direction of the Minister for the benefit of the industry. The precise use to which this surplus is to be put is central to this debate, and has obviously concerned the many leaders of the industry and industry representatives with whom I and my right hon. Friend have had discussions, which were always conducted in an extremely robust but courteous manner.

This aspect was touched upon on Second Reading of the Pig Industry Levy Bill. The then Minister of State was, as always, very clear in his comments on the matter. He recognised that the issue gave rise to some anxiety in the industry, and he assured the House that any money that was available would be returned to the sector that had provided the funds. However, he also made it clear that it was impossible to be specific about any surplus funds, and refused to speculate on the precise purposes for which surplus moneys should be used.

In the past, we have considered with the industry a number of possible uses for the surplus. Initially, discussions focused on possible research and development projects, and we have agreed to use a small amount of money in that way. However, we received no firm proposals from the industry about how the funds might be used, and in the context of the most recent public expenditure round discussions, it was decided that the remaining balance from the levy should be used for continuing work on Aujeszky's disease that was of immediate benefit to the industry.

Having eradicated the disease, our priority now, as my hon. Friend rightly said, is to secure trade arrangements that will ensure, so far as possible, that the disease will not be reintroduced into this country. This requires us to secure recognition of our disease-free status and appropriate trade guarantees from our partners. These efforts, after long and difficult negotiations, have been extremely successful. The necessary veterinary trade guarantees came into force at the beginning of the year, and I believe that the industry recognises their value and soundness.

Without those trade guarantees, there would have been a real risk of reinfection. This would have led to renewed expense to the industry in trying to maintain our disease-free status through the existing mechanism. That is particularly important with a disease like Aujeszky's. The signs of disease are highly variable and there may be sub-clinical infection. It is necessary to test all cull boars, and to have all samples submitted to veterinary investigation centres for examination. In this way, we are effectively screening the whole national herd, and should be able to detect infection at an early enough stage to take prompt and effective action.

It is the cost of this monitoring that is to be offset by the use of the surplus funds collected through the levy. It is clear that this work is of direct and immediate benefit to the industry. Freedom from Aujeszky's benefits all producers, not just the exporter. It was the potential effect on production which won the support of the industry for action. I have assured the industry—I repeat the assurance to the House—that not a penny of the accumulated funds will be spent by the Minister other than on Aujeszky's disease.

As my hon. Friend is aware, I met the National Farmers Union and representatives from the Pig Disease Eradication Fund Board before Christmas. At that meeting, I made it clear that there could be no going back on the decision, but that we were keen to see a continuation of the close co-operation which has always existed in relation to Aujeszky's disease. My officials are consulting the industry on the details of the surveillance necessary to maintain this country's disease-free status, which is what we all want. We shall also be discussing with it ways of minimising the costs of the necessary work and the financial control mechanisms, as clearly we wish to use these outstanding funds in the most effective, efficient and prudent way possible.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Soames: I must get on: I ask my hon. Friend to forgive me.

As I said at the outset, it is the pig industry that benefits from the freedom from Aujeszky's disease, and it is entirely right that the industry should focus on the real costs of control. It is regrettable, of course——

Mr. Townend: I wish to make an important point. I accept the arguments that my hon. Friend has advanced, but will he assure the industry that he recognises that, when the fund is completely depleted, the monitoring will still have to continue? Will the cost of the monitoring then be paid for by the Government, or will another levy be introduced?

Mr. Soames: No. My hon. Friend will be aware that, if the fund ran out and by some awful chance the disease were to reappear, we would continue with exactly the same slaughter policy, and if necessary we would have to have another levy.

Mr. Townend: With respect, my hon. Friend has misunderstood my question.

Mr. Soames: I must continue.

It is regrettable that the industry should feel that it has not been adequately consulted. That is a point that has been made to me very clearly. I was under no illusions about the initial response of the industry, but I think that it now believes that we are taking a positive approach. It is an inevitable result of the way in which the Government's spending decisions are taken that advance consultation is often not possible. I do not accept that there is a legal obligation to consult before Ministers use the powers that have been given to them in legislation to direct how the funds should be used.

The industry's financial involvement in the maintenance regime will serve to underline the importance of a sensible approach. It maintains the investment of the industry as a whole in its well-deserved high health status. The surplus is finite, and no decisions have been taken on the future financing of ongoing work once the fund is exhausted. In what is, I very much hope, the unlikely event of an outbreak of the disease, the existing controls, including slaughter, will apply. As now, if the fund proves inadequate, we shall have to look to reactivating the levy.

I cannot end without responding to the main points made by my hon. Friend. It is my belief that the Aujeszky's disease story is one of proper achievement. Together, in a short period of six years, Government and the industry have eradicated a disease of sufficient economic importance that producers saw the benefits to them even when faced with the necessity of a levy. It was a wise investment, and one worth protecting. Only Denmark has achieved the same Aujeszky's disease-free status as Great Britain. Disease freedom must pay dividends in terms of increased production and enhanced export opportunities.

Once again, I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this important Adjournment debate. I have noted the points made by my hon. Friends and by the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) and I commend the work of my hon. Friend and the Ministry to the House.

Mr. John Townend *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Has the Minister given way?

Mr. Soames: No.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 14 January 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

RIVER HUMBER (UPPER BURCOM COOLING WORKS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 21 January 1993.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Fines (Ability to Pay)

1. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made as to the success of the points system linking magistrates court fines with the individual's ability to pay.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): The principles of the scheme were successfully trialled before its full-scale introduction in all magistrates courts from 1 October 1992. It is too early to judge the full effectiveness of the scheme, but I am ensuring that it is closely monitored.

Mr. Steen: I am sure that the House will agree that it is important that the way in which our courts conduct their business should appear to be fair. Does the Minister consider it fair that a man on income support who drives along the A38 at 100 mph should be fined £24—less than a parking fine—while a man driving immediately behind him at the same speed whose disposable income is £100 a week, which is not very much, is fined £1,600 for the same offence? Does that not discriminate against the ordinary man in the street and clobber him although he is not a millionaire?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend will understand that I cannot comment on individual cases. On the principle, however, he will be aware that offenders' means have long been taken into account by the courts. My hon. Friend will know that magistrates still have total discretion regarding the seriousness of an offence and all relevant factors. I hope that he will also bear in mind that a fine is supposed to be punishment which hits the offender's pocket with the same punitive effect whether he is rich or poor. The scheme provides a framework to make that possible for magistrates courts. The scheme will continue to be monitored.

Mr. Llwyd: In my constituency there were two recent cases of driving without due care and attention, both of similar gravity, but one defendant was fined £800 and the other £25. Does that not strike the Minister as absurd?

Mr. Wardle: The units reflecting the seriousness of the offence may well have been the same, but the assessment of the fines would have depended on the offenders' disposable income. That is the purpose of the scheme. As I said, courts have long taken financial resources into account in deciding fines.

Business Crime

2. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures have been taken to reduce the level of business crime.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack): The latest safer cities progress report highlights a wide range of successful crime prevention initiatives that have benefited business, whose own crime prevention efforts have also gained from Home Office research covering issues such as retail crime analysis, shop theft and cheque and credit fraud. We have also supported the business and crime initiative launched by Crime Concern and the Confederation of British Industry.

Mr. Ward: Does my hon. Friend agree that the 300 business watch schemes represent a real commitment by the police and the business community to fight crime in partnership? How does my hon. Friend intend to encourage the extension of such schemes, and what practical help can he give to the participants?

Mr. Jack: I am delighted that my hon. Friend mentioned the word "partnership". That is the key to the way forward. Partnership has certainly been encouraged by the 20 safer city projects, and we have announced our intention to create 20 new safer cities. In addition, I have also had discussions with leading retailers, who are now showing considerable interest in working on crime prevention in partnership with us.

Mr. Redmond: When businesses such as B and Q open on a Sunday they commit a business crime. When will the Minister stop hiding behind local authorities? When will he stop condoning that activity and take positive action to stop those businesses breaking the law?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has given a clear idea of the Government's intentions on Sunday trading. Later this month a Bill dealing with the subject will be discussed. The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity then to express his views more forcefully.

Mr. Paice: My hon. Friend has referred to retail crime. He will be aware of the great concern among retailers about large-scale, heavy-duty burglary, including ram raiding. What steps are being taken to reduce the incidence of ram raiding in terms of discussions with retailers and with the Department of the Environment, which controls the planning aspects of the prevention of ram raiding?

Mr. Jack: I recognise the severity of the effects of ram raiding. It is worth pointing out, as this may not be widely known, that ram raiding offences can attract a sentence of up to 10 years' imprisonment if burglary or aggravated burglary is involved.

My hon. Friend should be aware that we are pursuing Car Crime Prevention Year vigorously to ensure that the source of the tools of trade for ram raiders, if one can put it that way, are prevented from being stolen. I shall certainly pass on to the Department of the Environment my hon. Friend's comments relating to protective street furniture.

Mr. Michael: Does the Minister realise that the House is aware that he is being incredibly cheeky in suggesting that he will double the number of safer cities projects when in fact he will produce no extra cash?

On the real question before us, is the Minister aware that crime against business costs more than £10 billion per year, which is equivalent to a third of all NHS spending or 6 per cent. on income tax? Is he aware that fraud in the City of London costs more than £500 million per year? Given the Home Secretary's enthusiasm for putting business men in charge of hospitals, schools and prisons, or perhaps even the police, will the Minister now put some real enthusiasm into taking dramatic steps to sort out business crime?

Mr. Jack That restatement of a problem that we take only too seriously is merely a thinly veiled apology from the Opposition for their total lack of positive thought on how to deal with the problem. Last week we announced in full detail our plans for the safer cities projects. We always made it clear that there would be a limit on funding for existing projects until the end of 1994.

I am surprised and disappointed that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) gives no weight to the announcement that we made about the National Board for Crime Prevention, which includes a dialogue between business and the Government to address the very problems that he detailed.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that the outburst from the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) that the House has just witnessed is an outrage on the great majority of businesses in the United Kingdom which wish to co-operate with the police and the Home Office to prevent crime? Can my hon. Friend tell the House what arrangements he has in mind to ensure that business men are encouraged to sponsor crime prevention schemes?

Mr. Jack: I am delighted that my hon. Friend referred to the police in the context of crime prevention. The police are central and play an excellent role. *[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members disagree with that, they will have a chance to say so later.

As for contributing to crime prevention, we have certainly made it clear that there will be a real opportunity for local businesses to bring not only their expertise but their resources to help perhaps even to run some of the new 20 safer cities schemes.

Data Protection

3. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the EC data protection directive.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): The Government are seeking to achieve a directive as close as possible to the 1981 Council of Europe convention on data processing, on which our law is based. We consider that the convention preserves a proper balance between the rights and interests of data users, data subjects and others.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Government not be adopting double standards if later today they say that they support privacy protection from the press for individuals, from royals to plebians, but then spend their time watering it down for computer records? Why are the Government against the inclusion of manual data and data subject consent before records can be passed to others? Why do they expect France and Germany to have lower standards for their privacy protection than they already have?

Mr. Lloyd: We expect the Germans and the French to have the arrangements that they think best. Data users are well protected under the European convention. The fear is that their real interests will not be better looked after under the directive but rather that the data subjects will have extra expense and inconvenience as their banks, building societies and insurance companies will have to write to them more often to get written permission for routine transfers of information which most people want their banks to do automatically.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Does my hon. Friend agree that, contrary to the impression given by the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), the United Kingdom is in the forefront of data protection? Does he further agree that United Kingdom law is based on the 1981 convention, which has not even been ratified by five of our EC partners?

Mr. Lloyd: That is right. Five of our EC friends have a long way to go. We signed the convention because, after long discussion, we believed that it provided the best protection for the data subjects as well as allowing business to be transacted by electronic means, which is in the interests of everyone, not merely businesses.

Local Police Forces

4. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is yet in a position to announce the future shape and organisation of local police forces; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I am still considering a range of issues connected with the police service, including the future shape and organisation of local police forces. I shall announce my conclusions when we have proposals to make.

Mr. Dunn: When my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary comes to consider the nature of reforms as presented to him, will he ensure that two things take place: first, that local accountability is maintained; secondly, that nothing is done to damage the integrity, work and competence of the police force of the county of Kent?

Mr. Clarke: Proposals are not being put to me. I am preparing proposals, which, in due course, I shall put to my hon. Friend and to the House. Of course I am determined to make the police service in Britain yet more effective and efficient to tackle the serious problems of lawlessness which we all know that we face. I already have in hand work on quality of service, more effective local policing, the pay and command structure of police forces, and what can be done about policemen who lack the capacity for the job. Now I have announced that I am having a look at the disciplinary procedures for those who face serious charges.

Obviously, I am also looking at structure and financing. I shall certainly bear in mind my hon. Friend's legitimate points when I do so. The relationship between the local police force and the local community is crucial to a good police force in Britain.

Mr. Mandelson: Has the Home Secretary reconsidered the 2 per cent. budget cut forced on my police force in Cleveland as a result of the Government's financial curbs on local authorities, about which I have had a complacent and unsatisfactory letter from his colleague the Minister of State, Lord Ferrers? Does the Home Secretary not realise that unless Government resources match his rhetoric, any reorganisation or tinkering with the management of the local police forces will be regarded by the public with the utmost suspicion?

Mr. Clarke: There has been a further substantial increase in the resources available to the police service nationally and to local government to spend on the police service as a result of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's autumn statement. I shall look up the financial arrangements of the hon. Gentleman's police force to see whether any particular local circumstances explain the difficulties that he describes, but overall we had a good settlement this autumn in the light of the economic recession which we know the country faces. The police service had a bigger increase than any other part of local authority expenditure.

Mr. Sykes: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the tragic murder between Christmas and the new year of an 80-year-old pensioner, Mr. Percy Noble, in Whitby in my constituency? That followed a similar event in September in which PC Moss was tragically blinded in the course of his duties in a so-called joy-riding accident. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the tremendous anger felt by people in Scarborough and Whitby at those incidents? Is he aware that we want more bobbies on the beat, less paperwork for them to do and, most importantly, the punishment to fit the crime and not the criminal?

Mr. Clarke: I am aware of the tragic events that my hon. Friend describes. I also appreciate that they are only the worst feature of the problems that his constituents and many others face in today's society. That is why I am so determined to ensure that the police are made more effective and efficient. Although obviously the police cannot reduce the level of crime of their own volition, we have to have the best police force possible to tackle it. For that reason, I am looking at every aspect of police forces, including the relationship between the large numbers of headquarters staff in police forces throughout Britain and the policemen deployed on the ground, where I agree with my hon. Friend that the public most wish to see them and gain the greatest sense of security from them.

Mr. Blair: Does the Home Secretary agree that the most important thing that people want is a say in the policing of their local communities? They would resent it very much if policing were to be controlled by Government boards, stuffed with Government appointees. Would it not therefore be better if he had the broadest possible consultation on the changes, so that the outcome could be based on the interests of the public and not on his obsessive dislike of local government?

Mr. Clarke: First, I should make it clear that any proposals that I make will go out for consultation. I doubt whether that will interest the hon. Gentleman very much because he has already denounced my proposals—just in case—before he even knows what any of them are. The public are concerned about the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes)—about how far the police can be enabled to protect members of the public against the rising level of crime—rather than about the hon. Gentleman's prime concern, which is who sits on what committee, which seems to be a comparatively subordinate question.

Woolf Report

5. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made in the implementation of the Woolf report.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government's proposals in response to the Woolf report were set out in the White Paper, "Custody, Care and Justice", published in September 1991. The White Paper identified 12 key areas of priority for change. I will write to my hon. Friend with a more detailed account of progress in each of the 12 areas and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House. The White Paper paved the way for agency status for the prison service and work is well in hand to establish the executive agency on 1 April. I have appointed a chief executive designate, Mr. Derek Lewis, who I am sure will give dynamic leadership to the service.

Mr. Amess: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that my constituents in Basildon, where crime is falling, agree with the Woolf report? Does he also agree that the rapid progress in providing humane and modern conditions in our prison, is in stark contrast with the record of the Opposition, who cut capital spending on prisons by one fifth in spite of the fact that the prison population grew by 14·5 per cent?

Mr. Clarke: First, I believe that the encouraging crime statistics in Basildon are a result of the efforts of the local police force and the crime prevention initiatives canvassed a moment ago by my hon. Friend the Minister of State. The Government have certainly set a target of a more enlightened prison regime. We have adopted Lord Justice Woolf's proposals, appointed Judge Tumim to point out

the deficiencies and are moving towards a more modern and effective management system which will deliver that target as soon as possible. It often surprises me that Opposition Members, who are most critical of the present failings of the prison service, appear most resistant to any idea of changing the way in which we run that service. The steps that we are taking will speed up the achievement of the targets that my hon. Friend wants us to set.

Mr. Maclennan: What does the Home Secretary intend to do about young offenders institutions, especially the one at Feltham?

Mr. Clarke: I visited Feltham, where a series of difficult and tragic incidents have taken place in recent years. I was glad to see the progress being made there to get out of those difficulties. The present governor and staff are to be congratulated on raising the morale of the team, introducing innovative ways to deal with offenders and providing more productive regimes. Bullying at Feltham is being tackled and we hope that efforts being put into improvements there will put an end to the problems that have occurred.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that when I visited Wandsworth prison recently the most impressive aspect had nothing to do with the laundering of Canadian diplomatic mail bags, but was the building works which will make possible single prisoner cells without slopping out? I hope that that work will continue quickly. The education work being done by the prison education service was the second most impressive thing. Will my right hon. and learned Friend keep a close eye on the current changes to the service to ensure that when prisoners have served their sentences they are able to leave prison best equipped to return to the community and the job market?

Mr. Clarke: My right hon. Friend's autumn statement preserved the Government's capital programmes and I am glad to say that, as a result, the prison capital programme was kept well in place. We are making great advances in extending and improving the amount of prison accommodation. I am glad to say that we are on target for ending slopping out and having integral sanitation everywhere by the end of 1994. More than 70 per cent. of prisoners already have such arrangements. I hope that my hon. Friend is assured that the improvements that he saw when he visited Wandsworth prison will be continued in the near future.

Ms. Ruddock: In the light of those replies, does the Home Secretary recall that his chief inspector of prisons, Judge Tumim, reported only three months ago that prisoners were still in overcrowded and disgraceful living conditions with inadequate medical attention? Do I need to remind him that, since then, there have been allegations of drugs and alcohol dealing and the rape of a female staff member of Long Lartin prison, a riot at Reading remand centre, and reports of a gangland culture at Wymott? The Secretary of State must acknowledge that the central recommendations of the Woolf report on reducing overcrowding and providing better education and work facilities for prisoners have not been carried out by the Government and that in that respect the Home Secretary has failed in his duties.

Mr. Clarke: It was this Government who appointed Judge Tumim to be Her Majesty's inspector of prisons and I recently reappointed him precisely so that he could carry on pointing out to the Government and to the public the failings and shortcomings in the prison service. We know that they exist on a wide scale. The conditions that the hon. Lady described still exist in too many of our local prisons and I have been describing how we propose to tackle them. Substantial improvements have been made towards getting Lord Justice Woolf's recommendations in place and we shall continue to make progress. When we have made the necessary changes to speed up progress, I hope that the Opposition will not merely resist them all, defend the status quo, and become frightfully obsessed with the fact that we bring in business men from outside to raise the management culture and improve the running of prisons.

Electoral Law

6. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had regarding changes in electoral law; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have set up five working groups of Home Office officials and representatives of returning officers and local authorities to look at different aspects of the electoral process.

Mr. Skinner: It is about time, because in the 1992 election the Tories helped themselves by rigging the elections and piling up in marginal seats votes which they got from Johannesburg and the Costa del Sol. They made sure that those votes were put in the right place. Does the Minister agree that Tory supporters were also voting for the infirm and the disabled in residential homes in order to win the election? Why has there been no public inquiry into those malpractices? Will he guarantee that he will support the Bill to be presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on Friday—appropriately, in a few days' time?

Mr. Lloyd: There is not much truth in any of that rant, as the hon. Gentleman knows. The whole House, including most of the hon. Gentleman's party—not the hon. Gentleman, but the Labour Front Bench and most Labour Members—supported the enfranchisement of British citizens living overseas. Some 30,000 voted, but they could not possibly have affected the outcome of the general election. What made a difference was the piling up of Labour votes in the Labour heartlands and inner cities —when the population had moved out—because the boundary review had been so long delayed.

Mr. Rathbone: Does my hon. Friend accept that the vast majority of people in the country welcomed those reforms to allow more people with interests in this country to vote in elections here? However, another aspect of electoral review which requires immediate attention is election to the European Parliament. Can my hon. Friend throw some light on the review to take place on that front?

Mr. Lloyd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We are urgently considering how to take forward the question of adding six additional seats for the next European elections in 1994. We intend to keep the existing voting system but to have the existing Euro-constituency boundaries independently redrawn.

Mr. Barnes: Does the Minister agree that the biggest problem in electoral law is the people missing from the electoral register? Some 2 million have disappeared from the register since 1987 and many redundant names appear on electoral registers, hiding from view the fact that there are many missing people. What are the Government doing about getting a proper—rolling—electoral register? If they are not doing anything, will they support the principle of the Bill that I shall be introducing in the House on 12 February?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman asks a rhetorical question—he knows perfectly well what we are doing, as he and I have had discussions on the matter. As I said earlier, five working groups of local authority and Home Office officials are looking at the various issues, including that of the register. As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, the register has always been a problem. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is comparing the register with the outcome of the 1991 census.

If the hon. Gentleman casts his mind back to the 1981 census and review he will recall that 6·5 per cent. of people who were eligible to vote were not on the register then and 7 per cent. of names on the register were redundant—the people had died or moved. There is much work to be done by the group, which is why we set it up and intend to consider its recommendations carefully.

Mr. David Evans: Is my hon. Friend aware that we won the general election in 1979? Is he aware that we won it in 1983? Is he aware that we won it in 1987? Is he aware that we won it in 1992? Is he aware that when we won those elections it had nothing to do with electoral reform, but was to do with our policies? Until that lot opposite understand those policies, they will never get re-elected.

Mr. Lloyd: Not for the first time my hon. Friend puts his finger right on it. He is quite right and Opposition Members know that he is right. That is why they come forward with fiddling excuses such as those produced by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister join me in saying that one of the most important functions of his Department is to ensure that all British citizens who are entitled to a vote receive a vote? Does he accept my criticism when I say that it is unacceptable that millions of our fellow citizens are not on the electoral register? Will he make a statement to the House in the near future about proper and adequate funding for electoral registration officers? In particular, will he make a statement about the disabled people who are currently unable to exercise their right to vote even when they have registered? Will he bring forward proposals to put an end to that disgrace?

Mr. Lloyd: All disabled people are entitled to vote. The important factor is that the law requiring local authorities to provide polling stations to which disabled people can gain access is not always applied. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that some local authorities face difficulties with that—he rubs his fingers to indicate that the problem is money. That is why we contribute 50 per cent. of the cost of providing special ramps and help for those people. As the hon. Gentleman knows, if an individual cannot get to a polling station becuase he is disabled, he has a postal vote.

Mr. Burns: Does my hon. Friend accept that the Government, through his Department, make available a great deal of money for advertising voter registration and making it easier for people to register to vote? Does he further accept that far too many people cannot be bothered to make use of those facilities to register their vote? In the past three years, some people have deliberately sought not to register to vote, in the hope that they will avoid having to pay community charge. For that reason, one should not get too upset at the crocodile tears shed by Opposition Members. If people cannot be bothered to register to vote, they get what is coming to them.

Mr. Lloyd: In the last analysis, it must be the individual's responsibility to get his name on the register. The Government have a responsibility to give good advice, assistance and support to electoral registration officers to ensure that those who want to get on to the register, do. We fulfil our responsibility and the study groups aim to ensure that we shall achieve even greater success in future. Electoral registration officers are more effective in the job, which rightly and primarily belongs to them.

Crime (Hampshire)

7. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the increase in recorded crime in Hampshire since 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Since 1979, recorded crime in Hampshire has increased at a rate of 6·6 per cent. a year, which is broadly in line with the rates of increase for England and Wales as a whole.

Mr. Denham: Is not the Minister aware that that means that crime in Hampshire has more than doubled since 1979, but police numbers have been increased by only 10 per cent? Is he aware that crime increased by 14 per cent. in the last year alone, that there were a dozen crimes involving firearms in Southampton over the Christmas period and that crack is now available in Southampton? In the light of that increase in crime, will the Minister explain to the House precisely how he came to decide, against the advice of the police and the police authority and against the demands of local people, that there should be no increase in police numbers in Hampshire next year? Why has the so-called party of law and order become the Government of criminal Britain?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman sounds a long alarm. He failed to mention that Opposition Members have voted against every major piece of law and order legislation since 1979. In the year to last June, recorded crime in Southampton increased by 4 per cent., whereas in the previous year it increased by 22 per cent. In the current year, Hampshire police have received 67 more posts. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be asking the Hampshire force to get on with civilianisation so that more uniformed policemen can get out on the beat and combat crime in his constituency.

Mr. David Martin: I agree very much with what my hon. Friend has just said. I wish to raise with him the concern of residents, particularly in Southsea, about disturbances outside licensed premises. Will he co-operate with local authorities, the police force and all others concerned to make sure that, particularly with regard to

licensed premises that open into the small hours of the morning, all possible back-up is given to efforts to do something about the problem?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is right to express concern about those matters. His concern is shared by the Hampshire force. As he may know, Hampshire police have introduced a clubwatch scheme to deal with violence in clubs and pubs for that very purpose.

Mr. Gunnell: The Minister will be aware that in Leeds yesterday magistrates imposed a——

Madam Speaker: Order. The question relates to crime in Hampshire. The hon. Gentleman must relate what he says to crime in Hampshire and not to Leeds, which I know is dear to his heart.

Mr. Gunnell: I will make the question applicable to all local authorities, Madam Speaker, and therefore to Hampshire.

Is the Minister aware that for the first time in this country a court has imposed a fine on a local authority social services department because of a crime committed by a young person in its care? Will the Minister explain whether——

Madam Speaker: Order. I fear that, although I have given the hon. Gentleman an opportunity to get his question in order, it does not appear that it is directly relevant. We shall have to move on.

Car Crime Prevention Year

8. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police forces have developed special initiatives as part of Car Crime Prevention Year.

Mr. Jack: All 43 police forces in England and Wales have engaged in some form of activity in connection with Car Crime Prevention Year and I take this opportunity of congratulating them on their contribution to a campaign which in its first quarter has seen a 2·5 per cent. reduction in car crime.

Mrs. Currie: Is the Minister aware that last year Derbyshire showed the highest increase in car crime in the country and that certain industrial estates in my constituency have been used by car rings to process cars stolen from a wide area of the midlands? Will he nevertheless join me in praising the considerable efforts of the Derbyshire police force to tackle this problem, after years of delay and pressure from the local Labour-controlled Derbyshire county council intended to impede their operations, and encourage them to take whatever initiatives they can to counter the current crime wave in Derbyshire?

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for her support for the efforts of the Derbyshire police to counter car crime. It is only fair to add that the figures show tremendous potential for further reductions and I hope that the Derbyshire police will contact, for example, those involved in Northumbria Partnership Against Car Theft, which has brought about a substantial reduction in the number of cars stolen and thefts from cars.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that in Leicestershire, as in most counties, the increase in car crime over the past few years has turned into a plague? In the light of that, the Government's refusal to allow the police any additional forces in any of the provinces is a shameful way in which to treat ordinary people in all our constituencies.

Mr. Jack: I am sorry that the hon. and learned Gentleman is single-minded enough to think that police numbers provide the solution to car crime. The police would be the first to admit that it was through their partnership with motor manufacturers, motor traders, car owners and ordinary members of the public that a 2·5 per cent. reduction in car crime was delivered in the second quarter of last year. Let me correct the hon. and learned Gentleman: in this financial year alone, we are putting another 1,000 police officers into service.

Second-hand Cars (Security Devices)

9. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to persuade dealers to fit security devices to second-hand cars.

Mr. Jack: Through the medium of my advisory committee on car crime, I am working closely with the Retail Motor Industry Federation and the Association of Chief Police Officers to encourage the wider adoption of schemes such as Essex Sold Secure and Northumbria Partnership Against Car Theft, which are specifically targeted at improving the security of second-hand cars.

Sir Anthony Grant: That is all very well, but the current level of car crime is a national scandal. Whoever is responsible—ram-raiders, or young idiots misery-riding —something must be done. The answer is to fit cars with immobilisers. A number of inexpensive models are available; I recommended one to the former Home Secretary, but nothing happened. I have one here—it is a very simple model.

Car dealers and manufacturers will do nothing until they are compelled to. It is up to the Home Office to put a stick behind them.

Mr. Jack: There is certainly nothing immobile about my hon. Friend's solution to the problem. When I visited the motor show this year, I was heartened to see that many more cars made by our leading manufacturers were already fitted with immobilisers and alarms as a standard precaution. After all, those cars will ultimately become second-hand cars. I hope that the methods of Northumbria Partnership Against Car Theft—which instructs the public about precautions such as that described by my hon. Friend—will be widely adopted. Such precautions have already contributed to the reduction in car crime.

Ms. Lynne: In the light of the Minister's reply to me on 4 December, will he inform us of the progress of the discussions with our European partners about fitting inbuilt security systems to new motor cars? Will he also include second-hand cars in the European directive, if that is possible?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Lady is right to draw attention to that aspect. Work is in progress, led by the Department of Transport, to try to encourage our European colleagues to adopt higher standards in connection with locks, alarms

and immobilisers. Obviously, the progress that we make today in regard to new cars will affect the second-hand cars of tomorrow.

Voluntary Groups and Charities

10. **Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to increase public participation in voluntary groups and charities.

Mr. Jack: The Home Office promotes voluntary activity by supporting bodies whose role is to encourage and extend the work of the voluntary sector to promote volunteering and to provide information, advice and support for other voluntary organisations.

Mr. Howarth: Does my hon. Friend agree that a great many people want to make a contribution to society through voluntary work? Has he any thoughts about the way in which the Government could play a part in establishing networks, neighbourhood by neighbourhood —probably on a fairly informal basis—to help people to find the most worthwhile and practical ways in which to make their personal contributions?

Mr. Jack: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his continuing interest in, and dedication to, the voluntary sector. He asked about local networks and volunteering; we are working with BBC Radio on a £250,000 programme to encourage more individuals to volunteer. We have given a pledge to develop the volunteer centres database more widely, to ensure that people can volunteer and can obtain the necessary information about volunteering. I assure my hon. Friend that that pledge will be high on my list of priorities.

Miss Lestor: While I support what the Minister and his hon. Friend said about involving more people in voluntary work, bearing in mind the disclosure today that a voluntary organisation registered as a charity was employing people who had been accused of offences against children, does not the Minister think that if he is to encourage this he should also vet people before they are allowed to take children away at weekends?

Mr. Jack: I have taken careful note of what the hon. Member says; her experience is considerable. She will know that the Charities Act 1992 does a great deal to strengthen the voluntary sector and the operation of charities and may make its own contribution to the point that she has raised. I will look into the specific case that she mentioned.

Sunday Trading

11. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what review he has made of the operation and enforcement of the Shops Act 1950 over the Sundays preceding Christmas 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None, Madam.

Mr. Beith: Does the Minister realise that what some large companies are doing by flagrantly breaking the law is attempting to increase their market share at the expense of those companies and small businesses which keep the law? Since the lawbreakers may carry on with the same cavalier attitude, whatever modifications of the law are agreed by the House, will the Minister and his colleagues start to put their weight behind enforcement of the law, now and in the future?

Mr. Lloyd: As the right hon. Gentleman very well knows, the law is extremely clear on one point, that the responsibility for its enforcement lies with local authorities. He has, however, been rather misleading in his introductory remarks. He knows, as does the whole House, that for many years many small shops have broken the law. It is in the recent past that the large shops have started to do so, which is why my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, in his statement a few weeks ago, made it clear that the Government intend to find a solution to this problem—something which eluded us some years ago when we sought to do so—by introducing a Bill that would enable the House to compare and choose between the major options for reform that are available. That should put behind a new law the authority that the current law so clearly lacks.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 January.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Wareing: Does the Prime Minister agree that although the action against Saddam Hussein was thoroughly justified, similar military action in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina could not be so justified? Will he give a categorical assurance that no British service man's life will be put at risk by fighting on one side or the other of that conflict, because such a conflict would lead to a general conflagration in the area? Should not the message from the House now be: remember Sarajevo, 1914?

The Prime Minister: The situation in Bosnia presents special difficulties and is quite different, as the hon. Gentleman said. He will know the action that we have taken: we have imposed an arms embargo, sanctions and a no-fly zone which has been made effective. Progress has been made in the peace talks in Geneva—not enough, but progress has been made—and we will take further measures if we have to. As the hon. Gentleman may know, European Community Foreign Ministers agreed yesterday to work on measures leading to Serbia's total diplomatic isolation. The European Community also agreed on the need for an international criminal court and will support that at the United Nations.

Q2. **Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pickles: In his busy schedule today, does my right hon. Friend have any plans to commemorate the centenary of the foundation of the Independent Labour party? If so, what advice does he offer as the most appropriate way to mark this event?

The Prime Minister: I did not have it in mind to do so, but perhaps we might hold a wake.

Mr. John Smith: To return to the Prime Minister's actual responsibilities, does the right hon. Gentleman believe that it is right that taxpayers' money should be used to pay the legal fees incurred by a Minister in connection with his own private affairs?

The Prime Minister: It is uncharacteristic of the right hon. and learned Gentleman to deal in innuendo. The matter to which he refers has been dealt with by Sir John Bourn, an independent report has been commissioned and the answer is quite clear: no impropriety occurred.

Mr. Smith: Does not the Prime Minister even understand the distinction between a public duty and a private concern? In this case, is not it clear that the Chancellor instructed solicitors because of his decision to rent his own property to a tenant for his own profit? Is not it clear from the report to which the Prime Minister refers that the Chancellor instructed solicitors without referring the matter to a Government legal adviser? If property was involved, should not the Chancellor be asked to repay the money now?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman may wish to reflect on and withdraw those remarks. It is uncharacteristically cheap of him to have raised the matter in this fashion. The report fully exonerates the Treasury on the central questions: was it right to make the payment and were any rules breached? Sir John Bourn, who carried out the inquiry, has no criticism on either point. He also confirms that the Chancellor did not ask for assistance and makes no criticism of my right hon. Friend's actions.

Mr. Smith: Does the Prime Minister understand that it is a matter not of innuendo but of public policy on whether taxpayers' money should be used to finance the private legal affairs of a Minister? If the Prime Minister is resting on the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General, which has not yet been considered by the Public Accounts Committee, will he explain why, as is clear from the report, the whole matter was concealed under a heading called

"Expenditure . . . on economic, financial and related administration",

which included the expenses of pay review bodies and the cost of the BCCI inquiry? Was not there an attempt to hide this matter from the public and from scrutiny here?

The Prime Minister *rose*——

Hon. Members: Answer!

Madam Speaker: Order. It is pointless the House shouting "answer"; the Prime Minister is at the Dispatch Box doing just that.

The Prime Minister: It says a great deal about the Leader of the Opposition that, the day after our service men have been in action in Iraq and when we have troops in Bosnia, he has raised this matter in the House. I repeat, as he sits smiling smugly, that the Chancellor did not receive assistance. The Treasury broke no accounting rules and in the absence of the rules it was appropriate that judgment should be exercised by two accounting officers. That has been independently examined. There is no criticism of that judgment and if he had a shred of self-respect the right hon. and learned Gentleman would withdraw those remarks.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating Aim Aviation of Bournemouth, which has been so successful in winning export orders in the United States, the far east and Europe that it has had to acquire a new factory at Wallisdown in my constituency? Will he join me in wishing it every success in seeking new orders, which it undoubtedly will be able to do under the policies of the Government?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to do that and I am delighted to hear of this export success. There is no doubt that our exports have been on a rising trend. Equally, there is no doubt that we have the right economic fundamentals to encourage exporting in the future.

Mr. Boyce: What a load of nonsense.

The Prime Minister: It is vital that we do so for our jobs and prosperity. We understand that, even if the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Boyce) understands nothing.

Q3. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Livingstone: Does the Prime Minister accept that the vigour with which the Government have ensured that Iraq complies with the United Nations resolutions is not repeated when ensuring that other nations such as India comply with United Nations resolutions on Kashmir or China with United Nations resolutions on Tibet? Is he aware that, to many people in the world, it seems that we pursue United Nations resolutions wth vigour only when they refer to endangered western oil interests?

The Prime Minister: I think the hon. Gentleman knows better than that. This country has a better record of supporting United Nations resolutions than almost any country that he can name.

In the case of the difficulties with Iraq, there was a clear violation and invasion of a neighbouring country and an attempt to capture both that neighbouring country and probably to move on further down the Gulf. Recently there have been deliberate attempts of genocide both in the north and south of Iraq. The whole of the hon. Gentleman's background suggests that he should be supporting the Government in preventing that genocide.

Mr. Bill Walker: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the Cabinet will shortly be looking at proposals for the future of the naval dockyards. He will be aware of the political sensitivity that applies to both naval dockyards. Will he assure me and the House that the decision, when made, will be based upon equal opportunities for both dockyards and that we will be comparing apples with apples so that there is no question of saying afterwards that the decision was arrived at other than properly and honourably?

The Prime Minister: I can assure my hon. Friend that every relevant factor will be taken into account.

Q4. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: Will the Prime Minister find time today to pass on the condolences of everyone in the House to the family and friends of my constituent, Lance Corporal Edwards, who was killed yesterday bravely delivering aid to Bosnia? Will the Prime Minister tell the House what measures he will be taking to ensure that the troops performing this dangerous role have the firepower and intelligence back-up to prevent further casualties?

The Prime Minister: The whole House will agree with what the hon. Gentleman had to say about his constituent. He was a very brave man and there is no doubt that he gave his life to save the lives of many other people who would have died, but for actions of Lance Corporal Edwards and those of his colleagues.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will be making a statement after questions which will be directly germane to the hon. Gentleman's question.

Q5. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Martin: Is my right hon. Friend aware that since he visited St. Mary's hospital in Portsmouth, it, with Queen Alexandra's, has been approved for trust status? Remembering all the virulent criticisms levelled at trust hospitals by the Opposition parties, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he has seen the reports in today's papers that even the official Front-Bench spokesman of the Labour party now sees the sense in our reforms? Is there joy in Downing street over one sinner that repenteth?

The Prime Minister: There is hardly likely to be joy over that particular sinner. But I can certainly confirm to my hon. Friend that I have seen the report. The fact is that the Labour party has no agenda of its own. Conservatism has won the arguments on health and will continue to win them. I well remember what the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said:

"I give this historic pledge that the hospital that serves my constituents will opt out over my dead body."

I hope that the hon. Member does not live to regret that pledge. No doubt if he is ill his local trust hospital will treat him.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Prime Minister find time today to consider the representations that have been made over a number of months by disablement organisations about the need for anti-discrimination legislation? As he once had ministerial responsibility for disabled people and bearing in mind the fact that a Bill has passed through the House of Lords, will the Prime Minister find time for such legislation to go on the statute book in this parliamentary year?

The Prime Minister: This is a technical and difficult matter, as the hon. Gentleman knows as well as anyone in the House, but I will look at the points he raised and discuss them with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Worcester

Q6. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Prime Minister when he next plans to pay an official visit to Worcester.

The Prime Minister: I am at present making plans for a series of visits to all parts of the country and I hope to include Worcester among them.

Mr. Luff: Is my right hon. Friend aware that if he were to visit Worcester, he would encounter very great admiration for the skills and bravery of our armed forces, both in Bosnia and the Gulf? Is he also aware that he would encounter great local anger at the inability of the Labour-controlled local council to live within its means and at its failed gamble that it would be bailed out by an incoming Labour Government, as a result of which it is resorting to desperate measures to balance the books, including the sale of much-loved public open spaces?

The Prime Minister: I believe that a number of people may well have gambled on a Labour victory at the last election. I am bound to say that it was always likely to be a poor bet. I quite understand the way my hon. Friend feels about the Labour council in Worcester—many people around the country feel the same about other Labour councils. It is the charge payers of Worcester who will have to pick up the bill for the Labour council's actions and I hope that they will remember that when the local council elections come along.

Engagements

Q7. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Vaz: The Prime Minister may recall that on 14 March 1991 I met him to discuss the case of my constituent, John Hall, who was dying of leukaemia, an illness which he contracted while serving on Christmas island. He also knows that John Hall subsequently died on 3 June last year in the royal infirmary in Leicester. The House rightly honours those who serve this country. Will the Prime Minister join me and others in honouring the memory and selfless devotion of the British nuclear test veterans and pay them and their families the compensation which they so richly deserve?

The Prime Minister: I certainly join the hon. Gentleman in honouring all our veterans, whether those veterans or others. He will know that the question of compensation and whether it is due for the reasons he set out is being examined at this moment.

Bosnia (Further Deployment)

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, I should like to make a statement on Bosnia.

On 15 September I announced that we would be participating in the United Nations operation to deliver humanitarian aid in Bosnia. To do this we sent to Bosnia a battalion group consisting of some 2,500 troops. Since November, they have been involved in escorting relief convoys bringing food, shelter and other essentials to Bosnian communities. I am pleased to say that this operation has succeeded in its aims. Our forces have been directly responsible for escorting some 147 convoys which have delivered 11,775 tonnes of aid. It is no exaggeration to say that there are many people in Bosnia today who owe their very survival to the presence of British and other United Nations forces.

At the time of the announcement of this deployment, I made it clear that our paramount concern was for the safety of British troops. This, of course, is still the case. The last few days have seen an increase in the number and seriousness of attacks on our forces. In particular, there has been the shelling of our base at Tomislavgrad, and then the killing of Lance Corporal Edwards in Gornji Vakuf yesterday. A few moments ago the whole House expressed its sorrow at this tragic loss of life, and we wish to pass on our condolences to his family. He was a brave man on a humanitarian mission who gave his life trying to help others.

In order to enhance the safety of our troops, I am authorising the deployment of additional forces to the region. These additional forces will be available, should the need arise, to reinforce our contingent in Bosnia at very short notice. They will be available to provide additional protection to British forces while they are involved in humanitarian operations. They will also be available to cover a withdrawal of British forces if that should become necessary. We are determined not to be in a position where we are unable to respond immediately to a significant deterioration in the situation.

My proposals are as follows. We shall immediately be sending a small number of extra specialist troops to join our contingent in Bosnia. They will include logistics experts and others who will make arrangements for the arrival of a larger force, if that should prove necessary.

At the same time, as a contingency, we shall be deploying to the Adriatic HMS Ark Royal, with a carrier air group consisting of Sea Harriers and Sea King helicopters, accompanied by two frigates and three support ships. A number of other units will be deployed on the carrier group: a light gun battery, a locating battery and a mortar-locating troop, with support. HMS Ark Royal and accompanying ships will be ready to deploy on Sunday and will take up station in the Adriatic. I should emphasise that there are at present no plans to deploy any of the units embarked to Bosnia itself, but we wish to be in a position to do so immediately should the need arise. We shall also be making arrangements for the possible move to the area of other units at short notice.

None of this marks any change in our policy in the area. The forces that I have described will be used to increase the protection we provide for our existing battle group as it carries out its humanitarian role. We believe that the provision of artillery in particular will enable us to respond to attacks of the kind that we faced at Tomislavgrad. We remain committed to sustaining our participation in the United Nations humanitarian effort if at all possible. These forces will not be used to intervene in the fighting between rival factions in the former Yugoslavia. Our position remains that it is not appropriate to intervene in what is essentially a civil war. Our overriding concern, as always, is to ensure the safety of our forces.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): The appalling pictures that we see nightly on our television screens have served to shake many of our fellow citizens. Many of us find it difficult to appreciate how neighbours who have lived amicably side by side for 45 years can now behave like animals towards one another. The Secretary of State is absolutely correct in reminding us that we are indeed witnessing a civil war.

For this reason we were gratified when in September the Government announced in the House their proposal, which the Opposition had advocated, to detach a group of British soldiers to protect the United Nations convoys carrying humanitarian aid to the stricken people in Bosnia. I am glad to have the assurance of the Secretary of State today that the sole purpose of our troops deployed in Bosnia is to provide that humanitarian aid. In that sense, we welcome the statement.

We have argued consistently that our soldiers should have all the necessary armour and the correct rules of engagement to protect themselves. Am I right in assuming that that is precisely what the Secretary of State has announced today? If so, we welcome what he has said.

Yesterday's tragic death of Lance Corporal Edwards brought home to us all the extreme and ultimate dangers involved. I can say unreservedly that we in the Opposition express our deep sympathy to the family and friends of Lance Corporal Edwards. We associate ourselves completely with what the Secretary of State has just said about that young man's valour and effort in bringing succour to those in need in Bosnia.

That tragic incident serves to remind us that our soldiers face dangers from all sides. Can the Secretary of State confirm that the area in which the incident took place is one in which there was fighting between Croats and Muslims? With a view to pointing up the dangers that our soldiers face, can he further confirm the preliminary assessment that the point at which the incident took place was outside the range of Serbian soldiers? Will the Secretary of State confirm also that in Bosnia there are approximately 70,000 Serbian fighters, a similar number of Muslim fighters and 50,000 Croats and that, tragically, all these are potential enemies of United Nations soldiers, who are there trying to assist the civilian population?

Given the reinforcements announced today, can we now be satisfied that there is sufficient helicopter support for our troops on the ground? Why are there no amphibious landing vessels? Is it true that neither HMS Fearless nor HMS Intrepid is seaworthy and, if so, why?

In the middle of his statement the Secretary of State indicated thaat an advance group of specialist troops is to be sent to "make arrangements . . . for a larger force". That suggests a change in the role of British troops. Is that contingency or strategy?

If we are to deploy extra troops, will other countries do likewise? Has the United States said that it will supply troops? Will any of the conscript armies of our neighbours

be sent to Bosnia? There is a strong feeling that the British cannot themselves provide sufficient soldiers to do the job. It would be helpful if the right hon. and learned Gentleman would give more information on those points.

There is a feeling that we may be drifting inevitably towards a war which could last many years, and there does not seem to be a clear political objective. It all serves to remind us, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman did today—the message was clear from his statement—that a great deal hangs on the efforts of Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance and their peace proposals. We hope and pray that those proposals can be accepted and endorsed and that Karadic will be able to persuade his Parliament to endorse them so that, slowly, some normality can return to the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) for the welcome that he has given to our proposals. He is correct to assume that the purpose of the extra forces is to protect existing British forces in Bosnia-Herzogovina.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the tragic circumstances surrounding the killing yesterday of Lance Corporal Edwards. It took place in Gornji Vakuf, and he is right to say that it arose out of conflict between Croatians and Muslims in that town. There had been tension of that kind for some days. There is no significant Serbian presence in the vicinity. It is believed that the Serbians brought a mortar close to Gornji Vakuf a few days ago, but that was not involved in the incident yesterday which led to Lance Corporal Edwards' death.

The numbers that the hon. Gentleman gave of Serbian, Croatian and Muslim forces in Bosnia-Herzogovina are broadly correct, although obviously they are estimates, and comparable with the figures on which we work.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the use of helicopters. At present, Sea King helicopters are available for casualty evacuation, should that be required. They are based at Split, but could be used if necessary. The proposals that I have announced today would involve a significant number of additional Sea King helicopters on Ark Royal, when that is available in the Adriatic.

The hon. Gentleman asked about amphibious forces. We do not believe that such forces are necessary because, as he will be well aware, Bosnia does not have a coastline and Croatia is co-operating with any deployment that we require to Bosnia. So the need for amphibious forces is not relevant.

I can confirm that no change of role is proposed for the use of British forces in Bosnia. I said that explicitly in my original remarks, and I am happy to repeat it.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for repeating the assurance that our troops in Bosnia will be used only for the purpose of distributing humanitarian aid. Will he accept that that cannot safely be done if it needs to be supported by air strikes and field artillery? I must tell him, though it grieves me to do so, that if the Cabinet commits further troops for use in Bosnia it will not have the support of many hon. Members on this side of the House.

Mr. Rifkind: There is no suggestion on the part of the Government that it would be appropriate or sensible to contemplate a humanitarian operation which could take place only through the use of air strikes. That is not part of our thinking; nor is it part of the thinking of the United Nations.

We must envisage the possibility either that at some stage it will be necessary to withdraw our forces, in which case air cover and its early availability would be of considerable benefit, or that an individual incident might arise during the course of the activities of a convoy which could benefit from the early availability of artillery or air support. But I entirely endorse my hon. Friend's view that if it became clear that convoys could proceed only with the constant use of such forces, that would be totally incompatible with the purposes of the United Nations exercise. I am sure that the whole United Nations operation, and not just the British operation, would come to an end in such circumstances.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I join the Secretary of State in expressing sympathy to the family of Lance Corporal Edwards.

Is it not an inescapable conclusion of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's announcement today about reinforcements that, if they are necessary for the protection of our troops now, they were necessary for their protection from the very beginning? Does he agree that, although the primary purpose of the deployments that he has announced is defensive, Bosnian Serbs considering whether to accept the current proposals for a peace settlement would do well to appreciate that those additional military resources can easily be put to other purposes including—if necessary, and at the request of the United Nations—the protection of the Muslim community in Bosnia?

Mr. Rifkind: With regard to the first part of the hon. and learned Gentleman's question, clearly he did not listen as carefully as usual to what I said. I made it clear that we are not deploying the forces into Bosnia at present. They will be available for use if required. We hope that they will not be required and will remain as assets on Ark Royal.

On the second part of the question, it is important to ensure that the purpose of the continuing presence of British forces in Bosnia is to play a humanitarian role. The hon. and learned Gentleman appeared to suggest that he might have sympathy with a substantial extension of the role of British forces, but I believe that any significant extension in the use of ground forces would be fraught with danger. It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to draw a fine line limiting the kind of involvement that we might then wish to contemplate. Ground forces are there for humanitarian purposes. That is clearly understood and easy to define. To go beyond that category would be to go into difficult waters indeed.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): May I tell my right hon. and learned Friend that when I first visited Vietnam there were 600 American advisers in that country, but that when I visited Vietnam for the second time there were 500,000 American troops there? It has seemed certain to me from the moment that the Cheshire Regiment was sent to Bosnia that it would have to be either reinforced or withdrawn. I would strongly oppose any significant increase in the number of British troops on the ground, as would many of my hon. Friends, so I hope that if the present battalion is not safe with its present support my

[Sir Peter Tapsell]

right hon. and learned Friend will give serious consideration to withdrawing it altogether at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Rifkind: I understand my hon. Friend's concerns, and I think that I can reassure him by saying that today's announcement will mean that about 89 additional personnel will go into Bosnia. Those are the only people who will enter the former Yugoslavia. An additional 300 or so Army personnel will be based on Ark Royal but, as I have said, they will not be deployed in the former Yugoslavia unless they are required either to help supervise a withdrawal of our force or to enhance the safety of our existing force carrying out its existing responsibilities.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Does the Secretary of State realise that many of us feel that his statement is most alarming and shows clearly what we had predicted—that the Government are slowly being sucked into the middle of a civil war? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that many of us are totally opposed to further involvement of British troops on the ground in Bosnia, and that we decry the fact that he is holding two options open—one to support humanitarian efforts and the other to become further involved on the ground? Does he understand that we fully support the humanitarian effort, but that those on the ground involved in what he has described as a civil war perceive the British troops as representatives of a nation which is taking sides in the political argument in Bosnia? That puts our troops at a disadvantage.

Mr. Rifkind: I note what the right hon. Gentleman says, but he should follow the consequences of his own reasoning. He informed the House that he fully supports the humanitarian efforts of our forces. If that is so, he will agree that it is crucial to protect the soldiers carrying out those responsibilities. My statement today was intended solely to enhance the safety of those personnel, so I believe that the right hon. Gentleman should support the proposals that I have announced.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, although many of my right hon. and hon. Friends welcome his explanation that the measures are designed to afford further protection to our troops on the ground involved in the difficult humanitarian work, we might take alarm at his remark that those efforts should continue "if at all possible". We hope to have an assurance from him that "if at all possible" will not become "at all costs".

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with the point that my hon. Friend has just made. We believe that the humanitarian operation that the United Nations are carrying out is a worthwhile exercise. It is not simply the British forces but also the French, the Canadian and the Spanish as well as a number of other countries.

It is worth remembering that, so far, the humanitarian operation has succeeded in its objective of getting large amounts of aid to many tens of thousands of men, women and children who have been literally starving over the winter months. Clearly, it is desirable that the project should continue, but not "at all costs".

The criterion that we must apply is the level of risk to those who have been entrusted with responsibility for assisting the convoys. If we or, indeed, the United Nations came to the judgment, it is clear that the operation would cease. That would be right and proper.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I welcome the additional equipment being provided to the British forces in Bosnia, especially the mortar-locating equipment. Is the Secretary of State aware that when I asked a question on the subject in December 1992 the Minister of State replied that mortar-locating equipment would be of negligible utility in Bosnia because of the terrain? What has changed since December? Does that not indicate a lack of Government planning?

Mr. Rifkind: Mortars have been available to our forces in Bosnia since they were first deployed in November. At present we are examining the number of ways in which we can provide increased security on a contingent basis. It may turn out that that particular facility, like some of the others to which I have referred, may not be necessary. However, we think that it is wiser to have mortars available to be used if required rather than to accept a substantial lapse of time before they can be brought from, for example, the United Kingdom or Germany to Bosnia if they suddenly became useful. It is a useful precaution in the circumstances.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that in today's circumstances it is essential for our forces to be supported by the additional back-up if they are to continue to succeed in their humanitarian effort? In the event of the necessity to withdraw our forces, can he confirm that that can be achieved only if there are adequate supporting services to cover their withdrawal in difficult circumstances, with all the armoured vehicles?

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. Friend is entirely correct. We must envisage that that may become a requirement and that we shall have a duty to ensure within the shortest possible time the successful evacuation not only of all our personnel but of the substantial amounts of equipment available to them in Bosnia. That would be a complicated operation on any basis. It is therefore useful to have available in the Adriatic facilities of the sort which would make the task considerably easier. The fact that such facilities are available at such short notice is a continued boost of confidence for those carrying out the tasks on our behalf.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Secretary of State aware that his statement leaves some sense of confusion in the House because we have had many assurances of caution and the repetition of humanitarian objectives? However, the commitment to further forces with an uncertain objective of either protecting or withdrawing leaves the House in some doubt as to the Government's objectives.

As the civil war in the former Yugoslavia has a history going back hundreds of years to the Turkish, Austro-Hungarian and Nazi occupations, and the murder of the Serbs by the Ustashi during the war, the fear being expressed is a proper fear not only for the safety of British troops, which is a prime concern of the House, but that what could follow from the further commitment to forces is an extension of the fighting and the reverse of

humanitarian objectives—namely, that more people will be killed. In the circumstances, would it not be right for the Government to make a clearer statement of their objectives and let us debate and decide whether the House would wish to follow them?

Mr. Rifkind: I am sure that there is benefit in having as wide as possible a debate about the overall objectives of not only British but international and United Nations policy on former Yugoslavia. The Government's objectives for the use of our ground forces are clear and could hardly be clearer: they are to assist in the provision of humanitarian aid and to do so for as long as that aid is required, unless there is an unacceptable level of risk to the safety of the forces in question. That is a clear objective. We have made it abundantly clear—indeed, as clear as possible—that if that level of risk became unacceptably high, or if the humanitarian operation was discontinued, we would have to withdraw our forces in an orderly and safe fashion. We hope that that will not prove necessary for as long as the humanitarian exercise can bring much-needed relief to many hundreds of thousands of people.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that Bosnia is an internationally recognised independent state and that to call the conflict a civil war is a gross and distorting over-simplification? Does he accept that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and others, who have condemned the Serbian aggression, which amounts to genocide—200,000 people have been killed to date—have fairly and firmly pointed out where the blame lies? Will he confirm, as my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary did in the House yesterday, that if—as we all hope and pray—the Geneva settlement leads to peace, it will be, as my right hon. Friend promised us, an internationally guaranteed peace? Will he confirm that our troops will be able to play a part in, for example, ensuring that all heavy weaponry is taken away from all sides so that Bosnia can become a peaceful, demilitarised country, as its Foreign Minister made plain to Members of Parliament that he wanted when he came here yesterday?

Mr. Rifkind: The Government are clear that the Government in Belgrade bear a significant and heavy responsibility. That is why we fully support the actions of the United Nations in imposing economic sanctions and other measures with respect to that Government. However, we are also conscious that the fighting within Bosnia is, sadly, being carried out by Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims. It is in that sense that I refer to the conflict as having many of the characteristics of a civil war.

We naturally hope that the present diplomatic efforts will lead to a successful resolution of some of the problems. If they do, and if there is a proper and effective ceasefire in Bosnia, clearly the United Nations will wish to give thought to what contribution it can make towards helping with that ceasefire. But clearly that is something for the future. At this stage we must hope that a ceasefire comes into existence. Until now that objective has not been realised.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Do Ministers recollect the dire warnings of Julian Amery and others that the deterrent to Stalin's armies devised by Tito was the training of whole generations in guerrilla warfare? These are extremely tough, determined and skilled people. In those circumstances, what is meant exactly by "risk unacceptably high"? It seems to some of us that we withdraw only in circumstances where it becomes too rough for us. May I ask the rather nasty question whether it will be as easy to get out as it has been from the north of Ireland?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman's last point was an invalid comparison. Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom. We have a responsibility to give protection and assistance to a part of our own territory and to our own citizens for as long as that is required. There is no comparable obligation with regard to our presence in Bosnia or, indeed, any other country around the world.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman's assessment of the ability of the inhabitants of Bosnia of all backgrounds to indulge in guerrilla war. We are conscious that these are tough people who have a strong tradition of fighting skills. That is clearly a factor that we must all take into account. It is the view of the United Nations, and a view with which we agree, that countries such as ours have an obligation to give humanitarian aid so long as that can be done without unacceptable risk to our forces. I accept that it is difficult to define that term with the precision that we might all like. We have seen since our forces first entered Bosnia that, fortunately—until the tragic events of yesterday—our troops were able to carry out their responsibilities without undue consequences. That was to be welcomed, but it is possible that it may be changing. We hope that it will not, but it is precisely because it could be changing that it is helpful and sensible to have additional forces available in the Adriatic if they should be required for the purposes that I have described.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): In accepting my right hon. and learned Friend's assurances today, and on many occasions in the House, that it is not the Government's intention to alter the role of British forces in Bosnia, and while I understand that it is only prudent that they should have back-up facilities to enable them to make an orderly and safe withdrawal should the situation deteriorate, may I ask him to say a little more about the 90 or so troops with special qualifications who are to be landed in Bosnia?

Mr. Rifkind: The 89 personnel that we are proposing to deploy in Bosnia during the next few days consist of liaison officers, logisticians, tactical forward air controllers and some personnel who will be involved with observation responsibilities. There are a number of troops with responsibilities of that kind. Although they add up to a relatively small number, they will be able to supplement the existing personnel if future action of the type that I have described should be required.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): To what extent will the extension of our activities in Bosnia be under the United Nations command structure and in conformity with United Nations resolutions? To the extent that that is so, will those activities not be different from the activities in Iraq which were described last night?

Mr. Rifkind: The bulk of the people that we are sending to the area will be deployed on Ark Royal in international waters and, for the time being, will remain under purely

[Mr. Rifkind]

British command and control. Naturally, it will be desirable for the situation regarding any troops within Bosnia to be regularised in the normal way, but, as I said earlier, we hope that it will not be necessary to deploy additional personnel in significant numbers to Bosnia. So long as they are on Ark Royal, it is appropriate for them to remain entirely under British command.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the majority of people will agree with his view that, however horrific the circumstances on the ground, we should not be drawn into someone else's civil war? Is he aware, however, that since the end of last summer the Western European Union has strongly advocated an effective embargo and blockade of the participants in this ghastly affair? Does he not think that that is one of the avenues that we might explore further in an endeavour to achieve peace?

Mr. Rifkind: We are prepared to consider all constructive suggestions and I am aware of the important contribution that my hon. Friend has made, through WEU, to discussions on the issues. This is an ongoing situation and any constructive proposals are well worth examining.

Mr. Ieun Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): On behalf of my party, I express our sympathy for the family of the young Welsh soldier who was killed delivering humanitarian aid to Bosnia. We welcome any steps taken to protect troops who deliver that aid. May I challenge the Secretary of State, as he was challenged from his own side, about his definition of the conflict as a "civil war"? Does he not recognise that the conflict is clearly part of a campaign for the creation of a greater Serbia, part of a plan which started with the annexation of land in Croatia, and that unless it is stopped in Bosnia it may well escalate to Kosovo? When will the United Kingdom accept that there is international concern about this? Is it not time that the United Nations recognised that concern by taking steps to prevent escalation of the conflict, should the peace process falter?

Mr. Rifkind: The conflict has some of the characteristics to which the hon. Gentleman referred—I do not dispute that fact for one moment—but I think that he would be equally willing to accept that the Croatians have been seeking to control as much territory as possible in Bosnia—including territory which would not normally come under their control—and I have no doubt that the Bosnian Muslims, given the opportiunity, would also be seeking to do so. I have therefore said—it is a reasonable comment to make—that the conflict in Bosnia has many of the characteristics of a civil war, although I accept that that is not the end of the story. There is substantial external involvement and the Government have made it clear that they believe that the primary external responsibility must lie with the Government in Belgrade.

Mr. David Faber (Westbury): I, too, welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's reiteration that there will be no change in the role of our troops in Bosnia and, furthermore, that we shall continue to do all that we can to be perceived as utterly neutral to all sides of the conflict in what is undoubtedly a civil war. Can my right hon. and learned Friend comment on the efficiency of the British troops on the ground at present, especially those in and around Vitez? Is he happy that they face none of the internal logistic and administrative problems that so plague the UNPROFOR troops in and around Sarajevo?

Mr. Rifkind: The efficiency of our forces is of a high order. At a much earlier stage in consideration of those matters we were concerned about the command and control arrangements envisaged by the United Nations for the operation in Bosnia. Subsequently, however, the present headquarters were set up with General Morillon as their commander and Brigadier Cordy-Simpson from the United Kingdom as the second in command. That has led to a much more efficient operation and I believe that the British forces and the command and control structures under which they operate are now working effectively.

Press Self-Regulation (Review)

4.5 pm

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): With permission, I should like to make a statement about press regulation and privacy.

On 9 July last year, my predecessor as Secretary of State for National Heritage, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), announced that he had invited Sir David Calcutt QC, the master of Magdalene college, Cambridge, to undertake an assessment of the effectiveness of press self-regulation under the Press Complaints Commission and to give his views on whether the present arrangments for self-regulation should be modified or put on a statutory basis. Sir David was also asked to consider whether further measures might be needed to deal with intrusions into personal privacy by the press.

I have received Sir David's review and am publishing it today. A final response must await the debate that the House will have on the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), and the report of the Select Committee on National Heritage. But the House will wish to have a clear statement of the Government's initial response.

Sir David's overall conclusion is that press self-regulation under the Press Complaints Commission has not been effective and that the press would not now be willing to make the changes that would be needed to make the commission the truly independent body, commanding the confidence of the public as well as the press, that it should be. He therefore recommends that the Government should now introduce a statutory complaints tribunal on the model of that described in the 1990 report of the committee on privacy and related matters—the so-called privacy committee, which Sir David chaired. The tribunal would have wide-ranging powers, including the power to restrain publication of material in breach of its code of practice and the ability to require the printing of apologies, corrections and replies, to award compensation, impose fines and award costs.

As regards intrusions into personal privacy by the press, Sir David makes five further recommendations. The first and most significant recommendation is that the three criminal offences proposed by the privacy committee to deal with specific forms of physical intrusion should, with modifications, now be enacted, together with a civil remedy designed among other things to enable action to be taken to restrain publication. Hon. Members will recall that the offences were designed to cover the obtaining of personal information, with a view to publication, through intrusion on private property, the use of surveillance devices, photographs and recordings. A range of defences would be available, including a new one that the act was done for the purpose of informing the public about matters directly affecting the discharge of any public function of the individual concerned.

Sir David does not recommend the immediate introduction of a tort of infringement of privacy, but he does recommend that the Government should give further consideration to its introduction.

Sir David's other recommendations in relation to privacy are that further consideration should be given by the Government to the extent to which the Data Protection Act 1984 may contain provisions which are relevant for the purpose of misrepresentation or intrusion into personal privacy by the press; the Government should give effect to the remainder of the reporting restrictions proposed by the privacy committee; the Government should give further consideration to the law relating to the interception of telecommunications with a view to identifying all significant gaps—relating to the protection of private telephone conversations—and to determining whether any further legislation is needed.

The Government are most grateful to Sir David for the careful and thorough review that he has produced of what is an exceptionally difficult and controversial subject. We welcome the review as significantly moving forward the public debate on the future of press self-regulation and on the wider question of safeguarding personal privacy.

I shall deal first with Sir David's recommendations concerning privacy. The Government accept the case for new criminal offences to deal with specified types of physical intrusion and covert surveillance. Measures on those lines are now necessary to signal society's strong condemnation of such behaviour and to deter similar instances in future. Subject to further examination of the details of the proposed offences, and to consultations with practitioners in criminal justice and civil law, the Government will bring forward legislation in due course to give effect to the proposals in England and Wales. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will consider whether corresponding changes need to be made to Scots law, given the wider scope of the common law of Scotland.

The Government also accept Sir David's recommendation that further consideration should be given to the introduction of a new tort of infringement of privacy. We recognise, as Sir David does, that that cannot sensibly be confined to the press, and will have to take full account of a wide range of human and technological activity. We also accept the need to examine the extent to which the Data Protection Act may contain provisions that are relevant for purposes of misrepresentation or intrusion into personal privacy by the press. We will, in addition, give further consideration to the legislation on the non-identification of minors and others and to the legislation covering interception of telecommunications, as recommended by Sir David.

I turn now to Sir David's recommendation that the Government should introduce a statutory regime for dealing with complaints against the press. That raises separate, and more difficult, issues which need to be carefully weighed. The Government agree with Sir David that the Press Complaints Commission, as at present constituted, is not an effective regulator of the press. It is not truly independent and its procedures are deficient. Sir David's detailed analysis of those shortcomings is compelling. We also recognise the strength of the case that he makes in his report for a statutory tribunal with wide-ranging powers. At the same time, we are conscious that action to make such a body statutory would be a step of some constitutional significance, departing from the traditional approach to press regulation in this country. In the light of those considerations, the Government would be extremely reluctant to pursue that route. A most persuasive case for statutory regulation would need to be made out.

In coming to a final view, we shall want to take account of the debate surrounding the private Member's Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Hammersmith on

[Mr. Peter Brooke]

freedom and responsibility of the press, which is down for Second Reading on 29 January. On the basis of my statement today, the Government will advise the House that, although we have not announced our final conclusions regarding a statutory regime, we cannot support the Bill.

The Government will also take account of the inquiry into privacy and media intrusion which the Select Committee on National Heritage has set in train, the report of which is, I believe, expected in February. We shall look forward to receiving the report as a further significant contribution to the public debate on those issues. We shall also wish to take into account any response that the press might make to Sir David's detailed criticisms of the Press Complaints Commission. We shall thereafter announce our conclusions.

In the Government's view, for the reasons cogently set out by Sir David Calcutt, self-regulation under the Press Complaints Commission, as at present constituted, is not satisfactory. The Government accept the case for reform. I have announced a number of major steps to tackle the issue of privacy, and, in the light of what I have said about statutory regulation, we invite further public debate on the nature of the reform that needs to be undertaken.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): We are pleased that the Government have decided to bring forward the report's publication, although we have grave reservations about a number of its recommendations. The extent of rumour and speculation about its contents during the past few days have served to confuse, not clarify, the debate. Indeed, the report has to be considered against a background of establishment intrigue involving the royal family and their advisers, Ministers, press barons and Lord McGregor, the chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, who have all made fools of themselves and each other. As some of the Ministers' colleagues are involved, will he give us his views on this, since he appears to be somewhat reluctant to refer to it?

The Opposition agree with a number of things that were said in both the report and the Minister's statement about the way in which some sections of the press have conducted themselves in the past few years. The excesses of journalism, especially the callous exploitation of private grief, bring the whole journalistic profession into disrepute. I am sure that no one on either side of the House would wish to condone such excesses, which have little to do with legitimate investigative journalism.

The report in many respects misses the central issues involved in questions of press freedom. It says nothing about access to public information through the introduction of a freedom of information Act. Nor does it say anything about a right of reply for citizens whose lives are wrecked through the publication of gross inaccuracies about their private lives or their business affairs.

The report also has nothing to say about the concentration of press ownership in so few hands. Can the Minister assure the House today that any Government legislation in regard to Calcutt will include proposals for a freedom of information Act and for a right of reply for ordinary citizens to correct factual errors about themselves in the press? What does the Minister intend to do about the concentration of press ownership? Is he prepared to tell us today that he will refer it to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

I note that the Minister said that he will not support the Bill that is to be introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). Does he recognise that his announcement throws grave doubts on the concerns that he has expressed today about the rights of the individual and the need for reform?

Calcutt's recommendation of a statutory tribunal with legal powers to fine offending newspapers and to dictate official versions of the truth for them to publish is clearly not the answer. The press will not be improved by censors appointed by the Government. In no circumstances will the Labour party support legislation that prevents proper scrutiny of the lives of the rich and powerful, including public figures such as politicians, business tycoons and members of the royal family.

The second main area covered in the Calcutt report concerns the enactment of three new criminal offences in England and Wales to prevent invasions of privacy. We are sympathetic to the view that the ordinary citizen should be protected against the more grotesque invasions of privacy. The report has come down hard on the practices of electronic bugging and using long-lens cameras. We will want, however, to study in greater detail the specific privacy measures recommended in the report.

Finally, the central failing of the Calcutt report, in our view, is its attempt to deal with matters of press regulation in isolation from broader questions of press freedom. The Labour party believes that not only the Government but the press, which responds to any attempt to change the law with hysteria, have a lot more thinking to do on this complex issue.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for the welcome that she gave the report's publication. She made a passing and oblique reference to colleagues of mine in the Government. Her language was somewhat delphic. Let me simply say that the events to which I think she referred —as I have said, her language was opaque—occurred before Sir David was invited to conduct the report. He was invited to conduct it in a manner that had been strongly foreshadowed at the beginning of the 18 months of self-regulation.

The hon. Lady was good enough to give us her agenda, as against the agenda that Sir David was set in his terms of reference. Some of the omissions that she mentioned can scarcely be laid at his door, as they did not fall within those terms of reference. Although her question about concentration of ownership, for example, is an entirely proper subject for discussion in the House, I do not think that it falls within the purview of the report, in the particular circumstances. I cannot forecast whether specific legisation will be introduced; nor can I make any commitments in relation to a freedom of information Act.

The hon. Lady asked about the hon. Member for Hammersmith's Bill. That Bill would establish an independent press authority and an absolute right to corrections of factual errors appearing in the press. It certainly covers some of the ground that would be covered by the press complaints tribunal proposed by Sir David, but Sir David's review raised a number of wider issues. The Government believe that it would be better to address

those issues in the round, which was my reason for saying that I could not ask the House to support the hon. Gentleman's Bill.

In regard to the statutory tribunal, the hon. Lady adopted the asseverative technique that she has used on other occasions. She asserted that it was important that the powerful should not be protected. Throughout the report, Sir David made it clear that he did not envisage the protection of the powerful, given the existence of reasons connected with the public interest—which he carefully defined—that would justify alternative action.

The hon. Lady concluded by saying that Sir David had sought to deal with press regulation in isolation from questions concerned with press freedom. She will recall that Sir David said specifically in the report that he thought that it would be a mistake for the Press Complaints Commission to deal with both subjects at the same time: in his view, the issue of self-regulation is separate from that of press freedom. I am sure, however, that the hon. Lady's support for press freedom will be echoed on both sides of the House.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): The measures proposed by my right hon. Friend to combat the invasion of privacy are very welcome—and, perhaps, long overdue. Does he agree, however—in regard to the establishment of the press—that, however detestable the conduct of some editors may be, the right to freedom of speech is a precious right which we have upheld for centuries? Surely, however much we may resent what members of the press have to say, we should all defend to the last their right to say it.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for the welcome that he has given the Government's action. Of course I recognise—as I did in the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd)—the overriding issue on the right to freedom of speech, but my right hon. Friend himself welcomed the fact that our proposals dealt with questions relating to intrusion into privacy.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Secretary of State accept that in most countries the privacy of the citizen and the freedom of the press are protected by fundamental constitutional law? The absence of such arrangements in this country has given rise to the need for a piecemeal approach to the law's amendment that has been adopted by Calcutt.

Does the Secretary of State also accept that, whereas certain measures to tighten up the law on physical intrusion and covert surveillance may be acceptable, many people will regard the freedom of the press to act as at least a point of criticism of an over-mighty, over-centralised and over-secretive Government that we have under our constitutional arrangements in this country should not be checked by a statutory body appointed by the Government?

Will the Secretary of State recognise that if the Government will give the citizens of this country the right to invoke the provisions of the European convention on human rights in our own courts, most of the problems that he and his predecessors have had to deal with will go away?

Mr. Brooke: I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman makes. Sir David himself makes the point in his report, when referring to legislation that applies in other countries, that the history, culture, tastes and constitutional arrangements in other lands do not necessarily travel readily and easily across borders and that this must be taken into account when examining particular legislation that one would like to introduce here.

The hon. Gentleman paid an eloquent tribute to the freedom of the press which I am sure many other hon. Members on both sides of the House would echo, but there is a responsibility on the part of the press also to make sure that that freedom can be upheld.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I welcome the measured response of my right hon. Friend to the report and, in particular, to proposals for a press tribunal which I believe would be probably unworkable and certainly undesirable in a free society. Does my right hon. Friend agree that journalists should be neither flattered nor persecuted by being treated differently from any other United Kingdom citizen and that what is needed is a criminal justice Bill that would control electronic eavesdropping, intrusion into private property and intrusion by long-lens cameras in a way that would apply to every citizen in the land?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comment. The essence of the proposals that Sir David brings forward is that they are not specifically and uniquely addressed to journalists; they are addressed to anyone who would be engaged in those activities with a view to publication.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): May I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his courteous reference to the Select Committee and for his readiness to await the outcome of the inquiry that we are conducting before he arrives at final conclusions?

A free society requires a proper balance between the essential freedom of the press and the freedom of private individuals from harassing intrusion from media whom, in the normal course of events, they would never encounter except as readers, listeners and viewers. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with me that any reforms ought to be directed principally to the protection not of public figures, whether in the palaces of Westminster or Buckingham, but of innocent people such as the victims of crime and their families and the bereaved families of service men killed in action?

Mr. Brooke: I thank the right hon. Gentleman very much for the kind remarks with which he began his question.

In the context of the proper balance that he described, I would not wish to press the right hon. Gentleman, but if that is a trailer for the report that the Select Committee will bring forward, I think that many in the House will welcome the balance that he describes. In the context of the concentration and emphasis to which he made reference, he is right about the concern to make sure that everyone's home is his castle in which they can be secure and where they should not be interfered with. Sir David makes clear in his report that, where he makes reference to the potential for a defence relating to the public interest, it would need specifically to be related to the particular job that the individual was doing and, therefore, the relevance of the information to the discharge of that job.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I welcome what my right hon. Friend said about measures to prevent intrusion into privacy, especially that most

[Sir Anthony Grant]

odious practice of pestering those who are suffering from personal and family grief. On the broader issue, does he recall Sir Winston Churchill's saying that parliamentary democracy was a most incompetent system but every other system was infinitely worse? Will he say, therefore, that no matter how odious or detestable a free press seems, every other system is infinitely worse?

Mr. Brooke: I thank my hon. Friend not only for his concentration on those who are in a grief-stricken state but for the tribute that he paid to the freedom of the press and its importance to our constitutional arrangements.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I welcome the report as a part of the continuing, long-overdue debate on press freedom and responsibility and I thank the Minister for his interest in the committee that I set up to inform the progress of my Bill. The argument about the freedom of the press would be stronger if we had an Act protecting freedom of information or freedom of the press. If he introduced a privacy Bill, which, frankly, in the present climate I would not support, he would be introducing a Bill in a country which is almost alone among the western democracies in not having the counterbalance of press freedom legislation. That is why I would not support it in the present climate.

Perhaps we should start from fundamental principles. I hold the view that a citizen in a democracy has a right to expect news to be reported accurately in papers that claim to be newspapers. The Minister will know that the bulk of complaints that have been made to the Press Complaints Commission, to me and to others have been about accuracy. Inaccurate news reporting tends to lead to the further abuses that were brought to my committee's attention. The right hon. Gentleman seems to have had his mind made up for him, but if he listens carefully on 29 January I may be able to persuade him that the balance between press freedom and press responsibility requires a finely drawn Bill that addresses the need for explicit legislation protecting the freedom of the press or freedom of information before we go down the privacy road.

Mr. Brooke: I thank the hon. Gentleman for the tone in which he put his question. He has indicated his reservations about supporting legislation that we might introduce, and I have already made my position clear. The right of reply is dealt with in Sir David's recommendations for a statutory tribunal. I have said that the Government welcome continuing debate on reform, and perhaps the right of reply should be considered in that debate, despite my reaction to his Bill.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): As a member of the Select Committee, I urge my right hon. Friend, in reaching a final conclusion, to be guided by one principle—that the balance between the rights of the individual to privacy and the freedom of the press should be neither prejudiced nor subjugated out of balance? The decisive factor should be the public interest, but neither should be favoured or prejudiced.

Mr. Brooke: The terms in which my hon. Friend framed his question suggests that the trailer that I suggested the Chairman of the Select Committee gave us earlier will be reflected in the views of Conservative members of the Committee. I emphasised earlier that Sir David has identified and added the public interest defence in his report. I should not be surprised, therefore, if it is identified by the Select Committee.

Mr. Joe Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is the Secretary of State aware that one of the problems with the present system is that the Press Complaints Commission gives only an apology? There is nothing between that and going to court for libel and risking incurring costs of £100,000. There must be something in between. Why cannot he introduce a set-up like an unfair dismissal tribunal or the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, whereby a rape victim or a bereaved person who had been grievously abused by the press could make a complaint and be awarded, say, £5,000 or £10,000?

Why is it that we can have a Police Complaints Authority, which is totally independent, local government ombudsmen and health service ombudsmen—and the legal services ombudsmen, because the Solicitors Complaints Bureau was not doing its job? There are plenty of independent semi-statutory bodies which do a very good informal job and that is what is needed, instead of, on the one hand, a vested interest complaints commission and, on the other, lawyers making fat fees and taking great risks on other people's money in the libel courts.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman raises an important issue and I am grateful to him for having done so. The criminal offences that Sir David identifies also carry with them the opportunity for civil action. I indicated that the Government would be taking away for examination the proposals for criminal offences, but the hon. Gentleman is quite right in identifying the fact that a central consideration for the Government must be how the private individual can receive efficient and economical redress if it should be available to him.

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his determination to marry a wish to protect the private citizen's right to privacy with the rights of a free but responsible press. My questions follow on very much from the remarks of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton). Does my right hon. Friend envisage legal aid being available for this new civil action for intrusion of privacy? If not, is there not a real danger that, as with libel, this new tort will be of interest only to the rich and not to the ordinary citizen?

Following from that, before my right hon. Friend reaches his final decision, will he consider going back to the Press Complaints Commission and suggesting that it should reinforce itself, not only with more independent members, but with the power agreed by the industry to fine heavily those proprietors and editors who break their own code of conduct? The aim would still be to make self-regulation work.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's reinforcement of the question of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton). I was saying that we would need to look at a variety of ways in which that objective could be secured. I think that the hon. Member for Bassetlaw was envisaging some form of summary proceedings. It would be wrong for me, when we have not got into the examination of the preparation of any legislation, to be definitive at this stage, but I can reassert the principle and spirit of what we will be seeking to achieve.

As to what my right hon. Friend says about the Press Complaints Commission, Sir David Calcutt enumerates on page 42 of his report what he regards as 12 deficiencies in the working of the commission. I express a personal view, but I should be surprised if, during the debate in advance of the Select Committee's report, the press did not address themselves to those 12 deficiencies which Sir David mentions.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Will the Secretary of State tell us a little more about his thinking? He says that he accepts Sir David Calcutt's conclusion that the Press Complaints Commission is not working properly. My experience is that it makes rulings but creates no precedents and the press just go on misbehaving in exactly the same way. The press do not comply with their own code. That code is constantly breached and nothing is done. In that sense it does not work. The alternative seems to be some kind of tribunal, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) has said, with some capacity to fine or punish so that it can enforce regulations set up by the press themselves, or giving power for the press to complain to the commission themselves.

Will the Secretary of State tell us what he is thinking? He ruled out a statutory tribunal but said that the Press Complaints Commission is not working. What is the position in between that he has in his mind?

Mr. Brooke: The precise words I used were that the Government would be extremely reluctant and that one would need to have a very persuasive case made out in order to introduce a statutory tribunal. Lord Waddington, who was Home Secretary when the privacy committee originally reported, used the phrase "statutory underpinning" so there is a potential for an instrument that might respond to the concerns of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw. It is too early to be decisive with regard to a report which we received only four or five days ago. It would be sensible for the debate to take place as a whole.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): We warmly welcome the way in which my right hon. Friend is treating Sir David Calcutt's report, and I fully endorse some of the comments made by the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton). However, does he accept that there are two speeds? Surely, the public expect fairly rapid action to deal with the intrusiveness of bugging devices, telephonic communication and long-lens cameras but, in the longer term, they expect a final solution to what sort of press complaints commission can be established. Will he ensure that the former problem is dealt with urgently?

Mr. Brooke: The issue of criminal offences clearly involves Departments other than mine, but I assure my hon. Friend that the Government will proceed with all speed. It would be wrong to disguise the fact that these are complicated matters and we must ensure that they are properly studied before we introduce legislation which may not command respect if it is inadequate for the complexity involved.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that there is no such thing as a free press, as most of it is owned by a clique of millionaires? Does he accept that the Calcutt committee was set up when we had had a Tory Government for 10 years or more and when the press, ironically, were prying into some aspects of the establishment? As for the royal family, it is now apparent that the press were not doing the prying but that factions at the palace had been giving reports to the press to print. As for bugging and telephoto lenses, it is fairly certain that MI5 and GCHQ have been involved. What protection will there be from MI5 and other institutions? As the statement protects the high and mighty, the privileged and the establishment but not the under-privileged, it wants chucking in the political dustbin.

Mr. Brooke: I shall respond to the hon. Gentleman's three questions. He said that there was no such thing as a free press. I say only that the vehemence with which the issue has been examined in every editorial in the land—in every national, regional and local newspaper—in the past five days suggests that the press believes that there is something worth protecting in its present arrangements.

The answer to the hon. Gentleman's second question is that when Sir David was invited to make his one-man report, which the Government have published today, he did so as a follow-on to the earlier privacy report. The timing of any other event is, in a sense, irrelevant because he was merely reporting at the end of the 18-month period.

On the hon. Gentleman's technicolour observations about MI5 and GCHQ, I give the House a categorical assurance that the heads of the agencies involved have said that there is no truth in the rumours whose only——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): You are not supposed to say that—you have set a precedent.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Brooke: If I have set a precedent, I have done so inadvertently, but, in the eyes of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), I appear to have acquired individual excellence. To return to the question asked by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), the only evidence as to why those rumours began was that the technical difficulties were beyond any other organisation —but, unfortunately, the technical difficulties are not beyond any other organisation.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, notwithstanding the very high-minded opinion that the press has of itself as the fourth estate of the realm and as almost untouchable, newspapers are, at root, businesses and interested in making a profit? Although they purvey useful stuff—facts, good comment and even entertainment—they are not above the equivalent of mixing chalk with the flour, which is what they often purvey. In doing so, they are deceiving the public and selling their customers short. It is not true that every other business must run according to rules that protect people from such practices and that the press should not be above such regulation? Therefore, will he not allow himself or the House to be intimidated by the barrage of self-justification and bullying which we have seen in the press in the past five days?

Mr. Brooke: In response to an earlier question, I said that there were responsibilities on the press and everyone else to ensure that the tradition of the freedom of the press, which we revere in this country, could be maintained.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the Secretary of State not understand that, in any system of accountability, the idea of new torts does not exist for the vast majority of people and that the courts are too

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

expensive for people to obtain redress? Libel action involves costs of thousands of pounds, if not hundreds of thousands of pounds, which automatically place it out of the ambit of ordinary people. Legal aid is not available for libel or slander, in any case. Does the Secretary of State accept that there should be a much better way to provide people with cheap, easy and informal access? Does he also accept that the press will never be properly accountable as long as the present ownership structure is retained? The Calcutt report does not deal with that problem, but the Secretary of State must do so because the press is owned by a tiny group of people, mostly Tory sympathisers, who erode the general standards of conduct in political life by supporting the Tory party with propaganda and money.

Mr. Brooke: I have already tried to respond to the issue of redress for the ordinary citizen when answering the hon. Member for Bassetlaw and my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton). I tried to convey the fact that the Government will be considering the issue very seriously. I have already said that, although I agree that ownership is a wholly appropriate matter for debate in the House, it does not arise specifically from the Calcutt report.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): As someone with a journalistic background who has been absolutely disgusted by some of the antics of the tabloid press in recent years, I welcome my right hon. Friend's sensible approach. However, will he make it absolutely clear that, in adopting that approach and not accepting—at least straight away—some of the recommendations of the Calcutt report, he has in no way been pressurised by the, at times, crude and hysterical campaign mounted in the past few days by certain sections of the press? Does he agree that the press would be very unwise if it did not set about putting its own house in order on some aspects which are manifestly wrong?

Mr. Brooke: We are all aware of debates in the House to which people come with a particular attitude but find that that attitude changes as a result of the nature of the debate. I am sure that some hon. Members will have felt that the manner in which the press has argued its case in the past five days has not necessarily served its best interests.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): We agree with Calcutt and the Secretary of State that self-regulation of the press has failed. Does the Secretary of State agree that any form of self-regulation cannot be improved and will not work in the future, in view of the highly competitive nature of the press? Does he also agree that the answer is not state regulation? We endorse the Government's general approach of trying to make effective civil and criminal rights and responsibilities. It is important that civil remedies are effective and, in that respect, I endorse what the Secretary of State said about legal aid and other matters.

On the question of privacy, I appreciate what the Secretary of State said about different legal cultures on the continent, but I hope that that does not blind him to the fact that things are done better there and that we might learn from that example.

With regard to obligations——

Madam Speaker: Order. In the past 20 minutes hon. Members appear to have felt that we are engaging in a debate rather than in a series of questions arising from a statement. I am very anxious to call all Members who want to be called, but I shall not be able to do so if each Member puts many or long questions. I hope that during the few remaining minutes that I intend to allow for this subject Members will be very brief.

Mr. Trimble: I have just one more question to put to the Secretary of State. Does he agree that we should be concerned with regulation not only of the press but of other media and other persons? May I remind him of my Adjournment debate in December, in which I raised matters pertaining to television? Is he in a position to comment on that matter?

Madam Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his questions and for the way in which he has supported the general thrust of Government action. We have spent much time talking about freedom of the press and about the length of that tradition in this land. Given the fact that the hon. Gentleman is a lawyer, I remind the House of what Sir Edward Coke said at the beginning of the 17th century: that the house of everybody is, to him, as his castle and fortress. That should be borne in mind in the protection of people's rights.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): May I assure my right hon. Friend that his cautious and essentially pragmatic statement will be broadly welcomed but also ask him not to hasten to bring forward legislation in respect of what, after all, is a most complicated issue? Instead, he should listen to the debate with great care and consider how a more independent press complaints commission might be established, perhaps with the right to impose penalties, as has been suggested. If there is to be any kind of control, will my right hon. Friend look to the civil courts for the remedy, rather than to the criminal courts, as the lesser burden of proof is acceptable to the former?

Mr. Brooke: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend for his general support for what we are doing. I shall certainly look carefully at the propositions in his final sentence.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): As it is of paramount importance that any changes should ensure that all citizens are equal before the law, will the Secretary of State undertake to explore with the Home Office and the Scottish Office the issue of access to legal aid for civil actions? This, I believe, has been denied since time immemorial. Does the Secretary of State have any idea when the public debate will be concluded? Are we to anticipate a White Paper or immediate legislation thereafter?

Mr. Brooke: I do not think that I would be doing wrong to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland if I were to say that I think that he will be guided by the same considerations as influenced my answers to certain other questions about legal access. With regard to the timetable, I have indicated that the Government certainly will not respond or reach conclusions until the Select Committee has reported. The normal practice is that,

following publication of a Select Committee report, the Government publish a White Paper and provide the opportunity for a parliamentary debate on it.

Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, under our unwritten constitution, a healthy democracy depends on a press that is not only free but investigative, challenging and, indeed, disrespectful? While accepting and welcoming the specific proposals to control physical intrusion of privacy, may I ask my right hon. Friend for an assurance that the Government will not pursue measures that might throw out the democratic baby of press freedom with the scurrilous bath water?

Mr. Brooke: I think that my hon. Friend will be reassured by the list of defences that would be available in respect of the offences that he is recommending, whose general concept the Government have accepted.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): By accepting the overwhelming arguments in favour of the creation of new criminal offences and, indeed, a new tort to protect privacy —though not the tool of a statutory tribunal—the Government are presumably saying that these matters should be dealt with by the regular courts, both civil and criminal. Once those new offences and new tort become part of our law, it will be alleged either that a journalist has committed the criminal offence or that a newspaper had breached the civil tort. Does it not follow that the Government are really saying that it is better to have such matters dealt with in the regular courts, given the sensitive and delicate issues that will arise, rather than by a statutory tribunal? All issues about state regulation arise equally well in relation to the courts as they would in relation to a statutory tribunal, but we would lose the expertise that a statutory tribunal would develop.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman makes a relevant point. It will be well worth making it in the debates that we shall be having, and to which I look forward, in the next few months.

Mr. Alan Howard (Stratford-on-Avon): As he seeks balanced remedies for the problems that undoubtedly exist, may I ask my right hon. Friend to think deeply before concluding that the resources of self-regulation are exhausted, because I believe that there is scope for strengthening them? Will he also indeed consider extending the protection that the law affords private citizens, possibly by way of a tort of harassment? That might more precisely address the problems with which we should be most concerned, in a manner preferable to a more generalised law of privacy. Will he also think open-mindedly about the possibility of some countervailing strengthening of press freedoms, including freedom of information legislation?

Mr. Brooke: In relation to the strengthening of self-regulation, I should perhaps have added when answering my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) that I imagine that the press will have noted the opinion poll by one of its members which showed that there was a significant majority in the country in favour of a statutory tribunal, which suggests that the manner in which the Press Complaints Commission has so far operated does not enjoy public confidence.

The answer to my hon. Friend's question about harassment is that I infer that there is a possibility that the Select Committee will include a reference to that issue when it reports, and I look forward to reading what it says about that.

My hon. Friend will be aware, on the issue of countervailing freedoms, of the commitments that the Conservative party entered into in its election manifesto on the subject of openness of government.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As this is the slippery slope to state meddling with the press, may I consign the report, if not to the Bolsover dustbin, at least to the recycling plant to make up for all the trees that it took to print it?

It is not true, in the constituency experience of some of us, that people resent intrusion into grief. Often, grief-stricken families like some interest to be taken in them.

I rise particularly to ask if the common law of Scotland can be left alone. As the right hon. Gentleman said at the outset, the common law of Scotland is a bit different. For heaven's sake, leave us out of it.

Mr. Brooke: It would not be right for me to answer on behalf of the Secretary of State for Scotland, whose attention I shall draw to the hon. Gentleman's comments.

I stress—it is in Sir David's report—that large numbers of private individuals—one need only examine the index to the report—have written to complain to Sir David about the manner in which they have been treated. If one confronts a person in one's kitchen and that person says that he is there to represent the public interest, it is a little hard on the individual whose kitchen has been invaded.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): I warmly welcome what my right hon. Friend said about bugging devices, but I urge him to move with great caution down the statutory route. The job of the free press is the same as our job here, which is to expose what should be exposed. Although we may not like what is sometimes revealed, and although the press may not behave in a proper manner, we do not always behave in a proper manner. To inhibit the freedom of the press would do great damage to the democracy which we all value.

Mr. Brooke: Just as I stressed the aspect of Sir David's concern about the private individual, so I should draw the attention of the House to the fact that Sir David specifically ruled out any kind of exclusion zone being built around those in public life.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will the Secretary of State reflect on the simple observation that the criticisms of the media in recent times have almost exclusively been criticisms of the print rather than of the broadcast media? Is he aware that every test of public opinion shows that the public believe the news and current affairs reporting of the broadcasting media far more than they believe what they read in the newspapers?

While newspapers are subject to a self-regulatory system, broadcasters are subject to a democratically controlled regulatory system. Despite that, the broadcasters have proved time and again to have been outstanding in the pursuit of investigative journalism.

Will the right hon. Gentleman reflect again on his attitude to the Freedom and Responsibility of the Press Bill which is to be introduced by my hon. Friend the

[Mr. Bruce Grocott]

Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley)? That measure would do no more than any broadcaster or investigative reporter would acknowledge: it would allow people a statutory right to have errors of fact corrected. I see a complete contradiction in the right hon. Gentleman's position.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman raises the subject of broadcasters, as does Sir David in his report, in terms of whether all the media should be subjected to the same law and controls. As the hon. Gentleman rightly says, at present there is a distinction in the manner in which they are controlled. He makes a valuable point when he says that television news journalists are widely respected and, as he points out, are subject to two statutory controls. That issue should be weighed and measured in the debates that we shall be having.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): Will my right hon. Friend please steer clear of legislation affecting the press? Does he agree that there is a danger that, in trying to protect the privacy of individuals—in sometimes justifiable circumstances—we could be in danger of restricting the press invading privacy when it should sometimes be invaded, such as in the Maxwell and Barlow Clowes cases? At a time when the establishment is hardly held in high esteem, it would not be easy politically for any Government to sell any control on the press, however justified and well intentioned, to the British public.

Mr. Brooke: The problem—it has been identified by several hon. Members—is that, as Sir David says, self-regulation is not satisfactory as at present constituted, so we have an unsatisfactory position. But I assure my hon. Friend that the issue of the late Robert Maxwell and investigation of him would be a perfectly proper defence in terms of the criminal offences which I described.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I welcome what my right hon. Friend said about the public interest being the determining factor in conflicts between the rights of individuals' privacy and the freedom of the press. Will he confirm, as I think he just has, that there is no legislation that he would recommend—I think none would pass through the House—that would inhibit the press in inquiring into matters of legitimate public concern such as thalidomide or 'Spycatcher" or arms to Iraq-type matters, and that allegations to that effect by certain editors rather betray the weakness of their case?

Mr. Brooke: In his report, Sir David has added two further defences to the three already available in the recommendations of the privacy committee.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): Will my right hon. Friend explain why, when breaking the law, a journalist should be entitled to plead the defence of national interest? Surely the tradition of Sir Edward Coke, to which my right hon. Friend referred, means that if one besets Headington hall, trespasses on its lawns or electronically surveys what its occupants do, one should suffer the consequences. We should reject the alien concept of privacy. It is all very well to talk about foreign examples, but the French republic is a classic example of where the law of privacy inhibits the prosecution of corrupt politicians.

Mr. Brooke: I assure my hon. Friend, as I have sought to assure the House, that the defences that will exist under the criminal offences cover a wide variety of crime if the information was being sought with a view to publication.

Business of the House

5.4 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, Madam Speaker, I will make a statement about the business for next week. The business will be as follows:

MONDAY 18 JANUARY—Progress in Committee on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, fifth day.

TUESDAY 19 JANUARY—Progress in Committee on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, sixth day.

WEDNESDAY 18 JANUARY—Progress in Committee on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, seventh day.

THURSDAY 21 JANUARY—Debate on the Royal Air Force on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 22 JANUARY—Private Member' Bills

MONDAY 25 JANUARY—Second Reading of the National Lottery etc Bill.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet on Wednesday 20 January at 10.30 am to consider European Community document 5248/92 relating to footwear labelling.

[Wednesday 20 January
European Standing Committee B
Relevant European Community document
5248/92 Footwear Labelling
Relevant Report of the European Legislation Committee
HC 79-i (1992-93)]

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that statement.

May we have an assurance that there will be a further statement on Monday about the position in Iraq, when I presume a proper assessment will be available of the position there? Is he aware that it would not be acceptable to Opposition Members to see the debate on the RAF which is scheduled for Thursday as a vehicle for discussing that or other foreign affairs matters such as Bosnia? Thursday's debate stands on its own merits and we expect other Government time to be made available for other matters.

I press the right hon. Gentleman to schedule an early debate in Government time on the issue of care in the community. Recent events such as the Silcock case have fuelled existing concern about that important area of policy. There is much interest on both sides of the House as we approach the shift of responsibility from Government to local authorities for that policy area.

Can the Leader of the House give an indication of the likely date of the Budget, since, apart from that being of interest to hon. Members, we shall want a debate on the most important recent report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. As that will in part contribute to the atmosphere and framework of the debate on the Budget, it would be helpful to have that before the Budget itself.

Mr. Newton: On the hon. Lady's question about a further statement on Iraq, she will know that, as my right hon. and learned Friend said last night, we shall keep the House informed of the likely effects of the operation. He said that it would be some time before we could describe with certainty the detailed consequences, so I shall not make a commitment about a statement at a particular time, but I shall make sure that he is aware of the hon. Lady's request.

I recognise that the debate next week will be concerned with defence matters, specifically in relation to the RAF in terms of what I announced. But that will, I think, permit a quite wide-ranging debate—subject always to the decisions of the Chair—and it may be for the interest of the House that on this occasion the Secretary of State for Defence will speak in the debate, in view of recent developments.

The hon. Lady's next question was about a debate on care in the community. I acknowledge the importance of that subject and the widespread interest in it, in view of the impending changes, as well as the recent case to which she referred and a number of other issues. I am afraid that I cannot undertake to find time for a debate next week, or possibly for some little time, but I note the hon. Lady's request.

Finally, I was rather hoping that the hon. Lady would ask me about the Budget, because I have a little information to communicate. I am pleased to be able to tell the hon. Lady and the whole House that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer intends to open his Budget statement on Tuesday 16 March.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the amount of business now before the House often prevents us from leaving the confines of the Palace of Westminster. Many new Members, and, I am sure, some who are not new, are blood donors. Will my right hon. Friend consider providing an opportunity for a blood donation wagon to come to the Palace?

I have a further brief question, too, if I may.

Madam Speaker: No, no. I said earlier this afternoon that I wanted to hear one question from one Member. Furthermore, the hon. Gentleman's question was hardly a matter for the Leader of the House. For all that, the right hon. Gentleman may like to say something about it, and we shall then move on.

Mr. Newton: I am tempted to make a remark about the amount of blood on the Floor, Madam Speaker, but I note my hon. Friend's interesting request. Blood donation is certainly an important service, but, as you kindly said, it is not a matter for me. Nevertheless, I shall ensure that the point is drawn to the attention of the appropriate people.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Will the Leader of the House confirm that a statutory instrument will be required to give effect to the recent cuts in hill livestock compensatory allowances? As the cuts are causing great concern throughout the upland areas of the United Kingdom, will the right hon. Gentleman use his good offices to ensure that there is a debate on the Floor of the House on that important issue?

Mr. Newton: I acknowledge the views expressed by the hon. Gentleman. I would wish to look into the exact parliamentary procedures required—but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will at least acknowledge that hill farm incomes have been rising.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I am sure that the Leader of the House is aware of the serious and deteriorating security situation in Northern Ireland. I have

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

been told that that matter cannot be debated in the Northern Ireland Committee, but only on the Floor of the House. In view of the gruesome murders taking place on both sides of the political divide, will the right hon. Gentleman assure us that he will give us time next week to discuss something that affects the lives and well-being of the people in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Newton: I am afraid that I cannot give precisely the commitment that the hon. Gentleman seeks, but I draw his attention to the fact—of which he is no doubt already aware—that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will be here to answer oral questions next Thursday.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): Will the Leader of the House be able to find time for the President of the Board of Trade to discuss the rules governing receivership that were used in the termination of Lilley Group plc in Scotland—and especially the procedures whereby viable subsidiaries of that company which were trading profitably were also put into receivership? It will be noticed that, in early-day motion 1141, many hon. Members express concern about the procedures.

[That this House is deeply concerned at the cynical decision of the Clydesdale Bank, owned by the Bank of Australia, to call in the receivers on the Lilley Group plc and the subsequent actions of the receivers Price Waterhouse in ending the trading of financially healthy subsidiaries of the Lilley Group; notes that the receivers are now stating to companies who are owed money for works carried out for MDW, a Glasgow-based construction subsidiary, that debts outstanding of almost £16 million have been transferred to Lilley Group plc, who will be unlikely to make these payments because the majority of assets will be used to pay the banks; further notes that the subsidiaries, if sold, will not be liable to pay the debts owed to contractors for work done, which in turn will lead to substantial job losses and financial hardship for sub-contracting firms such as Fir-Side Joinery of Falkirk who are owed £200,000 by MDW for work already completed; and calls on the Department of Trade and Industry to introduce regulations to safeguard the rights of viable companies in such circumstances.]

I am sure that many hon. Members will have had similar experiences in their constituencies. Viable subcontractors find that outstanding debts are not paid, as happened in the case of Fir-Side Joinery, in Falkirk. Honest hardworking subcontractors see the money coming in for the work that they have done going to the receiver, and they never get a penny of it. Today and tomorrow, the Lilley subsidiaries will be relaunched and sold, and the people who take over will not be liable for debts owed for work done.

Is it not time for a discussion on the rules, to find out whether we can protect hard-working companies which have done the work and should receive the money?

Mr. Newton: As on the previous question, I cannot give exactly the promise that the hon. Gentleman seeks, but I draw his attention to the fact that the President of the Board of Trade will be here next Wednesday. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will be able to work a question in then.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Will my right hon. Friend ask the Home Secretary to make a statement next week in connection with the tragic death of Donna Cooper, a much loved 13-year-old schoolgirl who was killed by a stolen car driven, I understand, by someone out on bail? Such matters, involving the mindless taking of a car, affect lives, families and communities in the constituencies of hon. Members on both sides of the House. The subject deserves a statement, so that we can find out what else can be done to help in such circumstances.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Newton: It is clear from the reaction of the House that all hon. Members on both sides of the House would like to join in the expression of sympathy that my hon. Friend offered to the family involved. I shall certainly bring his request to the attention of the Home Secretary. As my hon. Friend will know, the Government have already taken steps to increase the penalties for joyriding, and are now examining some of the problems connected with offences committed by people on bail.

Ms. Ann Coffey (Stockport): Will the Leader of the House set time aside next week for an attempt to clarify the procedures for relatives of Bosnian refugees who wish to obtain visas? I ask that question because of a particular difficulty that has arisen for the Bosnian families in Stockport. At present, the onus of responsibility to go to the nearest embassy lies with the applicant. As the right hon. Gentleman will appreciate, Bosnia is not an easy country to cross. A 17-year-old boy, the son of one of the families——

Madam Speaker: Order. May I give the hon. Lady a little guidance? She should at this stage not go into detail, but simply give a broad outline of what is required and why she seeks a debate next week. If she wishes to pursue an individual case, I am sure that the appropriate Minister would be prepared to consider it.

Ms. Coffey: I apologise, Madam Speaker. I was giving the reasons why I wanted a debate next week. The problem arose from a particular difficulty in my constituency involving a 17-year-old boy who was required to cross the country to reach an embassy. I wondered whether the United Nations and the Red Cross could take more of an enabling role in helping applicants to get visas.

Mr. Newton: You and I both understand, Madam Speaker, why the hon. Lady raised that matter, and we respect her reasons. The right thing for me to do is to draw her concern to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As the Leader of the House is allowing three full days of discussion on the treaty of European union next week, and as the issues are so deeply felt that it may be necessary for the debate to go further into the following week, will he have a word with the Chairman of Ways and Means to establish whether there is any possibility of discussing at an earlier stage the two amendments concerning a referendum? There is a widespread feeling in the House that, if a referendum were approved, the business of the House concerning the Bill on European union would be dealt with very quickly instead of very slowly.

Mr. Newton: First, I confirm my hon. Friend's prediction that it is possible that further time will need to

be made available for the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. As for the rest, my hon. Friend will realise that that is not a matter for me. I hesitate to suggest that that is not a matter for the Chairman of Ways and Means, when he is here, because that sounds like a point of order. Nevertheless, I must steer him in that direction.

Ms. Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): Will the Leader of the House ensure that time is provided next week for the Secretary of State for Health to make a statement on the indictment of the Government's commercialisation of health care provided today by the British Medical Association, which describes

"a breakdown of many hospital services, leading to a two-tier provision of service as between those patients of fundholding and non-fundholding GPs, which is totally unacceptable."?

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health will make a statement on that matter next week. I have not had a chance to study what the hon. Lady says the BMA says, but the words she used do not bear much relationship to my experience or understanding of what is happening. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend will find other ways of commenting on the subject.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday next week we shall be dealing with the Committee stage of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill? Is it the custom of the House that, in Committee, either hon. Members provide their names to the Chairman of Ways and Means or they are not called?

Madam Speaker: Order. May I give a little more guidance? Hon. Members are inclined—as in this case—to ask procedural questions, which are a matter for the Chairman of Ways and Means, not for the Leader of the House. We should not ask the Leader of the House to come to the Dispatch Box and answer questions on matters which are not his responsibility. I call Mr. Jones.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): When will the President of the Board of Trade come to the House to make his statement regarding the assisted area map of Britain? There is apprehension in my constituency with 3,000 people out of work and the possible loss of a valuable status. Bearing in mind Wales's contribution in coal and steel, and with its massive unemployment at present, it would be wrong for any Welsh area to lose such a status. I should like the hon. Gentleman to tell the Cabinet about those matters.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. Friend is examining a number of issues at present. I cannot give him a definite date on which the assisted areas review will come forward, although I will ensure that my right hon. Friend is aware that the question has been asked, if only because it might well be asked again next Wednesday.

Mr. Warren Hawksley (Halesowen and Stourbridge): During the Prime Minister's Question Time on Tuesday, the Prime Minister announced that he had asked the Home Secretary to examine the question of juvenile offenders, and said that he was hoping to come forward quickly with proposals. Is it possible for the House to have a debate in the near future on this important issue, so that we can feed in the views of the House?

Mr. Newton: Again, I cannot promise an early debate. However, I can certainly confirm that my right hon. and learned Friend is examining urgently and critically the existing arrangements to deal with juvenile offenders in order to decide what measures, if any, it would be sensible to introduce.

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): Given the number of calls for a public inquiry into the death of my constituent, Thomas Adleigh, who died in the early hours of Christmas morning while waiting a prolonged period for an ambulance, will the Leader of the House find time next week for the Secretary of State for Scotland to make a statement on the reduction of overnight ambulance cover in the Argyll and Clyde health board area?

Mr. Newton: As with the hon. Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey), the appropriate course is for me to bring that question to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Can my right hon. Friend find an early opportunity to debate early-day motion 1154 on emergency services in Tayside?

[That this House notes that during the recent spell of adverse weather throughout Tayside, the police and other emergency services have carried out their humanitarian tasks with great skill and courage; further notes that Tayside Regional Council, Perth and Kinross District Council and Angus District Council have opened up council buildings as emergency shelters for stranded lorry drivers and motorists; congratulates the officers and men of 45 Royal Marine Commando, who, using their skis and Arctic experience, rescued many stranded civilians; and further congratulates the crews of the RAF search and rescue helicopter flight of RAF Leuchars for the vast number of emergency sorties completed in conditions of gales and below freezing temperatures.]

My right hon. Friend will be aware that, even today, many major roads in Tayside are still blocked and communities are isolated. He will be aware of the problems that the people in Tayside will face when the search and rescue flight is no longer available at Leuchars and when 45 Royal Marine Commando is not at its base at Condor. The skiing and Arctic ability of the commandos have saved many people's lives.

Mr. Newton: It is becoming clear that the follow-up period to these business questions will keep my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland fairly busy. I will bring that question to his attention.

Ms. Jean Corston (Bristol, East): I refer the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1162 on today's Order Paper on the subject of legal aid.

[That this House agrees that justice for all can only be a reality when there is provision for access to justice for all irrespective of wealth; notes that the intention of the Legal Aid and Advice Act 1949 was to ensure that no one was to be denied legal advice and representation because of inadequate finance; is appalled that the Lord Chancellor, as part of a Government purporting to espouse citizen's rights, proposes to restrict free legal aid only to those on income support or the equivalent, thereby excluding 12 million people from the legal aid provisions; and calls on the Government to abandon these proposals.]

It calls attention to the Lord Chancellor's proposals to change the eligibility rules for legal aid, the effect of which will be to deny free legal aid to 12 million people. That

[Ms. Jean Corston]

could prevent women from taking out domestic violence injunctions, or parents from making applications under the Children Act. Will the Leader of the House make time for the House to debate that important matter?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady is right to say that the Lord Chancellor has announced proposals and will shortly be tabling regulations to bring changes into effect. Those regulations will undoubtedly give rise to debate. I simply make the point that nearly half of all households will remain financially eligible for legal aid.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I support the calls today from my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) and others for an early debate on crime and law and order, and especially the police service. The Leader of the House will know that, throughout the Christmas/New Year recess, barely a day went by without news of some catastrophe involving youngsters and crime. It is time that the House had a proper debate on the matter.

Mr. Newton: I note the point made by my hon. Friend, which follows the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills. My hon. Friend will know that the Home Secretary is examining a number of matters that arise from the concerns expressed by hon. Members. I cannot add to what I said a moment ago.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House change his mind about having a debate on the national health service and the crisis that has arisen in almost every part of the service as a result of the introduction of the internal market? May I be helpful to the Leader of the House and pre-empt any remarks that he might make about Labour making a U-turn? I was at the press conference yesterday, and I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) did not say that we supported the trusts. But we desperately need a debate.

Mr. Newton: I did not have it in mind to make any aggressive remarks in response to the hon. Lady's question. However, it remains the case that, in addition to what I said to the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) a while ago, I am not in a position to promise a debate next week.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): My right hon. Friend will be aware that many customs clearance agents and freight forwarders in Dover have recently been made redundant as a result of the introduction of the single European market. Can he confirm that there will be an early opportunity to debate the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department of Trade and Industry in dispersing the British share of the 24 million ecu that the European Community has announced is available to assist customs agents and freight forwarders? There is anxiety in my constituency that, unless the procedures for dispersing that money are speeded up and made more efficient, it will not filter down to them.

Mr. Newton: I appreciate the reasons why my hon. Friend has raised that point. Indeed, I appreciate the assiduity with which he has pursued the matter on behalf of his constituents over a long period. He too might like to be reminded that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, to whom he referred, will be here to answer oral questions on Wednesday.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Members' interests.

Mr. Newton: I am afraid that I cannot add this week to what I have told the hon. Gentleman on previous occasions. Having had some discussions with the Chairman of the Committee, I am examining ways to proceed.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Has the Leader of the House been approached by the Prime Minister about making a statement next week in the light of press reports on the future governance of Scotland? If he has not, may I suggest that he encourages the Prime Minister to speak to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and other hon. Members who have had experience of devolved government and are interested in Scotland and the Union, bearing in mind that we are known as the Ulster Scots or, as our American cousins call us, the Scotch-Irish?

Mr. Newton: I will draw the hon. Gentleman's kind and undoubtedly well-meant offer to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): When the Leader of the House was compiling the business for next week and came to Thursday, did he observe that it was passing strange that Thursdays in the past few months have been heavy days on which all Members were expected to turn up? On Thursday of next week, the business is a debate on the Air Force, which does not normally arouse a great deal of interest among Members, although I realise its importance. Therefore, will he try to disprove the sinister suggestions that have been put to me, that the reason why such a debate was chosen was to distract Members from coming in on Friday for the debate on my Shops (Amendment) Bill? I thank him if those sinister remarks are wrong. I have known him and the work that he does for some time, and I suggest that he allowed a light Thursday so that Members will have time to study the booklet that they received from me this morning explaining the difficulties of introducing a shops Bill.

Mr. Newton: I had not expected the hon. Gentleman to join the conspiracy theorists who are normally to be found on the other side of the Gangway. I assure him that nothing more was in my mind than the ambitions presented to the House by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) about Fridays. Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman says, since the House resumed in the autumn, the pattern has been of light days, in the sense in which he uses the word. There have been few heavy Thursdays.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): The Lord President will recall that a few weeks ago I raised the issue of pornography on the telephone, following the rape of a young girl in Hillingdon. He referred me to the Department of National Heritage—which surprised me—and I was referred back to the Department of Trade and Industry. Since then, I have had a debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill, in which the response from the

hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) was unhelpful. Next Tuesday, I have a ten-minute Bill which has all-party support.

Will the Lord President now or very soon add some weight to the need to regulate pornography on the telephone? I understand that he has two daughters, as do other right hon. Members on the Treasury Bench. I ask them please to consider what I have been saying for a long time, which is attracting all-party support. For that reason alone, will he do something about what is happening on the telephone, which I believe is corrupting and not very wholesome for a civilised country to accept?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that I have two daughters. I also have two stepdaughters. I have no direct or indirect experience of the problem that he describes through them, but I am conscious of the importance that he attaches to the matter and of the sympathy that many people have for his views. I cannot make an absolute commitment, but I will do my best to be here next week to listen to his speech on the subject.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Welsh Grand Committee has not met since last February? Since February, thousands of jobs have been lost in my constituency and those of other Opposition Members. It appears that all representations to the Secretary of State for Wales are failing. Therefore, will the Leader of the House place on the Order Paper next week the appropriate motion to establish the Welsh Grand Committee to discuss the growing unemployment problems of Wales?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give the undertaking that the hon. Gentleman seeks, but I shall certainly bring his suggestion to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that the Government's proposal to reduce expenditure under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 is likely adversely to affect the educational opportunities and life chances of many children of ethnic minority background in my constituency and those of many other hon. Members? If he is aware of that, will he please urge the Home Secretary to make a statement as soon as possible? If he cannot do that, will he arrange a debate on that important subject as a matter of urgency?

Mr. Newton: Again, I cannot promise exactly what the hon. Gentleman seeks, but I shall bring his concern to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is it possible to have an early debate on the recommendations of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, the most important of which is that the security services should be subject to full parliamentary scrutiny? Any such scrutiny committee should not be composed of Privy Councillors alone, hence my early-day motion 1089.

[That this House is strongly of the opinion that the security services should be subject to Parliamentary scrutiny; and moreover is opposed to a committee composed only of privy counsellors being established, which would be outside the normal Select Committee structure.]

Bearing in mind the allegations that have been made about the security services in the latest controversy involving the royal couple, is it not essential that, as in other democracies, the security service be subject to parliamentary scrutiny as early as possible? When can we have an early debate?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise the early debate that the hon. Gentleman seeks; nor can I add to what was said by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage half an hour ago on the question to which the hon. Gentleman adverted. Obviously the report of the Select Committee, like all Select Committee reports, will be carefully studied.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House accept that we need a statement next week on the national health service, even if, after repeated pressing from my hon. Friends, he cannot manage a debate? A two-tier system is developing. I have in my hand a letter from the chief executive of the Bradford hospital trust which says:

"I hope and would expect that preference will be given"——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have had to call several hon. Members to order today for developing their points rather than stating the principle of why they want a debate. The hon. Gentleman is a good parliamentarian and he knows what I am getting at.

Mr. Cryer: One sentence, Madam Speaker. The chief executive of the national health service trust in Bradford is urging consultants to give preference to GP fund holders. That is a serious departure from all the pledges which the Government have given, and that is why we need a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have commented twice on similar questions about the national health service, and I shall not add to what I said earlier.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 1150?

[That this House congratulates the I.L.P. on its 100th anniversary, recognising that the Independent Labour Party held its inaugural conference in Bradford on 13th and 14th January 1893 and that its tradition is continued today by its direct successor organisation, Independent Labour Publications, which has maintained the I.L.P. historic initials and continues to work for the advance and development of democratic socialism.]

That motion contains the simple but powerful initials "ILP". It is about the formation of the Independent Labour party 100 years ago today in Bradford—an organisation which still exists as Independent Labour Publications. A debate on that topic would allow a general discussion on political issues, including democratic socialism, which is still very much alive. For example, Keir Hardie, who was a founder member of the ILP, was known as the Member for the unemployed in the House. We need many Members for the unemployed. We could discuss unemployment during a discussion on the early-day motion.

Hon. Members: Yes—grant it.

Mr. Newton: I am being urged by my right hon. and hon. Friends to grant the hon. Gentleman's request.

[Mr. Newton]

However, I cannot add to the generous offer of my right hon. Friend to provide time for a wake. Nor, indeed, can I identify the undertaker.

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Following the answer which the Leader of the House gave to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), although he said that he could not make available any time next week for a debate on community care, will he make time in the foreseeable future before April for such a debate? He should do so especially in the light of the report by the Association of Directors of Social Services that social services throughout Britain are having to cut their budgets.

Mr. Newton: I repeat what I said to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett): I am not in a position to promise a debate, but I shall bear in mind the request given the longer time scale given by the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne). The ADSS provides a survey of social services expenditure every year at this time, and it is not unknown for it to make gloomy predictions. It must be recognised that funding to local authorities for social services is to be increased by 15 per cent. next year. That comes on top of a real increase of almost two thirds in local authority social services spending since 1979.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): May I remind the Leader of the House of the implied and repeated promise to Members of the House of Commons that we would have an opportunity to debate the six documents on rail privatisation which the Secretary of State for Transport promised would be available before the publication of the privatisation Bill? Those six documents have not yet been received. As Members anticipate that, before the Leader of the House makes his next business statement, the Bill will have been published, will he use his good offices, first, to ensure that the six outstanding documents are made available to the House of Commons, especially the one on the pricing regime for Railtrack, which is crucial and central to the legislation, before the Bill is published; and, secondly, that we have an opportunity to debate the documents before Second Reading?

Finally, with regard to the Second Reading——

Madam Speaker: Order. I call the Leader of the House.

Mr. Newton: We have just had—I accept that it was thanks to Her Majesty's Opposition—a full day's debate on rail privatisation. It is to the credit of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport that he is making so much information so openly available in advance of Second Reading. It seems to me that the right way to respond to that is to treat that information as relevant to the debate which we shall undoubtedly have on the Bill.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Following the reply by the Leader of the House to my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) about hill livestock compensatory allowances, may I invite him to be a little more forthcoming? If, as seems likely, the Select Committee on Agriculture will consider that issue as a matter of urgency, can he give us an undertaking that the House will be given the opportunity to study and debate its report fully?

On the right hon. Gentleman's comment that the incomes of sheep farmers are said to have risen in recent years, I wonder whether he has noted the report of the west country sheep farmer who said that 50 per cent. of bugger all is still bugger all.

Mr. Newton: I do not know that I would want to validate that language from the Dispatch Box, quite apart from the implication of the remark. Nor shall I add to what I told his hon. Friend, beyond saying that any report produced by a Select Committee will be studied carefully by my right hon. Friends.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): Will the Leader of the House consult his colleagues, the Secretaries of State for Defence and for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, about providing time for a debate on the implications of the second strategic arms reduction treaty and on the question of nuclear proliferation for this country? That debate is necessary in view of the present debate in the Ukraine, which is likely to continue.

The Ukrainian Government might sabotage the whole process, because Members of its Parliament are opposed to the fact that this country, among others, is not giving the Ukraine any guarantees that, if it gets rids of its nuclear weapons, we will not fire such weapons against them. Could the Government find time to debate that issue, so that the Ukraine could be given a negative security guarantee of that type?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will recall that I have already announced in the business for next week a debate on defence-related matters, under the heading of the Royal Air Force. Despite the obvious importance of the matter to which he has referred, I cannot promise another debate at this stage.

Points of Order

5.43 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During Prime Minister's Question Time this afternoon, in your hearing, the Leader of the Opposition launched a strong personal attack on my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Is it not one of the oldest conventions in the House that, if a right hon. or hon. Member is going to name another right hon. or hon. Member, he first gives him or her notice to that effect privately?

I have established with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the Leader of the Opposition gave him no such notice. In view of that fact, will you rule on this matter and confirm that that is a convention of the House and that the Leader of the Opposition ought to come to the Dispatch Box and apologise to my right hon. Friend?

Madam Speaker: It is a convention of the House, and it is a matter of common courtesy, that, if one Member intends to name another during a debate, or questions, he or she should arrange for that Member to be informed. Perhaps we can now get on——

Several hon. Members: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: No. There is no further point of order, I have dealt with the matter.

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 13 January]

[DAME JANET FOOKES *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION

Amendment proposed [13 January]: No. 40, in page 1, line 9, leave out 'II,'.—*[Mr. Cash.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

5.43 pm

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): I remind the Committee that we are also considering the following amendments:

No. 323, in page 1, line 9, leave out 'II'.

No. 11, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 2 on page 9 of Cm 1934)'.

No. 17, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 138a on pager 41 of Cm 1934)'.

No. 116, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(other than the following provisions set out under Article G—

Paragraph A (1)
Paragraph B (2)
Paragraph B (3)
Paragraph B (4)
Paragraph B (5)
Paragraph B (7)
Paragraph C
Paragraph D (10), (11), (12), (14), (15), (16), (17), (19), (20), (22), (23), (25), (26), (27), (28), (29), (30), (31), (32), (33), (34), (35), (37), (38)—except Articles 130, 130r, 130s and Title XVII) (39), (40), (41—except Article 138e) (45), (47), (48), (49), (50), (56), (57), (60), (61), (62), (63), (67), (69), (70), (71), (79), (80), (81), (83), and (84).'.

No. 124, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(excluding Article G B on page 9 to 11 of Cm 1934.)'.

No. 234, in page 1, line 9, after 'II' insert 'except' Article 138a'.

No. 91, in page 1, line 9, leave out 'III'.

No. 20, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 73g (2) on page 14 of Cm.1934'.

No. 92, in page 1, line 9, leave out 'IV'.

No. 146, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert 'but not Article 1 in Title IV thereof'.

No. 183, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert 'but not Article Q in Title VII thereof'.

No. 122, in page 1, line 10, leave out from '1992' to 'and' in line 11.

No. 117, in page 1, line 12, after 'Protocols', insert 'other than—

'(a) The Protocol on the Statute of the European System of Central Banks and of the European Central Bank
(b) The Protocol on the Excessive Deficit Procedure
(c) The Protocol on the Convergence Criteria referred to in Article 109 of the Treaty establishing the European Community
(d) The Protocol amending the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunity of the European Community
(e) The Protocol on the Transition to the Third Stage of Economic and Monetary Union
(f) The Protocol on Certain Provisions relating to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
(g) The Protocol on Social Policy

[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means]

(h) The Protocol on Economic and Social Cohesion.'.

New Clause 10—*Report of European Council*—

'.—After the European Council has submitted its report after each of its meetings, Her Majesty's Government shall publish and lay such reports, and those annual reports in writing, as required by Title I, Article D of the Treaty on European Union before Parliament, together with a statement as to their policy and performance in respect of the activities of the Union and their policies for its future.'.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): On a point of order, Dame Janet. Can you say for certain whether this is the Committee stage of the Bill, because it seems that my colleagues are not being called to speak unless they have given their names to the Chairman of the Committee beforehand? Is there any precedent for that during the Committee stage of any Bill?

The Second Deputy Chairman: That is entirely a matter for the Chairman. There is no such arrangement, although the hon. Gentlemen seems to think that there is. If Members wish to be called, they are not obliged to write in beforehand.

Mr. Knapman: You will be aware, Dame Janet, that many hon. Gentlemen and Ladies wish to speak to this group of amendments who have not given their names. I take it from your answer that their efforts will not be prejudiced in any way.

The Second Deputy Chairman: The main prejudice will come from those hon. Members who speak for such a long time that it makes it more difficult for others to speak, and not from any action by the Chair.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Dame Janet. I am acting on the assumption that the procedures of this Committee are not dissimilar in principle to those in a Committee upstairs and that they only vary slightly in practice. You will know, as all hon. Members do, that it is not infrequent for more than one Minister to be a member of a Committee upstairs. You may also know, from conversations with colleagues, that the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who I am glad to see present, has given notice that his hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is likely to reply to the debate on financial matters. You will also recall that the Minister spoke third in the debate and that many hon. Members—all but the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash)—have asked questions relating to foreign affairs and international law. We hope that no decision will be made that would prejudice the Minister of State having the opportunity to contribute again so that he may reply to those questions before the debate is concluded. He might have to indicate a willingness to do so, but without his reply the debate would be incomplete.

The Second Deputy Chairman: I cannot prejudge who may wish to catch my eye.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Dame Janet. The Leader of the House suggested a few minutes ago that I should raise this matter on a point of order. As you will know, he announced that three days will be allocated to discussion of the Bill next week, and it seems that, because of the strength of feeling expressed, even longer might have to be allocated during the following week. I was grateful, as I am sure were all hon. Members, that you and your colleagues decided to allow us to debate a clause dealing with a referendum, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). Could you consider our debating that new clause earlier, rather than at the end of the proceedings? There seems to be a widespread feeling that if that new clause were considered and agreed to, the proceedings on this important Bill might be completed quickly instead of taking a considerable time.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Dame Janet. I have tabled several amendments to the Bill concerning a referendum and I endorse the view expressed by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) that discussion of this lengthy Bill, which we must examine in great detail if a proper examination is to be undertaken, could well be curtailed. If it were decided, through an amendment, to provide the public with the opportunity to have a referendum, one would hope that the debate would shift to a much wider auditorium than this place—to the nation at large. Most decent, sensible democrats would welcome that. I endorse the view that the democratic procedures would benefit if an amendment or new clause were to be debated and passed, to allow the public the opportunity to join in the debate—a debate whose structure will inevitably be curtailed until the decision is made. An early decision on a referendum would be very welcome, not only here, but outside by the majority of the population. They have seen the Danes have a referendum in Denmark and they are asking, "Why can't we have a referendum about this important issue?"

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman: I think that I can deal with that point of order now. It is not for the Chair to vary the normal order in which amendments are taken.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Dame Janet. I am not complaining about the length of speeches because so far they have been interesting and instructive and I have listened to most of them. This legislation is important and I want to draw your attention to the fact that it is important to all parts of the United Kingdom, and particularly to Scotland, which enjoys a unique relationship within this unitary Parliament, brought about by the union that really matters, the Union of the United Kingdom. Therefore, it is important for the people of Scotland to understand that their views are being heard, listened to and noted in this Parliament.

The Second Deputy Chairman: I am afraid that that is not a point of order for the Chair, although it might be an interesting observation.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): On a point of order, Dame Janet. Would it not assist the House if those hon. Members who are calling for the debate on a referendum clause to be brought forward—many of them have also tabled many amendments that are designed to keep the Bill going in the House for as long as possible—*[Interruption.]*

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. Hon. Members may not like the views being expressed, but the hon. Gentleman has the right to express them, providing that they take the form of a point of order.

Mr. Devlin: The point of order is that if some of those hon. Members who have tabled a large number of amendments wish to bring forward an amendment for an early vote, could they not do so by withdrawing the considerable number of amendments that they have already tabled?

The Second Deputy Chairman: That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Dame Janet. I know that you would always want to be helpful to the House and this is an opportunity for you to be very helpful. This is a wide-ranging and important debate, which covers the vast bulk of the treaty. There have been many debates on the Maastricht treaty, but many hon. Members would like to catch your eye today and some have been unable to catch eyes in previous debates.

This may be the most important and wide-ranging debate on the Bill. It is unlikely that the Government would wish to curtail today's debate, but if they have told you that they will seek—God forbid—to move a closure motion at some stage today, quite inappropriately, could you tell the House now at what time the Government will seek to close the debate so that hon. Members can make their contribution within that time scale?

The Second Deputy Chairman: I remain in blissful ignorance of the Government's intentions.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): On a point of order, Dame Janet. This is the most important constitutional Bill since I have been in the House. It seeks to take large powers from the people of this country and reduce the position of the Executive and its accountability to the nation. I seek clarification on the observation that you made, which seemed to indicate that, because of the complex and difficult matters under discussion, if a speech is lengthy and ranges across the amendments before us, it curtails other Members' ability to make representations on behalf of their constituents. It therefore curtails free speech on this major constitutional arrangement.

Are you saying that an hon. Member who speaks in order for a long time will curtail the ability of other hon. Members to speak? Is that a new Committee ruling which we must bear in mind while trying to debate these great issues?

The Second Deputy Chairman: I have no such grandiose ideas in mind. I was merely making the common-sense observation that if hon. Members want to talk this afternoon, it is likely to be easier if they make shorter rather than longer speeches. However, that is not for the Chair to determine.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): On a point of order, Dame Janet. Is it not particularly perverse of hon. Members who have a stated commitment to the principle of parliamentary sovereignty—I know how sincere that commitment is on the part of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor)—to suggest that, if there were a referendum on the Maastricht treaty, we would somehow be able to curtail our discussion of the Bill now? If one believes in parliamentary scrutiny and if there is to be a referendum, it is particularly important that we should thoroughly examine——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. That is clearly not a point of order but rather an observation.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): On a point of order, Dame Janet. Can you help me? I have sat through all the debates on this treaty. How can a Member from another part of the United Kingdom—Northern Ireland—make a contribution? I have approached the Chair, but have not been satisfied. I have been a Member of the House for 22 years and have never had to put down my name to speak in Committee. If one was present and stood up, one was likely to be called to speak. Can you assure hon. Members from Northern Ireland that, at some time during the debate, at least one of them will be called?

The Second Deputy Chairman: May I make it clear that there is no obligation on any Member during the Committee stage, or in any debate whatever, to put down his or her name in advance. I have tried to take note of those who rise in their places when one speaker gives way to another.

Mr. Knapman: On a point of order, Dame Janet. Can you confirm that, when a closure motion was moved in Committee before Christmas, although Members representing Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland constituencies were present—the Bill affects the whole of the United Kingdom—no hon. Member from any of those three countries was invited to speak prior to the closure. We have had three statements this afternoon and it is now 6 o'clock, so it will be a short debating day. Is that likely to occur again or will hon. Members from those other parts of the United Kingdom have a chance to speak on this occasion?

The Second Deputy Chairman: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Member who would have the Floor now, but for the points of order, represents Wales.

Mr. Bill Walker: Further to the previous point of order that I tried to make but failed so miserably, Dame Janet. In your position as guardian of the interests of Back Benchers in Parliament, you will sometimes be required to accept or reject closure motions. Will you bear in mind the interests of the whole of the United Kingdom? I do not make a frivolous point because we know of the separatist movements within the United Kingdom, which wish to break up this unitary Parliament and the United Kingdom. The strongest card that we have to play against them is to ensure that the interests of parts of the United Kingdom such as Scotland are well looked after in the Chamber. If, by chance and for whatever reason, hon. Members are not called, separatists can use that as a device to claim that their interests are not being catered for. I draw your attention to that aspect on closure motions with respect and hope that you will bear it in mind.

The Second Deputy Chairman: I hope that I shall not be found wanting in my duties in that regard. However, we can best help by resuming the debate.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I am grateful to you, Dame Janet, for reminding the Committee that we are debating the first batch of amendments on the amendment paper.

As the House was full last night when I commenced my speech and as every hon. Member was listening intently, I have no intention of wasting time going over the same ground. I know that the Minister of State, Foreign and

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), will be disappointed, but I shall merely summarise what I said, especially in relation to amendment No. 17, which is the third amendment in the batch and was discussed by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith).

Before the House heard last night's statement on Iraq, I was arguing that, far from assisting those of my hon. Friends who are in favour of the treaty, I understood article 2 to do the opposite. Although they may have thought that article 2 was better than a fig leaf covering all the ghastly following articles, it is all of a part with the rest of the treaty. To borrow a phrase from the old days of nuclear defence, the treaty is a "seamless web", starting with article 2 and continuing in that vein.

Some of my hon. Friend's speeches did not show proper respect for those who drafted the treaty. I never cease to admire the intellectual power of those who drafted it. I do not know who they are and I do not make a cynical or sarcastic point. I never cease to admire the intellectual elegance, despite the convoluted language, of the manner in which the matter has been framed. It has been thought out carefully from the beginning and the articles all fit in and work their way through to a conclusion. We should therefore not be flippant about the treaty and say that it does not mean this or that. It has been carefully and diligently thought out.

Article 2 contains three phrases dealing with economic matters, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East and other hon. Friends referred. Indeed, they referred to them as though they would have liked them to be in the Labour party manifesto. I was a little worried about that. The first phrase—and the most difficult—is

"a high degree of convergence".

My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East seemed to be saying that we were in favour of a high degree of convergence. The only convergence indicators that I can find as I look through the treaty are the reduction of inflation down to price stability—a euphemism for almost zero inflation—the reduction of budget deficits to 3 per cent. and 60 per cent., and the eventual locking of exchange rates.

6 pm

As I tried to argue last night, I do not agree with the treaty, but I understand that those convergence indicators are major factors. If the treaty wants to achieve a single currency in the foreseeable future—be it 1999 or 2001—and if it is to contain all the other convergence indicators that Opposition Members would want it to contain, such as gross domestic product, unemployment and income per capita, we shall never arrive at the ultimate goal of a single currency and economic and monetary union.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Like my right hon. Friend, I oppose the Bill and the treaty on many grounds, not least economic and political sovereignty, which would be substantially eroded if the measure were passed, but would not those in our own ranks—if not Conservative Members—who are in favour of the measure have improved their case had they said that they were in favour of what was agreed in the Maastricht treaty but could not in any circumstances support limiting GDP, which would substantially reduce public spending? That result would in turn give right-wing Governments further ammunition in their fight to introduce measures which would undoubtedly increase unemployment and lead to further deflation.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I shall come to the issue of excessive deficits, which was discussed at some length in yesterday's debate.

The next economic indicator referred to in article 2 is high employment. My hon. Friends made much of the phrase "high employment". My hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) thumbed through the treaty and found quite a few references not merely to high employment, but to "lasting high employment"—or was it "high and lasting employment?" I am not sure how the words were positioned.

We are all in favour of high employment. The treaty does not say anything about full employment, and I should be surprised if it did. It may mention unemployment somewhere. I see my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles thumbing through the treaty to see if he can find such a reference. I shall be surprised if he does. The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Watford, who knows how the treaty was drafted, is smiling.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman ask his hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) to check by how much unemployment has increased in the European Economic Community compared with every other developed part of the world? That would give the right hon. Gentleman something to think about.

Mr. Davies: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles will deal with that issue. I was making a somewhat arid and textual point and saying that those who draft such measures are clever and understand what they are about. They would never mention unemployment. The monetarists—I do not use the word in a pejorative sense as I believe that monetary controls have a vital role to play in an economic system—believe that unemployment takes care of itself, so their only concern is to control inflation.

The phrase "high employment" is carefully chosen. Of course, everyone is in favour of high employment and the Government maintain that we now have it in Britain. My hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) laughs, but about 90 per cent. of what we used to call the insurable population—the employable population—are in fact employed. The Government have also maintained that there are more people in work now than at any other time. They even say that about Wales, where unemployment is high. The phrase "high employment" is carefully chosen by the clever people who draft such measures. The Minister of State smiles—I am not referring to him, although I am sure that he played a major part in drafting the treaty.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Garel-Jones): I am smiling because I think that the right hon. Gentleman is trying to imply that he is not a clever person but merely a common man speaking up. We all know better than that.

Mr. Davies: That is not what I was implying. I was merely stating that the phrase "high employment" was carefully chosen. If the unemployment level increased to 20 per cent. and 80 per cent. of the population was

employed, many people would argue that that was high employment. I do not know the level at which it ceases to be high employment—that is a matter of debate.

I am sorry to say to my hon. Friends the Members for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) and for Oxford, East and others that I do not think that there is much salvation or assistance in the phrase "high employment", which is part of the seamless web of the treaty.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Further to my hon. Friend's point, could not the Government defend the present disastrously high level of unemployment as "high employment" and do they not indeed do so?

Mr. Davies: That is the very point I was trying to make. Until one starts discussing very low levels of employment —perhaps lower than 90 per cent.—the matter is subjective.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I believe that my right hon. Friend is trying to distinguish between full employment and high employment, and is complaining that although the treaty refers to "high employment" it makes no mention of full employment. Will he define full employment? Does it mean 100 per cent. employment? If not, surely we are talking about high employment.

Mr. Davies: I am not distinguishing between high and full employment. I would have made the point that when we talk of full employment we all know that it is not 100 per cent. employment. I was merely arguing that the phrase "high employment" was chosen carefully because those who drafted the treaty did not wish it to make a specific commitment on unemployment. The thinking behind monetarist strategy—certainly as developed by the theorists in Europe in the 1980s, although it may be changing in the 1990s—is that employment takes care of itself.

Mr. Macdonald: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davies: No; my hon. Friend can make his own speech. I have made my point.

I shall not repeat what I said last night about non-inflationary growth, but some of my hon. Friends have gone to town on the subject. My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool—who can perhaps be described as a member of the modernising tendency of the Labour party—wanted the subject to be contained in the Labour party manifesto. He said that everyone was in favour of non-inflationary growth. I noticed that as his speech and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East progressed, the term "non-inflationary growth" was dropped in favour of the word "growth". However, before one achieves non-inflationary growth one must have non-inflation. Those with modernist tendencies must be careful.

I am not sure about non-inflationary growth. I do not think that the residents of Hartlepool who own houses that they are trying to sell want non-inflationary growth. Most of middle England and the middle classes—perhaps I should say, à la Clinton, the working middle classes, although I do not think that the British middle classes would like to be called that—do not want non-inflationary growth. In fact, they are desperate for inflationary growth.

I caution my hon. Friends who are going a bundle on monetarist theory—as I have said, I do not use the term pejoratively—that they must treat that policy as part of a pattern. Non-inflationary growth fits in with a school of thinking which has existed for a considerable time: it existed in the 1970s and was developed, mostly as academic theories, in the 1980s. We must be careful when we try to gain assistance from specific phrases simply because they make up part of the treaty.

Title VI of the treaty—perhaps it should be subtitle VI, although I can see why it has been made title VI—deals with economic and monetary union. There is article 104c, which deals with excessive deficits, and article 105, which deals with monetary policy and sets up the European system of central banks. I will deal first with excessive deficits, because there was some dispute on this side of the Committee and my hon. Friends—certainly my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool—dealt with it at length.

We can agree that according to the treaty the budget deficit must not be more than 60 per cent. of gross domestic product, and Government debt—not strictly the public sector borrowing requirement, but Government debt—must not be more than 3 per cent. of GDP. My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool—having told us that it is really all a matter of the broad sweep, the general interpretation, and that the politicians still have their hands on it all and therefore it is all right—proceeded to embark on a textual criticism of the article on excessive deficits. He looked at almost every comma and every word to try to show that it did not really mean 3 per cent. and that we would not be affected.

Then, after all this hoo-ha and argument, my hon. Friend came to a conclusion with which I agree. I tried to intervene to say this, but I do not criticise him for not giving way because he had given way so often. This is what he said, and I agree entirely:

"The main requirement in relation to the deficit is for progress to be made towards the target."—[*Official Report*, 13 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 1003.]

I cannot disagree with that statement. It is an almost ministerial type statement, well honed, well considered. We all admire the way my hon. Friend does these things and we all admired his speech. So the beautiful summing up of the article is that the main requirement is progress towards the target. The Financial Secretary may even repeat the words, taken from a Treasury brief, when he is winding up.

It does not have to be done in one year, of course. No one could get the Italian deficit down to 3 per cent. in one year; even those who framed this treaty in their ivory towers realise that. It is not a big bang theory at all; it is death by a thousand cuts. It will happen gradually because, as my hon. Friend says quite clearly, it is progress towards the target. The target we are concerned with is the percentage of GDP that the Government borrow. We understand that at the moment it is around 7 or 8 per cent., so the Government will no doubt start now, and will certainly have to start on 1 December 1994, if the Bill goes through the House and the treaty is ratified. The Government will have to start when stage 2 starts, not by imposition but gradually over the years, reducing that 7 per cent. to the 3 per cent. in the treaty. I am sure that my hon. Friend would not argue that that is wrong; it is what is said in the treaty.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): My right hon. Friend is being almost too generous with regard to these reference figures, 3 per cent. and 60 per cent., even allowing for the margin of movement, because both

[Mr. Peter Shore]

sub-clauses contain the words "close to" the reference level; they must be moving in the right direction and they must also be close to the reference level.

Mr. Davies: Yes, indeed, they have to, because the whole purpose of the exercise is to get eventually to economic and monetary union and a common currency.

This exercise will probably have to go on, because we shall not have arrived at 3 per cent. by the time the next Labour Government take over in 1996 or 1997. We may not have reached 3 per cent. by then; we may be around 5 per cent.—who knows? The Government of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) will come in faced with this. The Government will perhaps be composed of a number of parties. We may find as deputy Prime Minister the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown)—we do not know—and my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East having worked hard in his unproductive orchard, will by then have become Financial Secretary. My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool will be a vigorous Back Bencher, striving to get Government money for the inner cities of the north-east, particularly Hartlepool. He will be asking my right hon. Friends for more money, but they will be looking at his speeches and quoting back at him his statement that we have to reach the target. He will have to go back to Hartlepool and explain matters to his constituency party. Young people, not only in Hartlepool but in Llanelli, who drive around in cars that are not theirs and put matches into petrol tanks will probably not come to any of our meetings, but it will have to be explained to them, too, somehow or other, that we cannot do much about it; it is there in the treaty and unfortunately the Lib-Lab Government, or whoever they may be, with the modernising tendency no doubt in the vanguard, will have gradually to start making cuts.

6.15 pm

We may not have to cut expenditure, however; we may put up taxation. We have assumed that the way to get to the 3 per cent. is to cut public expenditure, but it is a reduction of Government debt and, as far as I am aware, there are two ways of reducing Government debt: reducing expenditure or increasing taxation, or a combination of the two. That choice will still be there.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool referred to "hands-on" politicians, and certainly the hands-on politician will have to decide whether we put up taxes or cut public expenditure.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the way to balance the books is not to increase taxation but to increase revenue? Results in the past have shown that very often there has been an increased take from taxation accompanying a reduction in income tax.

Mr. Davies: I do not know whether the Laffer curve made any sense. If the hon. Gentleman wants to talk about the Laffer curve, which I believe was something drawn on the back of an envelope in a Washington restaurant, that is fine, but it is not something that we should go into at the moment.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: On this wonderfully fair-minded valuing of an increase in taxation or a decrease in expenditure, the Community is charged with trying to harmonise taxes, which constrains the ability of the Government to do one side of the accounting.

Mr. Davies: That is the point that I was seeking to make —that, even if there is this marvellous freedom of choice whether to increase taxes or cut public expenditure, there are constraints on taxation. If there is harmonisation of indirect taxes, that imposes constraints, and there may be other harmonisation measures.

Mr. Marlow: Just supposing that the mythical modernising future Labour Government are unable to tear up their election promises and are unable to fulfil the requirements of the treaty that some of his hon. Friends seem so ready to impose upon themselves at the moment, is it not the case that Community institutions, on the basis of a two-thirds majority of countries outside the United Kingdom, would be able to make the Government's task even more difficult by imposing fines upon them?

Mr. Davies: That is what will happen eventually, but it will not happen overnight; they will have another meeting, make a statement, bring a little pressure to bear here and there, and an application from the Hartlepool development corporation to the European Development bank for a loan will be refused. There are many ways of doing these things, and ultimately there may be a gunboat, or whatever —I do not know. Whatever happens, however, there will have to be compliance, because that is how the system works.

I do not think that we should underestimate the effect that the "excessive deficits" article will have on both parties' policies, and the constraints that it will place on them to spend judiciously with the aim of maintaining economic growth.

Mr. Spearing: Will my right hon. Friend also consider the issue of direct taxation? Under article 8a as it currently stands, there is to be no frontier within the union, but would not differentiation of direct taxation of income through labour ultimately constitute that? Given that there must be a level playing field in regard to skills, and in regard to firms employing people throughout the Community, might not differential income tax constitute a fiscal frontier which might be judged inconsistent with article 8a?

Mr. Davies: I do not know. Even now, in practice, we are constrained by the tax rates of other EC countries, because we trade with them now and will trade more with them in the future. Actual constraints already exist, whether or not they constitute legal constraints.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool made a marvellous speech, which is no more than we would expect of him. He had worked hard at that speech. At some stage, he threw out an observation about Delors 2. He said that he was in favour of it—which, of course, is perfectly all right. Delors 2 says that there should be more money in the budget; if it had been accepted, I believe that the budget would have been 1·8 or 1·9 per cent. of the gross domestic product of the 12 countries. However, I did not understand the reference to Delors 2 in the context of excessive deficits. On the one hand, we are told that we must cut our expenditure to an eventual 3 per cent.; on the other, we are told that we must find money to give Mr. Delors so that he has public expenditure funds to pay back to us.

I am sorry if I have done an injustice to my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool; that may not be what he meant. I made my comment en passant, as they say. In any event, he was right to mention Delors 2, which illustrates a real problem. Once countries embark on the exercise of converging economies without actually doing so—the exercise, in fact, of converging monetary and financial indicators—and establish a common currency, as the United States has done, massive transfers will be needed. Conservative Members may not agree with that—it may not accord with their philosophy—but many non-ideological economists will confirm that massive transfers are needed between, say, California and North Dakota.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): May I draw the right hon. Gentlemen's attention to a rather curious aspect of the matter? Hon. Members may belong to the Liverpool or the Cambridge school of economists, they may be Keynesians or monetarists, they may be Ministers, or they may be Opposition Front Benchers, but what unites virtually all hon. Members is the consensus that, at a time of recession, deficits should be allowed to widen. It is hoped, of course, that they will narrow at times of recovery. Why, given that this part of the treaty will deny consensus to the House, are we all expected to vote like sheep for such a ridiculous proposition?

Mr. Davies; That is a good point. I am not sure whether the religious school in Liverpool will agree with what the hon. Gentleman has said; certainly, it does not necessarily accord with strict monetarist philosophy.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that a splendid example of the single currency and the single bank currently operates in the United Kingdom, where substantial amounts of taxpayers' funds are transferred from the well-paid to the poorer areas? The right hon. Gentleman comes from Wales, and I come from Scotland; we understand that system, have seen it in operation and do not disagree with it.

Mr. Davies: That is the point that I was trying to make. The same can be observed in the United States. In any event, massive transfers would be required.

In the 1970s, the McDougall report said that, with a common or single currency within economic and monetary union, transfers would have to constitute about 7 per cent. of GDP—and that was before Portugal, Spain and Greece joined the Community. We must now envisage a transfer of between 10 and 12 per cent. of GDP to alleviate the problem of unemployment in South Dakota, and to lessen the difference in wealth between it and California.

That money is not going to arrive, partly because it is not there and partly because no mechanism exists to provide it. The Germans are the paymasters, and they have problems in their own country; certainly, Britain cannot provide it. If no Government have the power to raise taxation at European level, the money will never be there. We are in the worst of all possible worlds. We have transferred democratic power, and we are moving towards a common currency, but we have none of the instruments needed to alleviate—I put it no higher than that—the concentration of economic power in a single currency.

Mr. Barry Legg (Milton Keynes, South-West): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that many of the economic problems suffered in 19th-century Ireland were due to a single currency? The Irish economy fell further and further behind. Another consequence was the mass emigration of the Irish population to the United Kingdom mainland.

Mr. Davies: I have enough problems trying to understand the treaty without going into Irish economics. The current Irish position is very interesting, however. I am told that Ireland has achieved economic success: apparently, it has managed to get inflation down to about 3 per cent.; meanwhile, interest rates have risen 100 per cent. overnight, and unemployment stands at at least 17 per cent. of the people who are left in the country. That, evidently, is the blueprint. The French socialists have pursued the same policies. It is a modernising party, which has not existed for long and looks as though, after the next election, it will not exist at all.

Labour Members sometimes refer fondly to the French socialist party as our sister party. I used to be Labour's defence spokesman; the youngsters in the House will not remember that. Sometimes I would go and talk to members of the French socialist party. "Sister party" may not have been the right description.

The French socialists sold out very early. Now France has a strong economy: it has been stronger than the British economy for a long time. It has low inflation, along with rising unemployment, high interest rates and the "franc fort", which is practically a Vichy franc: it is locked into the Bundesbank and is desperate for support. Come March, we shall see a proliferation of parties, the breakdown of the present Government and all sorts of problems. I remind my hon. Friends that that does not apply only to France; the left in Europe had better start thinking, because all these developments are destroying it.

The beneficiaries will not be the Christian Democrats. The Minister does not like the Christian Democrats. I will tell his relations in my constituency about that. He said yesterday that he did not like them. Nice Herr Kohl will not be the beneficiary of all this because lots of nasty people far to his left will benefit from it. So if the modernising tendency thinks that this is some kind of modernising blueprint for the Labour party, let them just look at the French socialist party.

6.30 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): The right hon. Member modestly reminds us that he has been a defence spokesman for his party. With even greater modesty, he omitted to say that before that he was a Treasury Minister for the Labour Government in the mid-1970s. We have enjoyed his extremely amusing speech, particularly his obsession with his hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) and his speech last night—subject to reading the record carefully, I think that he mentioned his hon. Friend 27 times—but I remember what he said when he was a Treasury Minister. It is a long time ago and the right hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I bring up something of great importance: he has refused ever since to retract it, but I remember it vividly and it is on record in *Hansard*. He said that the proportion of the French population engaged in agriculture in those days was 25 per cent. I remember that I and other hon. Members asked him to correct the figure because it was 7 per cent., but he refused to do so. Notwithstanding his hugely amusing speech, therefore, how can we attach any credence to what he is saying now? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Davies: It is all right, I knew what the hon. Gentleman was going to say. He says it all the time. He caught me out on one occasion. When he is a Minister —if he can keep working at it, I hope that he will eventually become one—I will try and catch him out.

I have referred to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool not because of anything to do with him personally but because he is a representative of the modernising tendency in the Labour party, and I am very concerned that the modernisation goes ahead properly, without leading to the destruction of the party. I was merely pointing out that the kind of modernisation carried out by the French socialist party has not worked very well.

In any event, I will move on to article 105 and the European central bank. The bank is to be the instrument for the control of inflation and of monetary policy. It is quite interesting to look at the set-up because, as one of my hon. Friends said, it is called the European system of central banks. It is described in this way because the Germans have plonked into the middle of this treaty their own federal system of the Bundesbank which has lots of other little banks all round the Länderbanks. So when this goes through, and after the statute has been brought in to make the Bank of England more or less autonomous according to the statutes of the central bank, we, too, shall have a Länderbank which will be the Bank of England, as it were, on the outside and the European central bank in the middle.

The object of the central bank is to control inflation by monetary means. It is a monetarist treaty. The belief is that inflation can be controlled only by monetary means. There is a lot of mythology about this, about reserves and corsets and things like that, but monetary control is basically a matter of interest rates and, in the end, whatever few extra reserves the Bundesbank puts into the economy or the Bank of England takes out, whatever straitjackets are put round, whatever dual rates of interest the French may play with—the commercial or the financial franc—control of monetary policy is about interest rates, and the object of the central bank is to control interest rates.

The control of interest rates is the prime instrument for trying to arrive at price stability. Price stability means getting as close as possible to zero inflation, not every price being stable but there being stability across the board and prices not moving up and down. So the bank exists and it is autonomous for that very reason because, as Mr. Gavin Davies, who works for Goldman Sachs, pointed out in a perceptive article in *The Independent* this week, the theory used to be, and the continental theory still is, that the control of inflation is a technical matter and that, because it is technical, it should be taken out of the hands of politicians and put on auto-pilot. The matter is then dealt with purely technically, with no consideration of output, growth or unemployment.

This, too, reminds me of my days as defence spokesman. I think it was Edward Teller or one of his ilk who devised something called the doomsday machine. They did not believe that people could actually carry out deterrence; in other words, politicians might not unleash the weapons when the time came. The only way deterrence could work was to programme this doomsday machine, and when the Russian missiles passed a certain point, half-way across the Atlantic or wherever, the machine would trigger off the American response and the Russians would know that.

It would be a bit like that for control of inflation. The autonomous bank is the auto-pilot and merely carries out decisions. When my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool was speaking yesterday, one or two hon. Members interrupted from a sedentary position to say that this was nonsense, that the Bundesbank was not independent, that it listened to politicians and that it was subject to pressure. Obviously, even the Bundesbank cannot live in a complete vacuum, but those of my hon. Friends who fondly believe that the Bundesbank is not autonomous should just talk to former Chancellor Schmidt. What happened to him in 1980 or 1981? He is convinced that, by refusing to go along with what he wanted, the Bundesbank brought down his Government. But we have no need to go back as far as 1981; we need only look at what is happening now. So the Bundesbank is as autonomous as it is possible to be and, on a European scale, it will be even more autonomous because it will not have a Government breathing down its neck: it will have something called ECOFIN which seems to figure broadly in some debates, but there will be no Government there even to make speeches and tell the bank what it should do. The bank is autonomous, it decides on interest rates and, as we have seen, it does so without too much consideration of the effects.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): May I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to article 2 of the treaty and what it says, because this is what article 105 on monetary policy is related to? Perhaps he will tell the Committee if he is in favour of the objectives in article 2, which reads,

> "It shall be the aim of the Community, by establishing a Common Market and progressively approximating the economic policies of Member States, to promote throughout the Community a harmonious development of economic activities, a continuous and balanced expansion, an increased stability, an accelerated raising of the standard of living and closer relations between its Member States."

That is what article 2 says, and the means of achieving this is said to be the establishment of the central bank.

Mr. Davies: I have dealt with article 2. I tried last night, but no one was listening. I tried just now, but again the hon. Gentleman was not listening. So I will not go back to it.

I turn now to the split between economic and monetary policy inherent in setting up the bank. It seems to me very silly, to use a not particularly elegant word, to split economic policy from monetary policy. We have seen what is happening in Germany today. I am not saying that the problems in east Germany could be alleviated easily if there were no separate Bundesbank, but if ever there was an exercise to demonstrate that perhaps it does not make sense to separate economic policy from monetary policy, east Germany is it.

The German Government want to increase public expenditure to revive the economy of east Germany, but the Bundesbank, quite properly, pays not a blind bit of interest because, by statute, it is concerned only with the internal value of the currency. In a sedentary intervention —I think that I heard him right—my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) said that during reunification the Germans exchanged one east mark for one west mark. That, apparently, was a good example of how politicians can overrule the Bundesbank. That is not true. The Bundesbank is concerned only with the internal value of the mark, which basically is inflation. That is why

Mr. Kohl was able to offer—in an expensive and damaging way—one west mark for one east mark. Karl Otto Pöhl resigned because he disagreed with what the Government were doing, but that was within the province of the Government, not the Bundesbank.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: The hon. Gentleman is making a terribly important speech. I do not recall reading in the Labour party's manifesto—for which, I know, the right hon. Gentleman is not responsible—or in our manifesto a proposal to set up an independent British central bank. I should like to know when that became Labour policy and whether the right hon. Gentleman thinks that it is an appropriate device for effecting a fundamental change in our economic management through the surrogacy of this Maastricht treaty. The House has not debated the principles behind an independent central bank for this country alone, yet we are legislating for it without a proper debate.

Mr. Davies: That is right; it is article 108, I think, which will be enacted under the Bill.

I am told that an independent, autonomous British bank is Labour policy—[HON. MEMBERS: "Since when?"] It was decided by the non-modernised Labour party at last year's conference—I do not know what the modernised one will do. In a short composite resolution, it decided that the Bank of England should be independent or autonomous. I prefer "autonomous". My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool is good on words. Perhaps he appreciates that the word "autonomous" conveys the impression a bit better.

All I am saying is that the proposed split is very silly, but the mistake is being repeated with the European central bank. The European central bank will be responsible for the internal value of the ecu. We were told yesterday, "It is all right; the exchange rate of the ecu will be determined by politicians". I do not disagree. The external value of the ecu will be floating. I do not think that perfect floating can be achieved, but party policy is managed floating. I do not know what that is, so I had better read the conference resolution. I am confused because apparently we must have fixed exchange rates at the moment, but once we have reached the promised land the ecu will float.

Mr. Shepherd: I can bring the right hon. Gentleman hot news from the Frost interview with the Prime Minister. Maastricht is slightly out of date as the Prime Minister is working on a world exchange rate mechanism: the Japanese yen and United States dollar will be intimately linked in this more universalist approach. I know that some foolish hon. Members—even Conservative Members—have giggled at the suggestion, but the right hon. Gentleman should impress on the House the importance of these developments.

Mr. Davies: A world ERM is basically Bretton Woods. Finally——

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): More.

6.45 pm

Mr. Davies: I have run out of things to say.

What depresses me about my colleagues who are in favour of this European venture is that they now tend to deny it. I should have thought that the ends justify the means and that they would rejoice in the convergence criteria, the central bank and everything that has been set up because the object is to achieve EMU and a single currency as soon as possible.

Previous members of my party—the Jenkinses and Levers—would have rejoiced and said, "The pain is all worth it; the end is justified by the means", which is almost a Leninist approach to economic and political life.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): Would the right hon. Gentleman like to add to his general list of subjects for rejoicing the fact that the promised land is not yet upon us? The Danish Government have resigned, which I understand will mean that the Danish referendum will be held later, so those who support Maastricht will have to wait a little longer for heaven on earth.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): On a point of order, Dame Janet. Can what we have just heard affect the way in which time is assigned to the Bill? The Prime Minister gave a clear assurance that the Bill will not be given a Third Reading until after the second Danish referendum. If the second referendum is to be postponed by a change of Government and a possible general election in Denmark, that gives us much more time to discuss fully every clause of the Bill, and neither the Government nor anyone else should be in any hurry.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Dame Janet. This is momentous news. It was the intention of the previous lamented Danish Government to put the Edinburgh conclusions to the people of Denmark in a second plebiscite or referendum. There is now no Government in Denmark. The next Danish Government might decide that they do not want to proceed further with this rotten treaty. As there is much uncertainty, is not it appropriate for a Minister to inform the House of the Government's proposals in these new circumstances? It is futile and fatuous for us to continue the debate when there is no Government in Denmark, no prospect of a referendum, and probably no prospect that the treaty will proceed in Denmark. Why proceed with the debate when the whole thing is stone dead?

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Further to the point of order, Dame Janet. Before the Committee gets overexcited, may I point out that sometimes we imagine that we are at the centre of the world, but occasionally are reminded that we are not? So far as I know, only the Danish Prime Minister has resigned. As the Conservative party knows only too well, and as the Opposition know to our cost, that does not automatically mean a general election.

The Second Deputy Chairman: I think that I can now answer the point, having heard the points of order. As Chairman of this Committee of the whole House, I have no responsibility for other Governments or what impact they might have. My only concern is with the Committee stage before us.

Mr. Dykes: I have a point of order, Dame Janet, but not exactly on that point, which I am not seeking to follow, as you have given us your conclusion, for which we thank you.

Can you guide the House? Many hon. Members on both sides are shocked and angered by the anti-Europeans saying that the sovereignty of this Chamber and this Parliament is sacrosanct and not to be negotiated away;

[Mr. Dykes]

yet they are constantly harping on the constitutional activities of another country and saying that they should be considered before we come to a decision. Can you guide the Committee?

The Second Deputy Chairman: Yes. That is not a point of order for the Chair. As the hon. Member well knows, hon. Members must be responsible for what they say.

Mr. Davies: If the Danish Government had resigned I was proposing to go on for another hour, but as it was just the Danish Prime Minister I shall sit down. I merely say that these are fundamental issues both for my party and for the House and there is also the question of democracy to be taken into account quite apart from economic policy. No doubt we can come back to these matters when we reach further amendments. I think that we should look at them in the interests of the economy of this country and I see nothing here that will do other than cause damage.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): We have listened to an impressive speech from the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). He is genuinely one of those witty speakers to whom one could listen for hours. Indeed, we did. Despite the usual courtesies, the right hon. Gentleman will, of course, wish to leave the Chamber quite rapidly and I well understand that, because clearly his constituents will want to know that the speech he made in the Committee this afternoon and last evening brought down the Danish Prime Minister. That is obviously momentous news. It is quite difficult to follow that speech and I shall endeavour to be slightly briefer, but the right hon. Gentleman has made important points on this cluster of amendments.

The fact that the Danish Prime Minister may have resigned is obviously of great interest to this Committee, but in the midst of a well-attended Committee session we should value the fact that the Committee is scrutinising the Maastricht Bill for itself. The provisions of the Bill are important to the Committee and this country and the attitudes in another country are not of immediate importance, Indeed, the timetable that the Prime Minister has set forth, to complete Third Reading by May at the latest, would still be valid and if the Danes decided to delay their referendum we would clearly maintain that timetable because the original intention was on the basis that the Prime Minister believed that the Danes would have had an earlier referendum.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I am at a loss to understand quite the point, because as I understand it the Foreign Secretary has assured us that if the Danes fail to ratify the treaty, it is dead. Therefore, this Committee hangs upon the events that take place in Denmark. I should point out to my hon. Friend that I was a Member, as was he, when we passed, lamentably, the Bill called the Football Spectators Bill. The House was marched to the passing of a statute which hung upon someone else's judgment. That is self-denigratory and humbling to this Committee and inappropriate for the passing of great legislation. The truth of the matter is that if the Foreign Secretary's statement stands, the Committee's deliberations are consequential on what the Danes do.

Mr. Taylor: With great respect to my hon. Friend, who is a learned constitutional expert, the reality is that this Committee's deliberations on the Bill are the responsibility of this Committee. The fact that the whole Maastricht treaty may be rendered invalid by the Danish decision is a separate matter. But there are very great differences to the interests of this country according whether or not we merely respond to what the Danes do.

I strongly hope that this country and this Parliament will make their own decisions. If, subsequently, the Danes were not to ratify the treaty, clearly the 12 members of the Community would need to get together and the Foreign Secretary has rightly said that the Danish membership of the Community is as important as that of the other members, in the sense that there are 12 members of the Community.

That is not the same thing as delaying decisions in this Committee because decisions may be delayed in another country. I strongly think that this Committee should take itself sufficiently seriously to make sure that we conduct our deliberations on the treaty in this country's interests.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving way because he may be surprised to know that I welcome almost everything he has just said, but has he not forgotten one important factor? Unless the Folketing recommends that the consequences of the decision taken in Edinburgh will precipitate another referendum or unless the Danes believe that those recommendations can be made—and they were made, were they not, and negotiated, perhaps for completely different reasons, by the Prime Minister who has only just resigned—is it not possible that another Prime Minister will make another recommendation? There is as yet no full guarantee that any referendum will take place. In those circumstances, at least the need for speed or indeed for any further proceedings at all may disappear.

Mr. Taylor: I am grateful to my old sparring partner, the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), for his support and I may store that up for the future as well. On the wider point, we do not know what the Danish Parliament will do, but the idea that we should suspend these discussions because we do not know——

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North) *rose*——

Mr. Taylor: I am endeavouring to answer the first point, then I will give way.

Mr. Radice: I was trying to help.

Mr. Taylor: Let me help myself before the hon. Member helps me, if I may. The reality is that seven of the eight Danish parties are now, effectively, in favour of what the Danish Government negotiated, so I think that we should stop second-guessing the Danish situation and look at our own.

The point about the amendments in this group is that they effectively remove the amendments to the treaty of Rome that were negotiated at Maastricht. We have heard various arguments about why that should be the case. The difficulty I find is that those who support the amendments before us would therefore be left with the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act unchanged. That is particularly interesting for my hon. Friend for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who is not with us at present. The fact that he supported the Single European Act is a matter of interest and slight confusion for many of the rest of us. I raised this in the debate in Committee in December and it was raised

again yesterday. The fact is that it was the Single European Act that made the dramatic step forward from the treaty of Rome and the arguments that were used yesterday, that the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act were all about an economic community, as if we had never left EFTA, are clearly and self-evidently bogus.

In the treaty of Rome there are many references to matters other than economics and if one looks at the Single European Act one will find that it added many items other than those specifically connected with the single market, the 1992 programme. The chapter headings of the Single European Act themselves indicate that social policy was very much in the forefront of the minds of the people who negotiated the treaty, and economic and monetary co-operation, with "union" in brackets, were also very much in the forefront of people's minds with the consequences that flowed from that, which are, of course, not just free trade consequences.

Indeed even in title II, article 3, there were several insertions into the activities of the Community made by the Single European Act. One of them was policy in the social sphere compromising the European social fund, for example. Another was strengthening of economic and social cohesion.

It is impossible to say that if we were to abolish all the changes made in the Maastricht treaty we would be left with something that was about economics. That is simply not the case.

It is interesting that, had he but realised it, my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford was in some difficulty with the grounds on which he chose to defend his position. In order to achieve the 1992 programme—the 285 measures required to create a free market with free movement of goods, people, services and capital—we had to have a series of strong Community institutions and a strong referee to ensure that the measures were applied evenly —I shall deal with that issue later—and we had to overcome the protectionist instincts that could arise over a variety of issues in any of the member countries. That was understood by our then Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher. It was why the Single European Act embraced qualified majority voting.

7 pm

In order to arrive at the very thing that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford defends himself as having supported, we had to strengthen the institutions that he now says he cannot abide and which he regards as marking the end of Britain as we know it. That is bogus. We joined the European Community in the 1970s, after a big debate, because it was believed to be in Britain's interests that there should not be built on the continent a bloc which we failed to influence.

Indeed, we joined the Community to prevent something which, in the 1950s, we thought would never happen—the solidifying of the Franco-German alliance. That is an important point. As a Labour Foreign Secretary, Anthony Crosland, remarked, it represented the first permanent attachment of Britain to the continent since the Reformation. It was the first time that we believed that we had to make such a commitment to prevent what has always been part of British foreign policy, which is that there should not be a continental bloc that we would be unable to influence. Influencing it was so essential to us that we joined the Community with all the infrastructure that it embraced.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): My hon. Friend is taking great pains to explain that the Community was never only about economics and spoke about our joining the "European Community". In fact, we did not join the European Community—we joined the European Economic Community. If he asks his constituents, he will find that they believe that we principally joined a Common Market and were not involving ourselves in other political institutions. I believe that, until the Maastricht treaty is ratified, the title is still the EEC. If the treaty is not ratified, it will remain so.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend takes a great interest in these matters, but I advise him to have another look at the treaty of Rome. The fact that the Community was called "the European Economic Community" should not delude us into believing that that meant it had nothing to do with anything other than free trade. For heaven's sake, we left a free trade area to join the Community. We knew what the institutional structure was——

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Taylor: Please let me finish this point, and then I shall willingly give way.

We knew what the institutional structure was when we joined. We knew that the Community's ambitions covered a range of issues and could not be achieved by free trade alone. The institutional structure has been apparent since we joined, and we knew what we were in for. Indeed, the words "European Community" have been used in all except legal documents in the Community since 1978. We had nearly 10 years' warning of what we were doing when we signed the Single European Act.

Mr. Bill Walker: May I clarify a point? My hon. Friend was drawing the Reformation into his argument. What date was the Reformation in Britain?

Mr. Taylor: The Reformation took place before I entered Parliament. I shall not bandy points about the Reformation with my respected hon. Friend from Scotland because that would lead us into other difficulties, but it was a very long time ago.

If one considers the history of the Community since the mid-1950s, it is clear that all along we have been part of an economic and political community and that many of its objectives were to be attained by involving ourselves in institutional structures and political debate.

This group of amendments, which would wipe out the changes made at Maastricht, would still leave us with an intensely political community. We must ask ourselves whether that is an ideal situation, and the answer is no. In many cases, what people in this country determined had gone wrong since the Single European Act was passed was on the agenda for correction at Maastricht, and the British Government were able to put much of it right for themselves.

For example, since I came to the House in 1987 there have been many late-night debates about the misuse of Community funds. One of the problems was that no one had sufficient clout or sufficient evidence to point the finger. One of the changes made in the Maastricht treaty is that the Court of Auditors is given institutional status, which is an extremely good thing. Also, the European Parliament is given greater powers of scrutiny of monetary

[Mr. Taylor]

and budgetary matters and can call the Commissioners to greater account. The Committee should welcome such developments.

Another objection that has been raised many times in the Committee is, "While we abide by the rules, chaps, the other lot don't." That is probably true, even though the rules by which we abide are often more onerous than those facing other countries because our civil servants have been particularly zealous in interpreting the rules in the first place. However, I shall leave that issue aside.

The treaty negotiated at Maastricht involves a strengthening of the powers of the European Court of Justice. Before there is shock and horror at the fact that the European Court of Justice should be involved at all, let us be clear—my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) should pay careful attention to this—that by joining the European Community on 1 January 1973 we effectively accepted the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. It is not a new concept which has suddenly emerged.

The new set of regulations and powers given to the Community to put the single market in place after the Single European Act did not entail a consequent increase in the powers of the European Court of Justice to ensure that the rules were applied by those who agreed them. I hope that the British public will become aware that it is in our interests to apply the Maastricht treaty provisions because they answer one of the great public concerns, which is, why do we appear to be at a disadvantage compared to many other countries?

Mr. Richard Shepherd: There is no question but that the European Court of Justice existed in the 1970s, but one of the issues that concern some of us is that at that time its remit was strictly limited to the European Economic Community, but the change explicit in the treaty broadens the range of its jurisdiction. By removing the word "economic" we have given it a catholicity of ranges and remits. That is the fundamental difference which causes much anxiety to many Conservatives.

Mr. Taylor: If that were the case, I could understand such anxieties, but what my hon. Friend says is not technically correct. The European Court of Justice is given jurisdiction over everything in the treaty of Rome. Therefore, it is also given jurisdiction over everything that emerged from the Single European Act which is consolidated in the treaty of Rome. As I said, the Single European Act was not about a free trade area alone.

I understand my hon. Friend's concerns and there are issues over which I would not wish the European Court of Justice to have jurisdiction. If one reads the treaty of Maastricht, one finds that it does not have jurisdiction over the two new pillars being constructed on foreign and security policy and on matters of justice—to put it technically, those matters are not justiciable.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): There is a complete misconception here. The Commission can be given jurisdiction. Matters can be referred to the European Court of Justice. With regard to the misconceptions that are being put forward by the Government, I can give references. First, the Commission is fully associated under articles J.9 and K.4(2), and it can draft legislation under article K.3(2). Furthermore, any legislation may be implemented by special convention under article 100c. Therefore, my hon. Friend cannot say that these matters are beyond the jurisdiction of the court and the Commission.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend has made an interesting point, but he will be aware that, with regard to the pillar to which I am referring, the Commission is involved. But the Commission does not have the power of initiation, and that makes a very big difference. My hon. Friend will know that the European political co-operation procedure for foreign policy that was established under the Single European Act involved the Commission. But the European Court of Justice does not have power to render the elements of those two pillars justiciable in the way that it does in the case of the treaties of Rome. That is why, during this Committee stage, we are not faced with those matters of foreign security policy and justice. Those matters are outwith the Bill because they do not make amendments to the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way as I realise that frequent breaks in a speech disturb its pattern. I must refer him back to the provisions relating to co-operation in the fields of justice and home affairs. Article K.9 is important as it says:

> "The Council, acting unanimously on the initiative of the Commission or a Member State, may decide to apply Article 100c of the Treaty".

Article 100c is therefore brought into play. I do not wish to be pedantic; I simply want to know what my hon. Friend thinks about that.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend confirms my point. In respect of such matters, Governments make unanimous decisions in the Council.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): It is opting in rather than opting out.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend comes to my rescue technically. The reality, however, is that this is very different from the unquestioned nature of the power of the European Court of Justice under the treaties of Rome. The precise fact is that the Maastricht treaty has clearly separated the other two pillars. Only with unanimous support under article K.9, which has been cited, will reference to the European Court of Justice come into effect. All these things are important.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Taylor: Interventions make the debate exciting from my point of view, but they may not please other Members who wish to speak. I shall very happily give way in a moment.

Let me put all of this in context. The treaty of Rome and the Single European Act—taken together, parts of the treaties of Rome—are, in effect, an expression of Britain's acceptance that it is a part of an economic and political community and that certain decisions are more in the interests of the British people if there is co-operation through the institutions of the Community, sometimes even with qualified majority voting.

Yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) made the point that, because of the changes that might be made under

economic and monetary union, we would see almost the end of Britain's nationhood. That, I think, is slightly over the top.

In economic and monetary terms, Britain is a particularly exposed nation as it is heavily dependent on trading. For a very long time, this country has been buffeted by changes in other countries. Whether or not we are in the exchange rate mechanism, monetary policies set in other countries determine monetary policies in this country. We cannot be isolated. Indeed, that is why, after we left the exchange rate mechanism in September, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, quite rightly, continued to make it clear that British monetary policy could not ignore the monetary policies being set in other countries and, indeed, that he could not set British monetary policy without watching the effect on the exchange rate. He was not attempting to excuse what had happened with regard to the ERM; he was simply recognising the facts.

It is very important to make the point that the Community itself has free movement of capital. No member country has the right to reimpose exchange controls. I accept that there have been breaches of this in the past few months. *[Laughter.]* Hon. Members should be cautious with their hilarity. Let them take note of how quickly the controls have been removed again. The reinstatement was temporary, and the controls were removed. Ireland is a notable example.

We were the first to abolish exchange controls, and we want the Community to have no exchange controls. However, the very important consequence is that capital finds the home that it most wants to find. If any of our domestic policies are out of line with those of other member countries, capital will find a different home. That applies to industry and to investors in Government bonds. A Government with a very high deficit cannot ignore the fact that some of the deficit may have to be funded abroad. That is the situation in which we currently find ourselves.

7.15 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The hon. Member is presenting a very interesting defence of what I regard as a pretty indefensible position. Does not he accept that if the principle by which the European economic policy is to be run is that capital will find the home that is most suitable to it, any social policies relating to housing, unemployment—or employment—and the environment are bound to take second place? Is not that at the very heart of this whole debate?

Mr. Taylor: I am very grateful to the hon. Member for his intervention. That is precisely the point I wish to make. The reality is that it is not a question whether we can isolate ourselves, whether we can protect British monetary policy, surrounding it with a barrier. The question is: what sorts of policies flow from the conclusion that we have to respect what other countries are doing? That leads to a series of political decisions. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and I will differ as to how to protect social, housing and other benefits. Those are matters that become a series of priorities in the domestic debate.

With regard to the point that I think is significant, the hon. Gentleman will not like what I have to say. Yesterday, his hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) did a few political contortions in an effort to make the best of what might be a bad job. The significant point is that the debate in the Community itself is political. Philosophies bring much to bear on the outcome even of negotiations on treaties. For example, it has not always been known to be strong Labour policy that the principle of an open-market economy, with free competition, should be enshrined in the treaty. But I am glad to say it is enshrined in article 3A because even socialist Governments, such as in France, have been strongly influenced by Conservative thinking over many years. They have been prepared to see right at the centre of the treaty statements with which Conservatives here strongly agree and which strengthen our desire to see the Maastricht treaty ratified as it enshrines many of the political values that we hold dear.

The European system of central banks and everything that flows from it have price stability as a principal tenet. Such things are acceptable to the Conservative party, but probably less acceptable to the Opposition. But that is party politics; it is not a question that arises from whether or not we are in the Community. The reality is that countries that are interdependent with regard to monetary policy do not sit down and ignore what is going on, but get stuck in.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South spoke about the problems of sovereignty. The clever action taken over economic and monetary union was not that we negotiated ourselves an opt-out—I disagree with the Minister of State about the use of that phrase—but that we negotiated ourselves an opt-in. In the process, we maintain parliamentary sovereignty. It is important to remember in that respect that we have not bound a successor Parliament. Meanwhile, we have the right to examine the matter and to influence the institutions that will be set up, including their character and objectives.

I agree that, for those who want nothing to do with it, that is not much of a bonus. They might say, "We shall pack our bags and go home. We do not like this game." But those of us who recognise that we are totally interdependent in the Community—by the facts of the matter, many of which stem from the very action that hon. Members who are now against Maastricht support, including the 1992 programme and the single market—appreciate that we must influence the institutions. And in that process of influencing them, we must make sure that they have the right objectives, which is why I welcome many of the phrases that are used, such as "open market economy" and "free competition."

Mr. Austin Mitchell *rose*——

Mr. Taylor: I give way to the hon. Gentleman because his tie is irresistible.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman's argument is jejune. There is a huge difference between being influenced by economic and monetary policies in other countries—we are influenced by them because we are part of the same world—and being required, even compelled, to maintain our exchange rate within 6 percentage points of DM2·95. Influence is inevitable, but compulsion to maintain relativity in exchange rates is a different matter. If the hon. Gentleman believes that we have influence because we are part of an institution, perhaps he will explain what influence we had on the reshaping, restructuring and realignment of the ERM by virtue of being a member of it.

Mr. Taylor: We are not compelled to do anything in the ERM. It was a British Government decision—I supported it; I am not fudging that—to enter and maintain that rate. We have discussed that subject at great length and I shall not today be deflected into discussing the rights and wrongs of German internal domestic policy, of which I have considerable criticisms, which I have aired to my German friends rather than simply in the House.

When we come to the third stage, the House will make its decision. Convergence is an important issue and many factors set out in the treaty about convergence do not make me feel uncomfortable. That does not mean that I would want us tomorrow to reduce our deficit to 3 per cent. of GDP. With that I would be uncomfortable. But I am not uncomfortable with the long-term objective, and no Government who, over a period—let us leave that undefined—believe in a balanced budget would feel uncomfortable with that.

That reinforces my argument because, given that we are interdependent in the Community—only in the Community is there the Single European Act consequence of the free movement of capital to which I referred—convergence is a desirable objective. There are various means by which to create convergence, and we could discuss that at length, but, given that convergence is a desirable objective, I have no problem with it in relation to the treaty.

Mr. Knapman: My hon. Friend will agree that we Conservatives believe in market forces. Is he saying that there is a right rate for any market? If so, what is the right rate for the pound to the deutschmark at any time? If there is no right rate for a market, there is no right time to join an exchange rate mechanism, and the country cannot afford to go through that again.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend and I have differed in many debates about the merits of managed currencies and exchange rate mechanisms. I suggest that it is inconceivable that, in a market with free flows of capital, there is no policy towards exchange rates. I fear that we must continue to differ.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North) *rose*——

Mr. Taylor: My generosity in having given way will be criticised because of the length of my speech, so I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not give way further.

The Maastricht treaty gives Britain many opportunities, the anticipation of some of which have appeared over the years on our party political agendas. For example, an aspect of the treaty is that we try to bring the whole workings of the Community closer to its citizens. We shall later have a chance to debate the technicalities of subsidiarity or minimum intervention, and I shall not deal with that now.

Let us not ignore the fact that there are several initiatives in the treaty for creating greater openness and accountability, for giving British citizens the ability to refer to an ombudsman cases of maladministration in the Community and the greater powers of the European Parliament. Also we should take into account the stress on national Parliaments. It is the first time that such an ability has arisen. It is up to the Committee to interpret it and I welcome its appearance in the treaty. We should be pleased at the inclusion of those matters and support them. They strengthen matters and I urge the Committee not to throw those gains away simply because a vociferous few here are concerned with the institutions which were set up in the 1950s and which we joined in the 1970s.

The Community will not remain static. The treaty that we are discussing has considerable benefits for Britain, not least the fact that the move to ever-closer union, to which we have been attached since the 1970s, can now be seen to take a wider route than it took previously, for there can now be an intergovernmental route to closer union. That is what the pillars are about on foreign policy and justice matters.

It has been shown in the treaties of Rome that the centralising instinct and inevitability that some people—I am not among them—wish to see in the Community have been arrested through the principle of subsidiarity. It is not a question whether on every issue we can define that down to the last dot and comma. The implication of what is on the face of the treaty means realistically that habits in the Community will change—they already are changing—and we have seen flesh being put on that principle at Birmingham and Edinburgh.

The Maastricht treaty has many advantages for Britain in areas about which hon. Members rightly believe that we should take particular care. It avoids a pre-commitment at a future date to a single currency and economic and monetary union. The interest of the House is protected in the treaty. We shall have the opportunity to debate that later. As is stated in the Treasury memorandum in the appendix to the report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, we are not automatically bound to rejoin the ERM simply by ratifying the treaty.

I put my cards on the table. I believe that some form of ERM is inevitable. Constitutionally, the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South on that issue do not hold water, and the Financial Secretary made that clear in the debate yesterday. I urge the House to address the treaty as part of what we are already committed to and as a measure that strengthens, rather than weakens, British interests, which does not undermine the position of the House, and which has advantages that we should do more to explain to the British people, who would then perhaps understand why we should be scrutinising the Bill rather than moving towards a referendum. The House is the right place in which to examine the Bill, and I hope that that will continue to be the case during the Committee stage.

7.30 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) and I disagree about almost everything in economics and politics, but there is one aspect of his speech with which I agree. Rightly and properly, frankly and openly, the hon. Gentleman described the character of the treaty, and said that it represented his monetarist political values. I too have come to that conclusion, and that is why I oppose the monetarist nature of the convergence cum monetary union in the treaty.

The hon. Gentleman's speech was open and honest, and it showed the differences between us—the reasons why I shall not support the inclusion of title II. At the heart of the treaty, and at the heart of title II, lies monetary union —monetary union, moreover, of a particular character, which the hon. Member for Esher sensibly and openly described as taking a monetarist route.

During the past day or so of debate, it has been said that at least the treaty provides enough flexibility, and enough of an alternative opportunity to pursue convergence and monetary union by other processes. In that connection, much has been said about the famous article 2. I do not need to dwell long on that, because my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) gave us a useful critical and textual analysis of it. I shall be rather more generous than he was about article 2, because I recognise that some of its wording—the references to high employment, social cohesion, and the rest—means that its tone and character are——

Mr. Austin Mitchell: An improvement.

Mr. Rowlands: Yes, an improvement—although, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli said, even article 2 contains more than a germ of monetarist thinking.

I shall show that, unfortunately, from that point the quality of article 2 is somewhat demoted as the processes and nature of the draft monetary union are revealed to us. My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) and, to a certain extent, my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) said that there was a route to monetary union based on growth, investment and jobs, and that the terms of the treaty made it possible to hold those objectives as central.

I have to tell my hon. Friends that I do not believe that that is feasible in anything like the time scale envisaged for the treaty. Such concepts of growth, and convergence based on those sentiments, would require a continuous consistent economic policy to be followed by 12 democratically elected Governments over a considerable period.

I have spent nearly 25 years in the House arguing for some convergence between my constituency and the United Kingdom average. One could have thought that convergence of the economies of regions and communities within one country would be a simple task compared with convergence involving 12 countries, but I have to report to the House that, according to the latest figures, which relate to 1991 or 1992, the county of Mid Glamorgan, part of which I represent, has only 72 per cent. of the United Kingdom GDP per head—and the ratio is getting worse. The figure has fallen from 79 per cent. to 72 per cent.

Even within the United Kingdom, I have seen no convergence between the community that I represent and the rest of the United Kingdom; I have seen a divergence of economic success, wealth and performance—so I find it hard to believe in convergence. I may be unduly pessimistic, but I think that I am realistic in believing that convergence and monetary union are not likely to be achieved by the dream route, with investment and jobs at its centre, in anything like the time scale envisaged in the treaty.

Furthermore, that is not what is on offer in the treaty. Although article 2 sets an improved tone, after that its role is demoted both in the process of moving towards monetary union and in the final nature of the union achieved.

This is a Committee stage, and it is the Committee's task to analyse what is before it, both in the Bill and in the treaty. As the debate is about title II, I shall briefly take the Committee through what happens to the good sentiments of article 2 in the subsequent processes of title II—how it is valued, how it is eventually assessed, and its final role and function.

By article 3a, paragraph 3, there is a new set of criteria, and there are new guiding principles that will come into force. The language of the definition in paragraph 3 is interesting. I have learnt to read and understand the language of such documents, and I hope that I understand article 3a, paragraph 3, all too well. Article 3, paragraph 1, contains a reference to the contents of article 2 as generally a good thing, but by paragraph 3 the guiding principles that "shall entail compliance"—they are not simply principles to be generally promoted, or desirable objectives; they have to be complied with—are a narrower band:

"stable prices, sound public finances and monetary conditions and a sustainable balance of payments."

During the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool yesterday, there were some interesting exchanges. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) ever so gently suggested that the language of the treaty was monetarist—possibly the language of the 1930s. He was accused of being a senior non-modernising member of the party, and his idea was dismissed.

Ironically, I had been sitting here wondering where I had already heard in a consistent form the language and principles of that paragraph—which are repeated throughout all the articles. I had just finished an interesting study and analysis of the way in which Whitehall handled the dreadful problems faced by my constituents in the 1930s, and when my right hon. Friend mentioned the 1930s it triggered off a connection with that research.

The language and principles of article 3a, paragraph 3, resembled the weekly and monthly statements of Chancellor of the Exchequer and Prime Minister Chamberlain, which rejected any form of public works or deficit financing on any scale for the salvation of communities such as Merthyr Tydfil. The language is not coded; it is an openly described set of monetarist principles. By the time we reach article 3, it is those principles which have to be complied with. They are not simply promoted as desirable objectives; they are the criteria which must bite.

By article 3, we have found out that the pleasures and joys of the sentiments behind article 2 have been put in a slightly different context, and now stand in a rather different relationship. As the hon. Member for Esher openly and honourably stated, that series of monetarist principles, which he thinks should be at the heart of the process towards monetary union, are statements of his political values.

Those monetarist principles left my constituency in the 1980s—as they left it in the 1930s—to suffer increasing unemployment. I do not intend to vote for a treaty and a process towards monetary union that enshrines those principles. I refuse to do so. I am sorry that some of my hon. Friends feel that they can manipulate that treaty and that process. I do not believe that we shall be able to do that. For 30 years, my predecessor and I have argued the case. We still find ourselves not converged but diverged in our economic activity, even compared to the level in the United Kingdom.

I do not believe that some of the desired objectives in article 2 will be carried through in the processes to achieve

[Mr. Rowlands]

monetary union. Article 3a dilutes the sensible objectives of article 2. I tried to track the role of article 2 through the subsequent articles. In other words, I tried to track the general and desirable tasks in article 2 through the remainder of the articles to the point at which monetary union is achieved. I then looked at article 102a. Of course, that is where the cat is let out of the bag in terms of the function and role of article 2 in the process of monetary union.

We have all been taught to draft in different ways. Words are what we live with; words are our trade. I had a fantastic schooling. I spent four and a half years in the real school of drafting—indeed, in one of the ultimate factories of drafting in which one does one's apprenticeship: the Foreign Office which does nothing but draft.

By the time we reach article 102a on economic and monetary policy, the function and role of article 2, with its desirable objectives of cohesion and high employment, have been changed. Article 102a says:

"Member States shall conduct their economic policies with a view to contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the Community, as defined in Article 2,"

It is simply "a view to contributing". If the drafting of that article is not a product of King Charles street, it should have been. If it was not a product of King Charles street, our continental friends have learnt the British art of drafting weasel words to cover the diminution of the importance of article 2 as part of the monetary process.

Although the desirable objective in article 2 is diminished in article 102a, the monetarist principles of article 3a3 are still there to be complied with. So the balance between the joys of article 2 and compliance with the monetary principles of article 3 are now carried through. One is "a view to contributing to", and the other is undoubtedly something which must be complied with or else.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): There are two ways to read the treaty. One way is to read it, as my hon. Friend has done, from the beginning—that may be the logical way to read through a treaty—and to say that article 3a changes the definition, especially from paragraph 1 to paragraph 3, where the stable price element is introduced, and then to read further and say that it is a matter of having regard to the words used.

If one reads the treaty backwards, looking at each of the minor elements with reference to article 2, which is the essential task of the Community, one can say that article 102a is a subsidiary of article 3a, because that is how it is written. One can also say that article 3 is a subsidiary of article 3a.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. While I have been in the Chamber and, indeed, while I have been watching the monitor during the debate, I have noticed that interventions seem to be very long. Some of them are tantamount to speeches, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear that in mind.

Mr. Rowlands: I understand the point that my hon. Friend is making. Although it may occasionally be justified and useful to read a document backwards, I have not found that so. If I understand my hon. Friend's point, and if one looks at the structure of the treaty and the title, at the beginning there is a series of general statements, and then a series of processes is described in detail within a time scale. The series of processes then reach the point at which a group of states will have converged sufficiently to achieve monetary union.

I do not think that hon. Members should read the treaty backwards. It must be read in a forward-looking way because the processes towards monetary union unfold in a series of articles which precede article 102a. The principles have been laid down in articles 2 and 3a. My argument is that, by the time one reads article 102a, the balance in the sentiment, tone, direction and objectives in article 2 have changed to a rather strict monetarist process. If I am allowed to continue, I shall show how that unfolds almost exclusively so.

7.45 pm

Mr. Marlow: In a broader context, has not the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) hit the nail on the head when he says that there are many different ways of reading the treaty? That has enabled my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) to plead for reassurances and tell the Committee how everything will be all right on the night, how none of our powers or our sovereignty will be undermined and how we will be strengthened. At the same time we will allow the commissioner and his friends, the Euro-fanatics, to take all powers from the House as time goes by. The institutions of Europe, the court and the Commission, will take those powers from us. Hon. Members can read the treaty two ways.

Mr. Rowlands: I do not agree that we can read the treaty two ways. It is very clear, and the hon. Member for Esher described it well. The treaty describes monetarist principles and the processes towards monetary union. Monetary union is the only principle of the treaty. I am simply saying that a number of my hon. Friends have argued about the value and importance of article 2 to defend the process.

I am seeking to demonstate how article 2 is progressively devalued as the treaty describes the processes to reach the ultimate point at which the member states decide whether they have achieved a degree of convergence. In article 3, the Commission is given a new power—at least, I think that it is a new power.

We have talked a lot about subsidiarity. This morning, in the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Minister of State and his officials admitted that the principles of subsidiarity cannot and do not apply in any shape or form to stage three of monetary union. In other words, the principle of subsidiarity, which is the central feature of the treaty and stage three of monetary union, will not apply. It is a centralising process, not a process which is subject to subsidiarity.

Mr. Garel-Jones: In the Select Committee this morning, the deputy legal adviser to the Foreign Office made it perfectly clear that article 3b did inform the whole treaty, despite what the hon. Gentleman says.

Mr. Rowlands: If I remember correctly—we will read the text—evidence was previously given to us by professionals. I simply asked Mr. Jay whether subsidiarity would apply to the principles of monetary union in the stage three process, and I think he said no. It was only consistent with other evidence which we have taken.

Mr. Jenkin: In a way, it does apply to monetary union because, by reason of the scale of effects, it is something which is better done at the centre. That demonstrates how subsidiarity can be as much a centralising concept as a decentralising one.

Mr. Rowlands: That is a perceptive point, because we speak of subsidiarity as a one-way process. As the hon. Gentleman rightly points out, it could be a two-way process. Whereas we talk a great deal about the potential decentralising of powers under the subsidiarity provisions of the treaty, alongside it is a hugely centralising process which is necessary to achieve monetary union. I hope that I am not vulgarising the exchange that we had in the Select Committee this morning. In the Select Committee, we talked about, dare I use the term, Mr. Delors's "little list" of devolved powers. We asked the Ministers who came before us to produce a little list of the new powers and responsibilities that the Commission will obtain under the treaty. Article 103 of title II includes, if not a new, an enhanced role for the Commission.

The Commission will almost have the power to play the role of a European International Monetary Fund. It will be in the job of multi-surveillance of every nation's economy and performance. That is the function that is provided in article 103. Rather than reducing the functions and roles of the Commission, the treaty enhances them. To borrow another phrase, the Commission will go into every nook and cranny of a nation's economic and monetary life. That is what is established in article 103.

The other interesting feature of the process of multi-surveillance is that the treaty does not contain a single reference to the Commission looking to see whether unemployment is increasing, whether there is any form of social cohesion and whether there is any real protection. The Commission's function of multi-surveillance in the process of monetary union has no meaning in respect of matters such as unemployment. The multi-surveillance function is already essentially monetarist.

Dr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): Is my hon. Friend aware that the recent Treasury report on the conduct of economic policy, to which reference has already been made, says in paragraph 106, referring to Maastricht:

"A strategy for deficit reduction in the medium term is required under the terms of the Maastricht treaty."?

It is difficult, if not impossible, to find in the report commitments to employment policy and growth as a result of Maastricht. The emphasis is on deficit reduction.

Mr. Rowlands: Absolutely so. That is why examination of the text does not justify the weight that some of my colleagues have put on article 2. Employment and growth are not the major aims which determine the nature of the process which will lead towards monetary union.

In article 103, the Commission is given the role of conducting multilateral surveillance of an individual nation's economy. It is little wonder that the Commission is willing to give up extra powers. It will have a full-time job involving itself in every nook and cranny of the economic life of nations.

Mr. George Robertson: Has my hon. Friend ever asked himself why, if the prescriptions which he says are the central feature of the treaty are so evil and unlikely to lead to growth and, according to his diagnosis, are likely to lead to a worse position, every socialist and social democratic party in Europe, and every trade union in Europe outside and within Britain, is in favour of the treaty?

Mr. Rowlands: Because these are matters of judgment. My judgment on reading the text of the treaty is clear, and it is evidently shared by all those who have spoken tonight. The running thesis of the treaty and the process of monetary union are based on narrow monetarist principles. I cannot answer my hon. Friend's question. My hon. Friend spends more time than me on the matter. He has not damaged my case. Others might not agree with me, but my hon. Friend has not taken me on about how I interpret the text. He has not told me that I am reading the treaty wrongly. If he thinks that I have got a point of fact wrong, he should tell me. He simply tells me that others have different views.

Let us examine the text. The text of article 104c on excessive deficits does not say that one reason why a country might have such a deficit is because it wishes to reduce unemployment. Article 2 does not deal with excessive deficits. By the time we reach excessive deficits in article 104c, it is clear that the route to monetary union is a monetarist one.

Mr. George Robertson: My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) dealt with several of the points that my hon. Friend makes, countered them, and argued strongly with some of the interventions that were made. I simply ask my hon. Friend, in a shorthand form at this stage in the debate, to remember that it may not be the case that he is right and everyone else in the 12 European Community countries is wrong. It might be the other way round. I simply ask him to reflect on that.

Mr. Rowlands: I hope that my hon. Friend thinks that he might find himself in that position, too. I am defending my case and making my points based on the text before me. My hon. Friend has not once yet told me that I am reading the text wrongly. I cannot be responsible for the company he keeps: I can only say how I read and understand the text.

By the time I reach paragraph 2 of article 105 on monetary policy, I find no vestige of reference to article 2. My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) said paragraph 1 contained a reference to article 2, but even he had to admit that the opening sentence of paragraph 1 of article 5 says that the primary objective of the European central bank is to maintain price stability. It is not to implement the objectives of article 2.

Again we have the words:

"with a view to contributing to the achievement of the objectives of . . . Article 2."

Those are the weasel words about the good things in article 2 by the time we reach the functions and role of the European central bank.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): Is one of the reasons why there is such support for the treaty among social democrats and socialists in the EC the fact that the treaty is not a policy document but a framework? It is a framework for decision-making—[HON MEMBERS: "No."] Yes, it is. In essence it is not a policy document. The policies will come from that document. I suggest to my hon. Friend—I shall be interested to hear what he has to say—that article 2 will be the key article in determining what sort of policies we have.

Mr. Rowlands: It is a treaty. It will have to be ratified. It places clear, specifically defined obligations on the Governments of member states. It contains language which I have just described, which implies, "Thou shalt comply in this or that respect and apply these principles." I have identified those principles of compliance and how they differ from the objectives of article 2. I have compared the language of article 2 with that of the rest of the treaty. One language is of policy; the other is of compliance.

The treaty contains detailed obligations which will force us to adopt a particular method of achieving a particular form of monetary union. I object to that. I hope that my hon. Friend will not vote for the treaty on the basis that it is a framework within which a country can have different policies. It is a clearly defined route to monetary union, based on a series of narrowly defined principles of monetarism.

Dr. Berry: Is my hon. Friend aware of a policy document which has just been issued by the new Government of the Republic of Ireland, which states:

"Budgetary policy will therefore be based on the overriding requirements of the Maastricht treaty. Prospective participants are required to adhere strictly to an annual general government deficit on around 3 per cent. or less of GDP"?

So it goes on. That is a specific policy document embracing the principles of Maastricht.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend underlines the point. If my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) wants another illustration of the point that the treaty is not simply a framework but an explicit series of obligations, I recommend that he reads article 108. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West said that the treaty is merely a framework, but it is not. Article 108 states that, during stage 2 of economic and monetary union, this Parliament must pass an Act to change the statutes of our national bank. That is compulsory. It does not state that we may do so if we wish —it is not permissive.

What is even worse is what might happen if the House does not want to pass such an Act. Why should we legislate in that way? I do not believe that the Bank of England should be made autonomous. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East has described what he thought might be constructive alterations to the statutes of our national bank, but I wonder whether his suggestions would be possible under the treaty.

8 pm

Article 108 states not only that we must legislate to change the statutes but that we must do so in a particular way. Such an Act would have to be compatible with the statutes on the European central bank laid down in the treaty.

I do not know whether the provisions of the treaty should be defined as obligations or merely as a framework, but in my language, article 108 forces us to legislate to change the character of the Bank of England and its relationship with the Government. When such a Bill comes before the House, we will be in a curious position. Hon. Members on both sides might seek to move amendments to change the proposed character of the new Act, but Ministers will tell us that we cannot do so, as that would not comply with the protocol and the provisions in the Maastricht treaty regarding the European central bank.

I cannot think of a better illustration of loss of sovereignty, in the way that this Parliament has always interpreted sovereignty. I am a bit of a parliamentary historian and have written about the evolution of Parliament in the 17th century, the original arguments for the creation of the Bank of England and the tonnage and poundage legislation of 1694.

Whatever else we used to think that this place was all about, it was about the sovereign right to legislate. As a result of article 108, during the next 18 months the Government will have to introduce a Bill to change the relationship between the state and the Bank of England, and that Bill will have to be compatible with the protocols and provisions on the European Community bank laid down in the treaty.

If one wills the end, one must will the means. The alteration of the character and nature of our banking statutes is one of the means for us to achieve monetary union as laid down by the protocol in the treaty.

I want the Financial Secretary to answer two questions which fall within his patch. Presumably, if we pass the Bill, unless the Danish people throw it out in their referendum, the treaty will be ratified, and stage 2 of EMU will start next January. That is only 11 months away, not in 1996 or 1997. During stage 2, legislation along the lines that I have described will be introduced. First, will the Treasury Minister tell us whether it is the Treasury and the Government's best estimate that stage 2 will start on time?

The opening paragraph of chapter 4—"Transitional Provisions"—states:

"The second stage for achieving economic and monetary union shall begin on 1 January 1994."

What if it does not? Will the treaty have to be amended, or will powers be created to override it? Does the Minister think that that deadline is feasible? If that is the deadline in agreeing the treaty, we will have to introduce legislation to amend our national banking statutes.

In an interesting passage of his speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East described some of his thoughts about how he would change the statutes. I have not had a chance to consider all of them, but I should like the Minister to study my hon. Friend's interesting reference and say whether his ideas would be compatible with the provisions in the protocol on the European central bank, because that will define the limits of our legislation and the new banking Bill.

I can think of no better illustration to show my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West that the treaty is not merely a framework but that it contains a series of explicit obligations.

Mr. Randall: They are declarations.

Mr. Rowlands: No, they are not.

I realise that I have spoken for a long time, and would like to give other hon. Members a chance. Finally, the cat is out of the bag when one reads the last clause describing the third stage of monetary union. Article 109j lays down the full criteria to decide whether convergence has been achieved and monetary union can go ahead. It does not contain a single reference to article 2 or to unemployment levels.

In his excellent speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli said that one could achieve convergence and monetary union, under the provisions in the treaty, while there was 20 per cent. unemployment in Merthyr Tydfil or in the United Kingdom. Unemployment

would not be a factor to decide whether the country was in a fit state to qualify for monetary union. The four criteria listed in article 109j are all based on monetarist principles and have nothing to do with the general propositions in article 2 about cohesion or high unemployment levels.

We are being asked to buy a type of monetary union which must be achieved by a particular process. I represent a constituency that has suffered too often from such ideas and economic principles for me to support the Bill. Even if I did not have that instinct, I would say that we should object to the Bill because the treaty is hugely centralising. Monetary union will create more centralisation. Even if a sufficient cohesion fund is created, it will have to be administered and disbursed centrally.

Secondly, the treaty is hugely restrictive. One of the major tasks for the Community is to reach out and reinforce the democratic structures of the Czechs, the Hungarians and the countries of central Europe. Much that is in the treaty will make it infinitely more difficult for a meaningful political and economic relationship between the central European countries and the Community, with its monetary union.

The treaty does not outline the shape of the Europe that I want in the late 20th century. The treaty is the last vestige of a process that began in the mid-1950s during the cold war. The creation of the original Community was as much a product of the division of Europe and the cold war as of any great dream of a reunited Europe. Many of its principles and ideas were based on that.

I believe that we have come to the end of that phase, as the cold-war division of Europe has come to an end. We should now look for alternative routes for economic and political union within the structure of an economic common market and an intergovernmental structure of co-operation of the kind represented in the second half of the treaty.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), said yesterday that I would try to intervene briefly today to speak on aspects of the treaty that fall within the Treasury's sphere of responsibility as they relate to economic and monetary union.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Have Ministers, in their attempt to answer some of the points that have been made, told you how they hope to answer points that have not been made? Many of us who have been here for three days have not been called to speak and the matters that I wish to raise have not been touched on at all yet.

The First Deputy Chairman: No, the Government have not told me that.

Mr. Dorrell: Perhaps my hon. Friend should reflect on the fact that our limited memories mean that we shall deal with the issue in tranches.

As befits somebody who lives in the Victorian splendour of the Foreign Office, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State has spoken about pillars and architecture. As somebody who occupies what was described in the papers yesterday as the "linoleum palace", I propose to speak solely about the engineering of the Community—its economic policy.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) started his remarks yesterday by referring to the Community's objectives defined in article 2 of the treaty of Maastricht. His example was followed by several of his hon. Friends. The hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) and the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), from extremely different standpoints, both started their speeches by discussing the objectives defined in article 2. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has also followed their example, and I am therefore happy to follow them down that road.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Llanelli that three key factors arising from article 2 would be common ground on both sides of the Committee, among supporters and opponents of Maastricht. Article 2 commits the Community to achieving high employment. The right hon. Gentleman had fun discussing the difference between employment and unemployment.

Mr. Marlow: I am sorry to make this point now, but I was speaking to some hon. Friends who had just entered the Chamber when my hon. Friend the Minister stood up. As he will know, I have tabled a couple of amendments, but have not had an opportunity to discuss them yet. Other hon. Members have also tabled amendments. Will my hon. Friend assure the House that a Minister will respond to the debate once all those who wish to speak have spoken, particularly those who have not yet put forward their amendments?

Mr. Dorrell: As I said in answer to a similar intervention, we are dealing with the Bill in tranches. Having listened to the debate, I thought that there was sufficient meat for me to deal with some of the concerns expressed and to put the Government's view on the points that have already been made.

I was going through the three key elements defined in article 2, picking out the key objectives of high employment, raising the standard of living and the quality of life of Community residents, and the achievement of sustainable, non-inflationary growth. Those objectives should be, and largely are, supported on both sides of the Committee. Although they may be shared objectives, the discussions on the methods by which they are achieved have revealed considerable differences. Several hon. Members on both sides of the Committee have alleged that the treaty and the institutions envisaged within it contain a deflationary bias that would make it impossible for such a Community to deliver its objective of high employment and the other side of that coin, which is low unemployment.

May I concentrate the attention of the House first on the evidence that has been adduced to support the assertion that the institutions envisaged by the treaty contain a deflationary bias or make impossible the objectives defined in article 2? The evidence that has been adduced in support of that argument during the debate is, to put it mildly, flimsy. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney treated us to a long speech based on the proposition that there is a clear division between a monetarist approach to monetary management. Although he did not define it, he implied that an alternative approach to monetary management could better deliver

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the objectives of article 2. The assumption that lay behind this speech took place more than 10 years ago, and most of his arguments have now become out of date.

Mr. Leighton: Is not the proof of the pudding in the eating? The first stage of economic and monetary union was the exchange rate mechanism, which made interest rates higher than was needed for the purposes of the domestic economy. That was deflationary, and unemployment rose by 1·1 million during that period. Does not that prove that the ERM was deflationary?

8.15 pm

Mr. Dorrell: The point that I was seeking to develop was whether there could be a choice between the delivery of growth and high employment, and the controlling of Government deficits. In one or two intervention, the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), who is not in the Chamber at present, appeared to believe that the higher the budget deficit, the faster the rate of growth. Surely the experience in the past 25 years of Governments of both political parties has tested that theory to destruction. High budget deficits undermine the delivery of employment and growth objectives. We embrace the commitment to proper control of budget deficits that is enshrined within the treaty, not because it is in the treaty but because experience over many years has shown that failure to observe the disciplines of proper control of Government deficits undermines the capacity of any economy, not just this economy, to deliver objectives of growth and high employment.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Minister may be right or wrong. Much of the issue is theory and fashion. Whether he is right or wrong, why entrench one view in a treaty that can never be changed except with the consent of 12 nations? Why give economic theory such codification?

Mr. Dorrell: The right hon. Gentleman may describe it as theory, but I do not believe that the experiments with the approach of the hon. Member for Walsall, North are theory. We have seen repeatedly that failure to control budget deficits has undermined the capacity of this country and other countries to deliver their objectives.

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): Governments are elected to take a view about budget deficits. Labour Governments think that one can expand budget deficits, whereas Conservative Governments generally take the opposite view. It is not up to a treaty to determine that matter.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is not quite right, because some Opposition Members have questioned whether it is possible or even desirable to deliver sustainable, non-inflationary growth. For example, yesterday we had a contribution from the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who said:

"article 3a(2) states that the primary objective of economic policy is 'to maintain price stability'. That has never been an objective of the Labour party". —[*Official Report*, 13 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 946-47.]

There is ample evidence to support that assertion.

In one of the last sentences that he spoke yesterday the right hon. Member for Llanelli said:

"We cannot have non-inflationary growth in today's western capitalist economies."—[*Official Report*, 13 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 1011.]

I do not believe that that assertion is true. The experience of successfully run economies, both in Europe and further afield, flatly contradicts the assertion made by the right hon. Gentleman last night.

Mr. Denzil Davies: There may be one or two such economies, but will the Minister give examples of countries in western Europe that have achieved non-inflationary growth since the war?

Mr. Dorrell: I shall give an example, but I should be cautious about doing so too often as I think that most people in this country get bored of having Germany quoted at them as an example. Germany has achieved a lower average rate of inflation and a higher average rate of growth than us.

Mr. Radice: I thought that I was on the same side of the argument as the Minister, but I fear that he is losing me. It is true that it is important to have a low inflation rate. It is sensible to have rules on budget deficits if we are to have a single currency. But if there is a recession and a high level of unemployment across Europe, there is a case for counter-recessionary measures. That was precisely what was agreed at Edinburgh. Surely the hon. Gentleman is not arguing against that case. I hope that he is not.

Mr. Dorrell: I am not arguing against the proposition that budget deficits fluctuate according to the state of economic activity. It would be hard for me to do so.

I can quote no better authority for that view than Lord Lawson, who is not always associated with such a view. The Committee will remember that he made a speech during the 1980s, from which he quotes extensively in his recently published book, supporting the assertion that budget deficits fluctuate according to the level of economic activity. That is the answer to the issue raised earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher), who was concerned to ensure that a budget deficit objective did not have to be cast in stone or at a fixed level every year, regardless of the state of economic activity.

Mr. Jenkin: The important distinction in the legal enforceability of the treaty is whether one is trying to achieve a deficit of less than 3 per cent. or wilfully avoiding achieving it. Without giving away any Budget secrets, will my hon. Friend say whether the Government will be trying to achieve a 3 per cent. budget deficit in the coming financial year? Alternatively, will we be able to interpret their actions as those of a Government who are wilfully avoiding doing so beeause that is in Britain's economic interests?

Mr. Dorrell: We shall be trying to avoid an excessive budget deficit, as the treaty requires us to do, not because of any treaty obligation, but because we know that that is the only sensible way of running an economy.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I thank the Minister for giving way. I want to intervene because he has referred to me in his argument.

Surely the essence of democratic decision making is to try to hold a balance between the employment level and the inflation level. Governments are continually trying to make such judgments. Economic policy becomes

deflationary when Governments become obsessed with reducing inflation and increase unemployment. That is exactly what the Government have done—their fight against inflation has become paramount. Surely the essence of article 3a is that price stability is the paramount objective of economic policy. It states that member states and the Community should pursue the general economic policies of the Community only in so far as they are

"without prejudice to this objective."

Mr. Dorrell: The reason for that is that we recognise, as do the signatories of the treaty, that the delivery of the wider objectives are not assisted, but jeopardised, by a failure to maintain stable prices. The answer to the point raised by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby was provided, with some distinction, by his hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East, when he said:

"My hon. Friend referred to price stability. It would be interesting to hear his arguments in favour of price instability"—

I agree with the hon. Member for Oxford, East.

"I have yet to see the benefits of price instability to working people and, in particular, to pensioners. There is no merit in price instability."—[*Official Report*, 13 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 947.]

That is the answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: That is an insane argument. The essence of capitalist and market economies is that prices will fluctuate—that is the nature of such economies. Nobody is arguing for price stability in the sense that prices do not fluctuate. Price stability in this context refers to the obsession with keeping inflation as low as possible —zero inflation—which has existed for a long time. When governed by such an obsession, that aim must be paramount over other Community objectives, including full employment.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the efficient functioning of the market economy depends on the ability of prices to fluctuate. It does not depend on the ability of the value of money to fluctuate. The effect of a progressive decline in the value of money—the rate of inflation—during the past 20 years has been to undermine economic performance and the delivering of social objectives in this country.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend talks about excessive budget deficits. He will be familiar with article 104c, which states that the Commission shall

"examine compliance with budgetary discipline on the basis of the following two criteria:

(a) whether the ratio of the planned or actual government deficit to gross domestic product exceeds a reference value, unless

—either the ratio has declined substantially and continuously and reached a level that comes close to the reference value"—

3 per cent.—

"or, alternatively, the excess over the reference value is only exceptional and temporary and the ratio remains close to the reference value".

Which of those two criteria will the Government satisfy with regard to next year's Budget?

Mr. Dorrell: Although we accept, for reasons that I have given—which have nothing to do with the treaty of Maastricht—the desirability of avoiding excessive budgetary deficits, we do not at this stage accept the legitimacy of the Commission or any other European institution's authority to require us to pursue a budgetary policy that is not of our own choosing. That marks the success of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in delivering the British protocol. None of the compulsory provisions of the treaty of Maastricht relating to monetary union apply to the United Kingdom unless and until the House passes an Act of Parliament to determine that they should apply.

Many of the speeches made in Committee have avoided the fact that this country is not committed to moving to stage 3 of economic and monetary union. My hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) sought to argue that the defence negotiated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister——

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister's case has moved. He did not answer the question posed by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), but merely said that there was an opt-out provision and we did not have to take action if we did not want to do so. Do the Government and the Minister consider it a desirable objective to belong to the monetary union?

Mr. Dorrell: We have made it perfectly clear, as we did throughout the negotiations, that we regard that as a question which is impossible to answer at this stage. That case was not accepted by any of our partners, except Denmark. That is why Britain and Denmark secured provisions within the treaty to allow them to take that decision when the necessary information was available. It is not now available. That is why we have reserved our ability to make that decision at a much later date.

8.30 pm

Mr. Leighton: The Minister has been very generous in giving way, which makes for a good debate. On the point about price stability, is he aware that the Governor of the Bank of England, in speaking quite recently to the eastern Confederation of British Industry, said that we could have achieved price stability this year but it would have meant too much deflation? So he and the Government decided not to go for price stability this year because it would have meant too much of a recession. Should we not have four objects of economic policy? One is as low inflation as possible, but the others are balance of payments equilibrium, economic growth and high employment, not just going for one.

Mr. Dorrell: I do not want to cover that ground again, but that is exactly what I said in defining what I saw as the key objectives set out in article 2.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: Why would my hon. Friends want to legislate for convergency criteria, which will create great pain, when they do not necessarily know at this stage whether they want to enter into the third stage? Take, for instance, the average on interest rates. With good fortune and if the Government take their courage in their hands, we shall bring down interest rates much faster than the European average. We shall be well outside the convergence criteria on those, and that creates a problem. The treaty says that we are meant to be within the range of 2 per cent. of the average of the European convergence criteria, so why would we legislate for the second stage?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is not quite right, because I do not think that it is possible for us to be outside the

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convergence criteria on interest rates by being below; the convergence criterion is to be within 2 per cent. of the lowest. But I will check that.

The point about the convergence criteria is that they come into play only if we choose to go to stage 3 of economic and monetary union. I agree with the right hon. Member for Llanelli, who, although he made it clear that he was opposed to a single currency, also said—I do not think that I misreport him—that if we choose to go to a single currency, the convergence criteria defined in the treaty make some sense as criteria for delivering a single currency. That is a point of view that is supported by somebody who opposes the basic argument that I am trying to advance.

So my hon. Friend is not on to a good point when he concentrates on the legislative nature of convergence criteria. They merely describe conditions which individual member states have to satisfy to become members of a single currency, because without coming within that cone of convergence there is no realistic prospect of a single currency working.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: That is the very point: why does one then need to legislate for them? They are criteria which the Government have it in their power to pursue in any event. It does not require the enactment into United Kingdom legislation and the decision can be made on the basis of the proper management of the economy. It is not necessary, therefore, as I understand the argument of the Financial Secretary, to legislate. So surely the Financial Secretary could accept the amendments before us on this point.

Mr. Dorrell: The amendments, as my hon. Friend knows very well, remove the relevant titles from the effect of the European Communities Act 1972, and the reason why those are unacceptable is that they would make it impossible for us to discharge our obligations under the treaty within domestic law.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Dorrell: I will give way to my hon. Friend later. I want to move on to deal reasonably briefly with the arguments advanced yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South to the effect that we are committed to joining stage 3 of the economic and monetary union and that the safeguards do not work. He was particularly concerned that we are committed to rejoining the exchange rate mechanism. He sought to argue that on two counts, both of them, I think, wrong. His argument was, first, on the ground that there was a legal obligation. He said that there was a legal obligation contained within the treaty which, when interpreted, would require the British Government, against its will, to rejoin the ERM.

I believe that there are three answers to that. The first is that nobody has yet quoted from the treaty a specific and express obligation to rejoin the ERM, for the simple reason that there is no express obligation within the treaty.

Mr. Macdonald *rose*——

Mr. Dorrell: I will give way to any hon. Member who can quote to me the article in the Maastricht treaty which expressly requires membership by any member state of the exchange rate mechanism. I say that with total confidence; there is no such obligation imposed under the Maastricht treaty.

Sir Trevor Skeet: It is at 109j. It is one of the criteria that are laid down and, since it is one of the criteria, we have to go along with it.

Mr. Dorell: It is one of the convergence criteria; my hon. Friend is right on that count. But there is no obligation on us to converge, because there is no obligation on us to reach the end result.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. There are proper codes of debate. Hon. Members know full well that if the Minister wishes to give way, he will do so. If he does not, hon. Members should resume their seats, however senior they may be.

Mr. Dorrell: Secondly,——

Mr. Macdonald *rose*——

Mr. Dorrell: Very well, I will give way just once more.

Mr. Macdonald: I have listened to the Financial Secretary's argument, but I think that he has got it slightly wrong. He is implying that the convergence criteria apply to the United Kingdom only if it opts in to the process towards monetary union, if it decides to go ahead with the third stage. But the protocol, especially paragraph 2, which says:

"Paragraphs 3 to 9 shall have to effect if the United Kingdom notifies the Council that it does not intend to move to the third stage.",

implies that to exempt itself from the convergence criteria the United Kingdom has to notify the Council that it is not moving to the third stage. It is not a question of opting in to the convergence criteria; it is automatically in the convergence criteria unless it specifically notifies the Council that it wishes to opt out.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman is on to a drafting point. He will see that paragraph 1 of the protocol reads as follows:

"The United Kingdom shall notify the Council whether it intends to move to the third stage before the Council makes its assessment under article 109j(2) of this Treaty."

The first paragraph of the protocol leaves the question entirely open. The second paragraph, from which the hon. Gentleman quoted, is an introductory paragraph which leads into paragraphs 3 to 9. Of those paragraphs, paragraph 4 is the one that is the safeguard for the United Kingdom position and that states that, in the case that we have indicated that we are not going to join the economic and monetary union,

"The United Kingdom shall retain its powers in the field of monetary policy according to national law."

So there is no obligation to join either the ERM or the economic and monetary union. There is no express obligation in the treaty, nor is there an implied obligation either in the protocol, from which the hon. Gentleman quoted, or in article 109m, which my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South quoted yesterday. He used the obligation in article 109m to regard exchange rates as a matter of common interest. As I pointed out to him yesterday, that is precisely the same obligation as has been accepted by every member state of the European Economic Community, as it then was, and the European

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Community, as we now know it, since the day when the original six signed the treaty of Rome, because it is contained in virtually the same language in article 107 of the treaty of Rome, which was signed in 1958.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): My hon. Friend is saying something that has puzzled me for a considerable time. I think that everyone will agree that the single currency and monetary union are at the heart of this whole treaty. If it is not the intention of the Government eventually to join in a single currency, why are they forcing the treaty through? If we do not join in 1996, it makes the whole thing an absolute farce.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend has raised an important point. Let me answer his question in a slightly elliptical way; it strikes me as the most cogent. Yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South said:

"I cannot see how we could remain within the European Community as the only country—other than Denmark, perhaps—committed to staying outside the single currency."
—[*Official Report*, 13 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 986.]

My hon. Friend's point was that, whatever the legal position might be, there would be a practical obligation to join a single currency, if one were established.

I do not understand the logic of that argument. My hon. Friend says that he does not wish to become part of a single currency; he then seems to argue that, because he hopes that the United Kingdom will not become part of such a currency, it follows that the continentals will not be able to set it up. That is clearly a nonsensical proposition for any hon. Member to adopt.

The success of the treaty lies in the fact that it allows the United Kingdom to continue to participate in the design of a system of economic and monetary union at which it is likely—I put it no more strongly than that—that some other member states will wish to arrive. It also allows us to preserve freedom to decide, at a later date, whether to join the single-currency monetary union that has been created—with our participation—by our partners on the continent. Furthermore, the treaty clearly establishes the consequences of that decision.

Let me ask the House—including my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell)—to reflect on the possibility that, if the Bill is rejected, some member states will establish a currency union in any event. My hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South said yesterday that, in his view, the United Kingdom would have no choice but to join that union. If the Bill is not passed, the continentals will be able to establish a single currency without our participating in its design—and my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South believes that we would have no choice but to join it. Surely that is not a better position than that established by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in which we participate in the design and are free at a later date to decide whether to join.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Having been given a good run yesterday, I did not intend to prolong today's proceedings, but this is becoming ridiculous.

The whole purpose of not ratifying the treaty would be to avoid setting up a single currency, with all the accompanying paraphernalia. All I meant yesterday was this: if the treaty were ratified and the single currency were established, we could not possibly stay outside it. Of course it is theoretically possible for others to set it up and for this country alone to stay outside it, while remaining in the Common Market. But—I am leaving aside the legal point, on which I disagree with my hon. Friend the Minister—it would not work out like that. In practical terms, we could not possibly work within the framework of the new single currency and the institutions attached to it while remaining outside it.

Mr. Dorrell: I entirely understand my hon. Friend's point; I merely seek to develop the logic of the position that he has described. I do not agree with his claim that the establishment of a single currency by other European countries would leave us with no option but to join that currency. If that is his argument, however, I do not see how he can conclude that it is in this country's interests to stand apart from the development of such a currency, if the continental powers choose to establish it. I am a great fan of the House of Commons, but I know that it is not within its competence to deny other European sovereign states free choice to establish a single currency, if that is what they choose to do.

Mr. Marlow: This is a complex issue, and I may be wrong; but I am a little fearful that my hon. Friend misled the Committee earlier. In my previous intervention, I referred to paragraph 2 of article 104c, which relates to the Commission monitoring whether we maintain sufficient proximity to various criteria regarding budget deficit. My hon. Friend said that our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had negotiated a very effective opt-out on monetary union. Let me draw his attention to protocol 5, on certain provisions relating to the United Kingdom. The provisions excluded do not include paragraph 2 of article 104c(2), though they include paragraph 1 of that article. It appears that paragraph 2 will apply to the United Kingdom regardless of whether we comply with stage 3.

8.45 pm

Mr. Dorrell: That is true, but my hon. Friend should also remember that the penalties contained in a later paragraph of article 104c do not apply unless and until we choose to join monetary union. The effect of article 104c is to commit us to the arrangement described in article 109e:

"In the second stage, Member States shall endeavour to avoid excessive government deficits."

We have accepted that treaty obligation—an obligation which, as I said earlier, we embrace, not because it is in the treaty but because we seek to impose it on ourselves.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Surely, given the existence of such an obligation in the treaty, there is a severe risk that the Commission—or any other element that is important in the structure of the EC—will wish to comment on the size of our deficit from time to time. If that happens, is it not likely to have an adverse effect on markets and to make things extremely difficult?

Mr. Dorrell: It is true that the Commission can comment. It can already comment. A regular feature of the agendas of ECOFIN meetings is examination of the performance of individual member states in relation to published criteria. In that regard, there is nothing new in the treaty. As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), the key point is that the penalty provisions in article 104c do not come into

[Mr. Dorrell]

effect unless and until we choose to move to stage 3 of economic and monetary union—and that is our free choice.

Let me now deal briefly with an aspect of the design of EMU, which has already become clear on the face of the treaty.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Dorrell: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can know what I am going to say. I hope that he will contain himself. After all, I have already given way to him twice.

More than one hon. Member has argued that the prescription for the central bank provided in the treaty of Maastricht would design a bankers' Europe—a Europe in which the central bank would not be accountable to the people of Europe in an acceptable way. If the House is to consider that, it must ask itself what its choice will be for this country when the time comes for us to decide whether to join a single currency and become part of a monetary union. At that point we shall be considering whether we want to accept an obligation to accept membership of a single currency.

Of course, if one is deciding whether to join a single currency, it is a proper consideration to look at the arrangements for the management of that single currency; and if there is a single currency, there must be a monetary authority responsible for managing it. Equally obviously, if it is a currency that will circulate in 12 member states, the monetary authority cannot be one that is firmly rooted in the institutions of one member state. I do not detect much support in the House for the proposition that the monetary authority responsible for all 12 member states should be ECOFIN; still less do I detect enthusiasm for the proposition that it be managed by the European Commission.

There is, of course, plenty of scope for individual hon. Members to have a view about whether a single currency is desirable, but if there is to be a single currency the institutions defined within the treaty are a broadly sensible means of managing that currency, developed from what has been, to some degree, the successful experience both of other member states and of states outside the Community that operate a monetary authority that is distinct from the main economic policy authority within the state. Since it is the commitment that we should retain at member state level responsibility for taxation and for wider economic policy questions, it is inherent in the assumptions of the treaty that economic policy, taxation policy and so forth should be to some extent divorced from monetary policy. The institutions designed and set out in the treaty represent a fair attempt by the Community to learn from the experience of other countries that operate a monetary authority that is different from their taxation and economic authority.

Sir Peter Tapsell: My hon. Friend puts these matters with the utmost clarity, and it is exhilarating to hear a first-class mind explaining these things so clearly, but since, throughout our history, we have never thought it right to establish an autonomous central bank, run by our own fellow countrymen, why should we now in any circumstances wish to set up an autonomous central bank run by foreigners, even if we had a single currency?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend reinforces my point. If he takes the view that in no circumstances can he contemplate a monetary authority that is not, first, combined with economic policy and taxation and, second, responsible one hundred per cent. to the House, he clearly cannot in any circumstances support a single currency that circulates in 12 member states of the European Community. That is the consequence of taking such a position.

The point that I seek to put to the Committee and to my hon. Friend is that there are many people who believe that a single currency has something to contribute to the development of economic management and an efficient economy within the member states of the Community. If one is interested in that concept, some institutions along the lines of those defined in the treaty seem to me not only a natural consequence of the desire to establish such a currency but the fruit of learning from the experience of those other countries—Germany, the United States and Sweden have all been quoted—which operate monetary policy independently from the main political authority.

It seems to me rather odd to argue that the United States or Germany or Sweden are any less democratic as a result of the institutions that they have chosen to establish.

Sir Peter Tapsell: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way yet again. May I define what I mean by autonomous? I mean a central bank that is not democratically accountable to democratically elected ministers answerable to a democratic assembly. So even if we had a single European currency, I would argue strongly that we need to have a single European central bank that is democratically accountable and answerable—and that is what we do not have in the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Dorrell: I understand the point that my hon. Friend makes, but I invite him to design a workable system for a European central bank that is politically accountable to a European political process. I do not believe that it would be easy to do and I certainly do not believe that it would learn the lessons that are available from other central banks that are divorced from the tax and economic management authority.

I should like to get on, Mr. Morris, because I am conscious that I have already detained the Committee for a great deal longer than I had intended.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, as I know that he is seeking to reach the conclusion of his arguments. I would just like him to clarify an earlier point that I may have missed. It seemed that my hon. Friend was suggesting that we had a position of opting into stage 2 as and when we chose, but article 109e says:

"The second stage for achieving economic and monetary union shall begin on 1 January 1994."

So from that point onwards, do we not therefore cut into stage 2?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend misheard me. The British protocol and the British position is that we are free to decide whether to join stage 3 of monetary union. We are clearly committed—and we make no bones about it—to stage 2 of the process, at which point monetary policy remains the exclusive concern of member states and national Governments.

I should like, if I may, Mr. Morris, in conclusion, to come back to the essential point.

Mr. Budgen: My hon. Friend seems to commend the British constitution on the basis that it is democratic. Surely the essential characteristic of the British constitution is that we have a sovereign Parliament. It is not necessarily a direct democracy at all. The thing that is different about the other constitutions to which my hon. Friend has drawn the Committee's attention is that they are federal and written structures.

Mr. Dorrell: It would be a brave man who would describe the French political tradition as federal. There is a wide range of political traditions in Europe, some of them federal, some tending to be more centralised. To my knowledge, all operate a written constitution but that does not undermine the basic premise.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I really am confused now by my hon. Friend. We can opt in, if the House so decides, at the appropriate time to stage 3: is he indicating that we have an opt-in or opt-out choice of stage 2 with its convergence criteria, or are we obliged to follow the convergence criteria? That is the question.

Mr. Dorrell: I am seeking to be crystal clear. We are committed to stage 2. We are not committed to stage 3. The convergence criteria are conditions precedent on joining a single currency. A single currency is not stage 2. A single currency is stage 3. If we decide not to join the single currency, we are not committed to seeking convergence on the conditions required to join it.

I come back to the essential fact. The treaty of Maastricht provides this country with three things. It provides us with the right to participate in the preparation for the arrangements for a single currency. Secondly, it provides us with a choice about whether to join that single currency, which we shall have participated in designing. Thirdly, it sets out clearly the consequences for Britain of joining or not joining that single currency. There is no need for the House or Britain to exercise that choice now. The only decision that the House must make in accepting or rejecting the Bill is whether to participate in preparations for that single currency. I strongly believe that it is in Britain's interests to participate in that process and leave that choice open.

Mr. Macdonald: The important point to seize upon in respect of the Bill and treaty has already been made: Maastricht cannot be seen and judged entirely according to the wording of the treaty alone but must be seen in a wider context—as part of a process, a journey of member states towards ever closer union. There are two reasonable questions to ask about Maastricht: first, whether the journey towards every closer union is desirable and, secondly, whether Maastricht is an appropriate way of continuing that journey. I believe in the goal of ever closer union, but I accept that it is a matter about which one must make a fundamental judgment—either one favours that goal or one does not. I shall not enter into that debate now.

9 pm

Even if one accepts the goal of ever closer union, it is still possible to ask whether Maastricht is the best way of achieving it. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), I accept that Maastricht is not perfect. I do not think that any hon. Member would defend Maastricht as the perfect treaty from our own point of view. But it is not drawn up from one point of view: it is an agreement and, necessarily, a compromise between 12 different Governments. The question is not whether it is perfect—*[Interruption.]*

The Chairman: Order. I apologise for interrupting the hon. Gentleman. May I ask hon. Members who are having private meetings on the Back Benches to protect the interests of other Back Benchers by having their meetings elsewhere?

Mr. Macdonald: I am grateful, Mr. Morris.

The question is not whether Maastricht is perfect, but whether it is an appropriate way forward. I accept that Maastricht is not perfect. Expectations that it should conform in every comma and sentence to the goals of one Government or one country, far less of one party, are unrealistic. One cannot get socialism in one treaty; Maastricht is part of a process. We want to see a subsequent treaty after Maastricht; it must be an ongoing process.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) spoke of the need for a system of fiscal transfer to make the goal of economic and monetary union operate as effectively and fairly as we would like. I entirely agree. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Radice: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. If Conservative Members want to confer among themselves, why do they not go to the 1922 Committee? We listened to their speeches; they should listen to ours.

The Chairman: I should be most grateful if hon. Members below the Gangway on both sides of the House would hold their meetings outside the Chamber.

Mr. Macdonald: The point that I was making is that Maastricht will have to be followed by subsequent treaties to make the process of economic and monetary union operate as we would like. I should like a subsequent treaty to allow fiscal transfer among member states, which will be necessary. I should like a further treaty to give the European Community, via the Commission or other institutions, the ability to raise taxation directly to facilitate the process of fiscal transfer and of borrowing to operate the deficits which will prove necessary from time to time according to the development of the economic cycle. Once we are in the state of economic and monetary union, there will inevitably be constraints on the fiscal and deficit-operating powers of individual member states. Therefore, these powers have to be devolved upwards into Community institutions.

The question is not whether the treaty is perfect, but whether it represents substantial and valuable progress. I argue strongly that it does because, for the first time, it brings in a social dimension, an environmental dimension and valuable political dimensions. The social and environmental dimensions are brought in on their own merits, not as consequences of successfully operating a single market but as goals to be pursued and achieved on their own merits.

Reference has already been made to article 2, which embodies some of the social goals that I find so attractive and valuable in the treaty. I noted that when the Minister referred to article 2 he managed to mention the goal of high employment, but he could not get the words "high social protection" out between his lips. Yet high social protection is what we shall be committed to as a goal of the Community, as a consequence of this treaty. There are a

[Mr. Macdonald]

number of provisions in the treaty which relate to the economic and social goals which lie behind much of the treaty.

I was earlier challenged privately by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) to find a third reference to employment in the treaty. Yesterday I managed to find him a second one, but now I have found a third as well. The second was agreement on social policy, which the Government has unfortunately opted out of but which a Labour Government can easily opt into. The third reference is in article 123—hon. Members will find it on page 31 of the blue document—which refers to the social fund to be set up to provide for social training and to combat unemployment and help people to find employment. Article 127 goes over similar ground and article 130 is perhaps one of the most important of the lot as it talks of the need for economic and social cohesion and particularly of the need for the Community to set itself the goal of bringing forward the more economically backward and disadvantaged areas of the Community and also to bring forward and take special account of the rural areas, which is something that I warmly welcome. Throughout the treaty there are numerous references to social and economic goals which I, as a socialist—and, I hope, all my colleagues on this side—would have warmly welcomed.

Despite those social goals, which are in the Community framework for the first time on their own merits and not as by-products of achieving a single market, and although these are valuable gains, there has been controversy about the economic provisions, particularly those relating to the central bank and the convergence criteria. There has been a very odd aspect of the debate tonight and yesterday about the economic provisions in this treaty. Some Conservative Members and Baroness Thatcher regard these economic provisions as letting in socialism by the back door. Yet, on the Labour side, one or two of my colleagues have argued the reverse—that the treaty nails us to the bed of monetarism for ever. Both cannot possibly be right, and it is just possible that both are wrong. I believe that both are indeed wrong, although by implying that the treaty embodies and places in the framework of the Community certain goals which the Social Democrats would be happy to embrace, Baroness Thatcher is more correct than my hon. Friends who criticise the treaty for being too monetarist.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that his views, Baroness Thatcher's views or anyone else's views are irrelevant because the article on page 91 entitled "Independence" makes it abundantly clear that, when the central bank is established, no Government of any party, no Chancellor of the Exchequer or Minister will be legally permitted even to make representations to it, to phone or to write, without committing the equivalent of a Euro-crime? Therefore, while he or Baroness Thatcher may be right, the fact is that the central bank will decide. It will be appointed for eight years, and no politician, no Prime Minister, no Chancellor of the Exchequer, Finance Minister or Back Bencher will be permitted even to make representations to it. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman had better keep quiet and wait and see what the bank does. Whatever it does will be its own business, not that of democratic Governments or Parliaments.

Mr. Macdonald: I shall deal later with the question of the independence of the central bank. I was trying to say that, regardless of what it says in the treaty, there are different arguments about how its provisions should be interpreted. Some of my hon. Friends argue that provisions such as that to which the hon. Member for Southend East (Sir T. Taylor) referred make the treaty inevitably monetarist, whereas Conservative hon. Members and Baroness Thatcher say that the same provisions make it an inevitably socialist document. The arguments will continue. In other words, the treaty is not the end of political argument as some have implied because those who suggest that it is the end of political argument cannot agree even about which political argument has been brought to an end by the treaty—some say it is the monetarist argument and others say it is the socialist argument.

Mr. Shore: Irrespective of what different politicians have said about whether the treaty is monetarist, democratic socialist or anything else in character, surely there can be no dispute about the words in the treaty which describe the independence of the central bank. Part of the relevant article states that Governments will undertake

"not to seek to influence"

it—there can be no argument about that. Either the words mean what they say or they do not.

Mr. Macdonald: As I said, I shall deal with the independence of the central bank in a moment. My point is that arguments have been advanced from both parties that the treaty is somehow an end to political debate. According to some, it locks us into a monetarist framework for ever, while according to others it locks us into a socialist framework for ever. That is nonsense—both arguments cannot be right. The existence of the two arguments proves that they are both wrong. The treaty will be debated after the Bill has been passed——

Sir Peter Tapsell: There is no antithesis between the hon. Gentleman's description of a socialist and a monetarist situation. Karl Marx was a monetarist, and this country had the most extreme monetarist policy it has had this century when Mr. Denis Healey was Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Macdonald: It is an interesting point—that socialism and monetarism are the same thing—but it was not exactly what the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends or mine were arguing.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Seriously, does the hon. Gentleman not accept that it is the end of all political argument if his views, those of the Government and those of the French and German Governments cannot even be communicated to the central bank? I accept that the hon. Gentleman may be a very good Member of Parliament, and he has shown so far that he is a man of integrity. Does not he accept that the political argument about economic policy will be ended if the central bank runs everything, if appointments are for eight years? Would not any Minister be committing a Euro-crime if he were even to write a letter or make a phone call——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not making an intervention; he is making a second speech.

9.15 pm

Mr. Macdonald: This treaty is not the end of political argument. It is not the end of debate about the future of economic policy. It merely transfers the debate from a purely national stage to a European stage and puts it in a wider context. After it has been passed, there will still be arguments between my hon. Friends and Conservative Members as to what it means and whether it commits us to a more monetarist framework or a more socialist framework or neither.

Mr. Corbyn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Macdonald: I have exhausted that point and want to move now to the question of a central bank.

Yesterday my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) said that price stability is the primary but not the exclusive purpose in having a central bank. Of course, the context in which the bank has to operate will be determined by member states individually and as a Community group, pursuing the goals that are articulated in article 2. Although that is a very cogent and very powerful point, some of my hon. Friends and some Conservative Members—for different reasons, presumably—object to the notion that the bank will not be able to take instructions from any particular member Government. In that sense, it will be independent. In my view, the notion of independence is rather overdone in the context of the central bank and monetary institutions. Experience of the Bank of England indicates that, frequently, the idea of political control, certainly when exercised by Labour Governments, can be quite empty. The direction of influence, rather than being from the Government to the bank, presumably via the Treasury, is often from the City to the Government via the bank. The bank acts not as the instrument of Government policy, particularly Labour Government policy, but rather as a wooden horse for the City of London within Governments of both parties.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend is right in saying that the Bank of England has often operated against the interests of Labour Governments. That is due to the mandarins who run it. If the hon. Gentleman has such doubts about the running of a bank which theoretically is state-owned and state-controlled, what influence does he think will be possible in the case of an independent central bank dedicated to a course of Euro-monetarism?

Mr. Macdonald: I am glad that my hon. Friend accepts that the Bank of England cannot be regarded simply as an instrument of Governments, especially Labour Governments. Conversely, banks which are nominally independent—for example, in Germany—respond to quite a degree of political influence.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): What about recent events?

Mr. Macdonald: Well, there has been the question of unification. There is a question about whether the German Government and the Bundesbank have very different views about interest rates.

The Chairman: Order. I remind the hon. Member that we are debating amendment No. 40, not German interest rates. Perhaps he will address his remarks to the amendment.

Mr. Macdonald: I had no intention of dealing with the details of German interest rates, Mr. Morris, but to make the general point that independent central banks are not immune to political influence. Nor does the notion of an independent central bank mean that Governments are constrained from carrying out policies that my hon. Friends would warmly support.

For example, an independent central bank in the United States did not prevent President Roosevelt from carrying out a new deal programme to revive that economy out of recession. An independent central bank in Sweden has not prevented successive Governments from pursuing policies which many of my hon. Friends would like to see implemented in Britain.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): Is my hon. Friend aware that it may be wrong to make an analogy between the Bank of England and the European central bank because the result of the relationships of elected Governments with the European central bank would become part of European law, part of which would proclaim that democratically elected Governments had no right to advise the bankers of that institution? What, in that event, would be the point of holding elections? Why bother to vote if those elected could do nothing to influence the decision makers?

Mr. Macdonald: I am simply trying to establish that the vision of an independent central bank being inimical to any kind of social development or political progress is not borne out by the experience of other countries with independent central banks. That applies to Sweden and the United States, which have been able to carry through progressive social and economic policies.

The whole question of independence is more complex than legislation would have us believe. Indeed, if we compare the experience of Germany and Sweden with that of the United Kingdom—with Labour Governments here having to wrestle with a supposedly dependent central bank—my argument is borne out.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I apologise for interrupting my hon. Friend's interesting contribution, and I do so only because word has been communicated to us that the Government may be about to move the closure. If that should happen——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Member is better informed than I am.

Mr. Hain: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris——

The Chairman: Order. I have ruled on the point that the hon. Member raised. I—the occupant of the Chair—decide whether there should be a closure motion. No such motion has been moved and I am not interested in rumours.

Mr. Macdonald: A European central bank, because it would be composed of people from all the different countries—not just the fast growing and big countries but all countries, including the more economically backward areas of the Community—would provide a more balanced view of Europe's overall economic needs than either the Bundesbank now provides of those needs or the Bank of England, City-dominated and London-centred, provides of Britain's overall economic needs.

Mr. Radice: That is why the French have been such supporters of the idea of a European central bank. They want to mitigate the influence of the Bundesbank. That fact supports the point that my hon. Friend is making.

Mr. Macdonald: My right hon. Friend is right, and what he says relates to a larger point. We must see the treaty and the progress towards monetary union not only in their own terms but in relation to the other options.

The convergence criteria are equally controversial to many of my hon. Friends, who argue that they are hostile to economic growth, to the achievement of high employment, and so on. My first point is——

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Macdonald: I have not yet made my point, so I shall do so before taking an intervention.

My first point is that if we are to move towards a monetary union, clearly there has to be some kind of central monetary and financial control over its members. We have to make sure that one member cannot pursue a course of irresponsible unilateral solo deficit running, which would inevitably have an impact on the other members. That being so, it is reasonable and right that there be some central restraint and control over members of the union—for example, contol over the kind of deficits that they are allowed to run. That happens now within the monetary union of the United Kingdom, in which the central Government exercise control over local authorities, and it must inevitably happen within a monetary union covering Europe as a whole.

Mr. Hain: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Macdonald: No. I must go on and make my second point.

The key point is that the central control must be flexible. It cannot be rigid; it must allow for differences and for stresses and strains within the monetary union—and the treaty allows for exactly that flexibility.

Mr. Cash: Has it occurred to the hon. Gentleman that the convergence conditions are precisely designed to create unemployment? Furthermore, has it occurred to him that the arrangements for capping under the excessive deficit procedure are designed to ensure that public expenditure will be capped? Does he appreciate that the system will not work, and that the cohesion funds will not make their way from one part of Europe to another, because there is neither the will not the ability to pay? Does he appreciate that the system will therefore collapse?

The Chairman: Order. That is too long an intervention.

Mr. Macdonald: I disagree with the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) about the cohesion funds. I believe that there is both a need and a desire to develop a Community in which there is more fiscal transfer than at present. That will be necessary. If it were not for the resistance of the United Kingdom Government, we should have drawn a little closer to that goal at Edinburgh.

Of course the convergence conditions are not designed to create unemployment. They are designed to lead to monetary union. But it is valid to ask whether, in the process of meeting the convergence criteria in order to achieve that goal, we may impose conditions upon ourselves which are too severe, and which may lead to unemployment and so on. I question the idea of 1999 as the date by which monetary union will be achieved. I am sceptical about that.

Mr. Hain: In giving a general blessing to the convergence criteria, to the narrowness and rigidity of the treaty, and to the idea of an independent central European bank—and with that an independent Bank of England —is my hon. Friend in line with Labour party policy as expressed by the Front-Bench spokesmen?

Mr. Macdonald: As I said when I spoke about an independent central bank in an intervention last night, I did not expect that all my hon. Friends would agree with me on that subject. Tonight I have tried to argue that blind resistance to any notion of an independent central bank is not necessarily grounded in real fears about the economic and social consequences involved. If one compares the experience of the United Kingdom to that in Germany or Sweden, my argument is that to have a politically independent central bank does not necessarily lead to the economic and social goals that my hon. Friends want.

The Chairman: Order. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would address the Chair and not simply talk to his hon. Friends. I should also be grateful if he could now conclude talking to his friends.

Mr. Macdonald: I apologise. I will try to work through to a conclusion.

9.30 pm

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Did I hear you correctly when you asked my hon. Friend to conclude his remarks, or were you just bringing him to order?

The Chairman: No, the hon. Gentleman misheard me. I asked the hon. Member for Western Isles to conclude his remarks on the point raised by the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) so that we can get on with the specific amendment.

Mr. Macdonald: I know that other hon. Members wish to participate in the debate. I shall conclude by referring to the convergence criteria. My point is that the convergence criteria are flexible within the wording of the treaty. In the first instance, the treaty provides that some countries may not meet the convergence criteria and, therefore, will not qualify for monetary union. Paragraph 3 in article 109k on page 29 of the treaty provides a specific exemption for countries which, because of their inability or lack of willingness to meet the convergence critiera, do not qualify for monetary union. The article specifies that countries which do not meet the convergence criteria or qualify for monetary union are not subject to the fines, constraints and penalties to which some of my hon. Friends have referred. The Council of Ministers can agree that certain countries are exempt from the fines because of their economic circumstances, and such countries will not qualify for, or achieve the goal of, monetary union.

The framework laid down in the treaty is not so rigid as some would insist that it is; there is room for an opt-out, not just for the United Kingdom but for every country in the Community.

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): Even when countries operate under the rules, is it not the case that there may be

circumstances in which the member states may decide that the rules do not apply? In the case of fines, the word "may" is used throughout the protocol.

Mr. Macdonald: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is the point that I was coming to. It is the flexibility not only of a country joining the monetary union but also of the convergence criteria not applying to a member of the currency union after it has joined the monetary union, and the penalties not applying to a member of the monetary union if it fails to meet the convergence critiera. That is decided by the Council of Ministers. I grant that to my hon. Friends.

Any member of the monetary union must argue its case with the other members of the monetary union on the basis of its particular economic circumstances and say that it cannot meet the inflation criteria, the budget deficit criteria or some of the other criteria. If the country successfully argues its case in the Council of Ministers, the constraints, fines and penalties no longer apply.

Mr. Winnick: I have listened with great care to what my hon. Friend is saying. Despite everything else, does he accept that that takes away the authority of the House of Commons and the Government of the day and places them in a position, at best, in which we would be virtually begging the body involved for permission to overspend in the circumstances that my hon. Friend described? Is my hon. Friend not worried about the erosion of the basic sovereignty of this House of Commons and this country —the very reasons why we are here in the first place—quite apart from the cuts which will undoubtedly occur in public spending?

Mr. Macdonald: Of course I worry about that, but I ask my hon. Friend to face up to reality—which is that we face such constraints whether we are inside a monetary union or outside it. I ask my hon. Friends to recall the history of the 1970s when we had to beg the International Monetary Fund for permission to run a deficit. I ask my hon. Friends to recall the history of the past year and, indeed, this year, when we had to beg the Bundesbank to reduce its interest rates because of the condition of our country.

Mr. Winnick: Until we left the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Macdonald: Yes. I remind my hon. Friend that we are still begging the Bundesbank to reduce its interest rates because they place constraints on our ability to deliver our economic goals.

The point is simply that we shall have to operate in an international environment whether we are inside the monetary union or outside it. I argue that we are better placed within the Council of Ministers to convince our colleagues—and frequently our socialist colleagues—within it of the special needs of the United Kingdom than trying to persuade the bankers of the Bundesbank or of the IMF of Britain's special case.

The arguments about the future course of economic policy in Britain will continue after the treaty has been passed. We shall continue to need to negotiate and make agreements with international partners after the treaty has been passed. The treaty is not the watershed that some of my hon. Friends would like to insist that it is. It moves the argument away from a purely national stage on to a European stage. I argue that that strengthens our position and helps us to win our arguments in those spheres in the future.

The Chairman: Rev. Ian——

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:——

The Committee proceeded to a Division——

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: May I point out that it must be on the procedure relating to the Division, not on any decision of the Chair.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Sir, you called my name and I stood up. The Whip was entirely out of order. I was called and I want you to rule on that. You called my name. I should like a ruling, Sir. You had called my name and, according to the Standing Orders of the House, I was entitled to speak.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman is correct, but the closure may be moved at any point. I am not to know when the closure is to be moved. I merely have to judge whether it is an appropriate time for the closure to be accepted or not. I made that decision.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. I have listened carefully to what you said, but if I was called, I was at least entitled to utter some words before being interrupted by the Whip who moved the closure motion; that did not happen.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman makes a point, but my judgment was that it was appropriate to conclude the debate as the motion had been put. The closure motion can be moved at any stage of any speech. It is unfortunate that the hon. Gentleman had only just been called.

Mr. Bill Walker *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: Is it on procedure?

Mr. Walker: Yes. The procedures of the House are designed, as I understand it, to give the House the opportunity, in Committee or elsewhere, to hear clearly views from all parts of the United Kingdom. When you made your judgment to accept the closure motion, were you satisfied that the interests of all parts of the United Kingdom had been heard during the four-day debate that has taken place, because if not——

The Chairman: Order. I understand the point of order, but I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to page 406 of "Erskine May", where he will read that the discretion of the Chair is absolute and is not open to dispute.

Mr. Walker: I am not disputing your decision but asking whether, in a constitutional debate, it will enhance the reputation of this Parliament in Scotland. If it does not, this day will be remembered for a long time by Scots.

The Committee having divided: Ayes 298, Noes 240.

Division No. 110] **[9.36**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Faulds, Andrew
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
[illegible] Peter
[illegible]e, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Arbuthnot and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary

Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Fraser, John
Fry, Peter
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gardiner, Sir George
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hawksley, Warren
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lord, Michael
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sweeney, Walter
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Gordon McMaster.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 74, Noes 304.

Division No. 111] **[9.51 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Body, Sir Richard
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Budgen, Nicholas
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Fry, Peter
Galloway, George
Gardiner, Sir George
Gerrard, Neil
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hall, Mike
Hawksley, Warren
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lord, Michael
McAllion, John
McCrea, Rev William
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marlow, Tony
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Mullin, Chris
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Sweeney, Walter
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*

Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Trimble, David
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Teresa Gorman and
Mr. Roger Knapman.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl'f)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Faulds, Andrew
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gapes, Mike
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Radice, Giles
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark

Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: I will take points of order afterwards.

It being after Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

Alnwick (Development Area Status)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

10.6 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder if you would be good enough to give the House some guidance as to how you intend to call right hon. and hon. Members in the course of our important discussions on the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that, as he will observe, I am now a reincarnation of the Deputy Speaker, and therefore discussion on proceedings in the Committee is not in order. Mr. Beith.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I make the point that the right hon. Member who has the Adjournment debate is a Back Bencher and has waited a considerable time for it. I will take quick points of order, but no more.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have always understood that the duty of the Speaker was to protect the interests especially of Back Benchers. I have also understood during the 22 years that I have been here that the House represents England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and that it makes no difference where an hon. Member comes from; but I have also understood that all sections of the community represented here would be called in debates to give their view.

I should like to ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if it is worth while for hon. Members from Northern Ireland to come to the House for the debate that has been concluded if, on all the days that they have asked to be called, they have not been called, and if, when they are called, the Government gag them. Is there no way whereby an hon. Member can be reasonably assured that, if he sits through all the debates—I understand that the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) wants to speak; I too have sat through all these debates—he will be allowed to speak?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying. This is a United Kingdom Parliament, and the Chair tries to choose hon. Members to contribute to all debates on that basis.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman has an Adjournment debate. The hon. Member has raised a point of order already.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Walker—with reluctance.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance. If hon. Members wish to participate in debates, either in a normal session in the Chamber or in Committee, does the Chair, in its capacity of protecting the interests of Back Benchers and all aspects of Back Benchers' interests—in other

[Mr. Bill Walker]

words, whether they sit on the Opposition Benches or on the Government Benches—and in the interests of attempting to procure a balance, achieve that balance? If so, thus far no one from Scotland on the Conservative Benches has spoken.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have already ruled that I cannot comment at this stage on what went on in Committee.

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. No, the hon. Member has had one point of order. I hope that this is a totally different one. Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Budgen: With respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was unable to make my point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member made his point of order. I made it quite clear, and I make it clear to all hon. Members in the Chamber at the moment, that I am now sitting here as Madam Speaker's Deputy. Neither she nor I can comment on what has happened in a Committee of the House. Points raised then should be raised at the next meeting of the Committee and not in the Adjournment debate of another hon. Member.

Mr. Beith: It is a convention of the House that hon. Members respect the fact that another hon. Member has the Adjournment debate, because the time that they take is taken out of the Adjournment debate.

I am grateful for the opportunity to raise a matter that is important to my constituents. I am glad to have the attention of the Minister for Industry. He and I were elected to Parliament on the same day, and he will know that since then I have often raised the need for development area status in the area that we are talking about.

I am talking about the Northumberland coalfield area. I am glad to be able to make a further plea on its behalf before the Minister reaches his final decisions about which parts of the country shall have development area status now that he is reviewing the map. I appreciate that he cannot give me the answer that I want in this debate, because the map for the whole country will be announced at once at a later debate. He will then be obliged to take into account the results of the review of the disastrous pit closures plan, even though nothing in his tool kit of development measures could possibly cope with the deluge of unemployment that would result if anything like that original programme of closures went ahead.

I want to direct the Minister's attention to an area that is already suffering desperately from decades of pit closures. The Alnwick and Amble travel-to-work area lost development area status in 1984, since when I have been campaigning with local authorities to get it restored. At the same time, the Morpeth and Ashington area, which includes an adjoining part of my constituency around Lynemouth and Ellington, was reduced to intermediate status, and I supported a similar campaign for the area. Sadly, the employment situation in these areas has worsened during the period and their cases therefore become stronger. Pit closures have continued, and with the area having to compete with assisted areas, almost no new inward investment has been recorded since 1984.

The area that we are discussing is the main part of the Northumberland coalfield. The Alnwick and Amble travel-to work area includes the town of Alnwick, which, although it is a market town, has depended significantly on coal mining, and Amble, which was once a busy mining and coal shipping town. The area also includes Seahouses, traditionally a fishing port with significant tourism, and remote and beautiful areas such as the Rothbury area.

The fact that the travel-to work area was so wide was one of the factors that led to its loss of development status in 1984, because it diluted the high unemployment figure in Amble and Alnwick, but unemployment has now increased throughout the area. Alnwick district council has submitted a strong and well-documented case to the review on behalf of the area.

The Hadston and Broomhill part of Castle Morpeth district, consisting mainly of a large housing estate built specifically to house people from the old mining villages, is also in the Alnwick and Amble travel-to work area. Castle Morpeth borough council pointed out in its submission to the Department of Trade and Industry some months ago how absurd it is that this deprived part of its area, which at that time had 12 per cent. unemployment, did not have development area status, yet the much more prosperous Ponteland part of the area, with 3·5 per cent. unemployment, had the full benefit of development area status.

Those figures have increased significantly since, but there is still a huge difference, with the most prosperous area having development status and the most deprived not. Castle Morpeth would like to keep its development status in the Ponteland area because of the potential for development at the airport, but it throws into sharp focus how wrong it is that the most deprived part of the borough should not have development status.

A recent study of the Hadston estate for the Northumberland coalfield task force, which was set up with the help of the Minister's Department, revealed that 38 per cent. of unemployed claimants had been out of work for more than two years, and that 55 per cent. of those interviewed had worked for a total of less than a year in the previous five years. This is a desperate problem of long-term unemployment, with resulting social problems in an area that the Government have wrongly excluded from assisted area help.

Immediately south of Hadston are the coalfield communities of Ellington, Lynemouth, Linton and Widdrington, which have the inadequate intermediate status because they are in the Morpeth and Ashington travel-to-work areas. The whole of the area has been hit hard by a succession of pit closures in recent years. At Shilbottle and Whittle collieries in the Alnwick area—although Whittle now operates as a small private drift—at Lynemouth and at nearby Woodhorn, Ashington and Bates collieries thousands of jobs have disappeared in the past decade.

The only remaining British coal pit in Northumberland, and potentially the only one in the north-east, is in my constituency, at Ellington, and it is no secret that it was on the closure list until days before that dreadful list was published. Closely linked with the fate of that colliery at Ellington are the Alcan power station and smelter, as well as the Blyth power station. More than half the jobs at Alcan have gone as production has been cut back. If any

one of this complex of related industries were to go altogether, the whole structure could go, with the loss of more than 3,000 jobs.

PA Cambridge Economic Consultants have advised Northumberland county council that, if that happens, unemployment in the Morpeth and Ashington travel-to-work area would approach 17 per cent. That was the advice some months ago. On the latest national figures, that would be higher. A similarly sharp rise would happen in the Amble and Alnwick area.

Even on the most optimistic scenario, without such a catastrophe, they expected unemployment to rise to 15 per cent. in the Morpeth and Ashington area, and to more than 13 per cent. in the Alnwick and Amble area. In the meantime, since they made those forecasts, the Alnwick and Amble figure has reached 14·2 per cent.

Unfortunately, other industries on which this area depends face dramatic job losses. The Alnwick and Amble area has an exceptionally high proportion of employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing. It has been estimated that 800 jobs will be lost in farming in Northumberland following the CAP reforms, and at least a third of those will be in this area. Fishing and associated trades face certain job losses because of restrictions on fishing opportunities and the Government's deplorable decision to phase out the north-east salmon fishery. The building industry has been devasted in the recession. Indeed, the main source of new employment in the Amble area has been the prison service, one of the few industries that seems to have survived the recession in reasonable numbers.

From an employment point of view, this whole area from Alnwick to Ashington needs the same level of support, and needs it very badly. The DTI recognised that under the previous Minister, when it set up the coalfield task force. Europe recognises it; the whole area is eligible for help under objective 2 and under the RECHAR scheme, which was so long delayed by the argument over additionality.

A lot of work is going on to help the area through these schemes, through local authorities and by the efforts of industry. Other things are needed, like full dualling of the A1 and investment in education and housing, currently squeezed by local government spending restrictions, but much of this work will be undermined if, when the new assisted area map is announced, all or part of the Northumberland coalfield is left without assisted area status, competing with areas which do have it and can therefore offer better incentives to inward investors or existing businesses.

Many of the businesses already established within our area belong to groups and companies which have plants elsewhere in Britain or abroad, and their head offices or main boards may very well shift new investment to plants which are enjoying development status either in Britain or in some equivalent form in other countries. The Northern Development Company has made clear that the evidence of past investment is that the north of England will not attract inward investment without assisted areas status.

The main factors which the Government have said that they will take into account in making their decision on this matter are current rates of unemployment, persistence of unemployment rates above the national average, the proportion of long-term unemployed in the local work force, the likely future demand for jobs and peripherality and distance from markets. The Alnwick and Amble area and Morpeth and Ashington area both pass all those tests. Unemployment in both areas is at present more than 14 per cent., with male unemployment at or above 20 per cent. and as high as 70 per cent. on some housing estates.

Apart from the impact of limited amounts of seasonal work, a large part of the unemployment is long-term. The job losses I have described in mining, farming and fishing, and the fragile nature of employment in the Ellington, Lynemouth and Blyth complex, mean that we must prepare for future job losses on a large scale. The area could hardly be more peripheral: it is further from London and from the channel tunnel than any other part of England.

The case is so strong that I do not see how the Minister can, in all justice, fail to accept it.

10.18 pm

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): As the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said, we were elected to the House on the same day. Therefore, it is a privilege to reply to his debate on what he sees as the need for assistance for his constituency. I know that he takes a great interest in his constituency, as I do in mine, and I sometimes envy the opportunity that he has to raise issues as he has done this evening.

The right hon. Gentleman understandably focused his remarks on the importance of assisted area status. It is especially understandable when one bears in mind the fact that the area, or part of it, had the status before 1984. As he knows, the current review of the future shape of the assisted area map was announced last June, and the criteria on which the review is based were set out in the consultation document.

We invited interested parties to submit their views and, as the consultation document explains, the primary base for the review is the range of statistical information on unemployment, which includes data on the current level, the persistence of unemployment rates above the national average in recent years and the proportion of the long-term unemployed in the local work force.

Other factors considered include demographic changes and the likely future demand for jobs in the area, taking account of the growth or decline in local industries—I shall deal with that point in relation to the mining industry to which the right hon. Gentleman referred—and other measures of economic performance, including activity rates and the important issue of peripherality to which he also referred. As he said, in England one cannot get further from the channel tunnel—I do not know what his hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) would say about the situation across the border.

The review is based on the existing travel-to-work areas, which are broad approximations of self-contained labour markets. It will be a year or more—I suspect more —before new travel-to-work areas are defined using the data from the 1991 census. The current map covered about 35 per cent. of the working population of Great Britain when it was designated in 1984. Of that, development areas covered 15 per cent. and intermediate areas the remaining 20 per cent. The right hon. Gentleman said something about the inadequacy of intermediate area status, but I do not think it is regarded in that way by many of those who have submitted requests for such status. It is a valuable and valued status.

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[Mr. Tim Sainsbury]

It is unlikely that the coverage of the new map will be greater than now, and it could be somewhat less. Coverage of the new map will, of course, have to be agreed with the European Commission, as it was in 1984.

The broad objectives of Government policy with regard to the assisted area map continue to be to reduce regional imbalances in employment opportunities and to encourage the development of indigenous potential within the assisted areas on a stable and long-term basis.

During the consultation period last year, more than 1,500 written representations were received from Great Britain, and, by the end of last year, Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry had held meetings with more than 50 delegations, in addition to the delegations seen by my colleagues in Wales and Scotland during the same period.

I have received detailed representations, to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, from Northumberland county council and Alnwick district council in support of development area status for the Alnwick and Amble travel-to-work area. Those representations cover comprehensively the effects on the TTWA of structural unemployment changes, especially in the coal industry which, as he said, had a considerable effect on the area some time ago. They also cover the difficulties faced by the area in attracting new industries because of the distances and the lower-than-average rates of small firm formation and participation in economic activity.

Before the previous review of the assisted area map in 1984, the Alnwick and Amble travel-to-work area enjoyed intermediate area status. At that time, Ministers decided that other areas had more pressing problems and that Alnwick and Amble should not be included in the revised map. Of course I am aware that that decision was, not surprisingly, not well received by the county council. That proves that intermediate area status is valued by local authorities and industries.

The current review, like that of 1984, is based on travel-to-work areas, which are the smallest areas for which reliable statistical information on unemployment is available. However, loss of intermediate area status has not meant that the area has been without assistance, and I shall say a few words about the situation since 1984.

First, there is the status of the area for European regional policy purposes. The various maps defining eligibility for European Community structural funds are separate from the assisted area map—which defines eligibility for aid from my Department—and are drawn up against criteria decided by the Community. I expect to receive from the European Commission at the end of this month proposals for new regulations governing, amongst other things, the selection of objective 2 areas—those suffering from industrial decline. The designation of areas under the new arrangements is unlikely to be completed until the middle of this year, and it will come into force from 1 January 1994.

As a result of its status under objective 2 of the structural funds, the Alnwick and Amble area has had access to individual project support from the European regional development fund and, subsequently, to the Tyne and Wear/south-east Northumberland integrated development operations programme—referred to as "TAWSEN". In addition, part of the travel-to-work area surrounding Amble is eligible under the TAWSEN RECHAR programme for former coal-mining areas, under which £11·5 million is available. So far, 53 applications have been received for more than £6 million of this, and £3·7 million has been approved for 27 projects.

A major beneficiary of European regional development fund support has been the marina development in Amble, which received a £700,000 grant in 1986. Other projects that have received support include the development of the employment training workshop at Amble, the second stage of the development of the Alnwick playhouse and improvements to tourism information throughout the area.

Secondly, the Rural Development Commission has operated a programme of advice for businesses and for the provision of premises in the Alnwick and Amble travel-to-work area. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman is well aware of this, as, last month, he performed the opening ceremony for the scheme of 10 workshop units at Alnwick—units ranging from 550 sq ft to 1,850 sq ft—developed by English Estates for the Rural Development Commission. That was part of a programme that has seen the provision in the Alnwick and Amble area since 1984 of more than 54,000 sq ft of workshop units and 10,000 sq ft of factory units, at a total cost of about £2·5 million. Of the total of 108,000 sq ft of space in 61 units in the Alnwick and Amble travel-to-work area, 70,000 sq ft in 39 units is let, providing an estimated 280 jobs.

The Rural Development Commission also provides grants to return redundant buildings to productive business use; marketing and exhibition grants to help rural firms to achieve profitable sales; and quality assurance courses to help rural businesses to prepare to accreditation. A wide variety of projects have been supported in the area, ranging from the provision of a rural coalfields development worker based in Hadston to a grant towards a centre for voluntary organisations to provide a "one stop" service. Since 1989, the area has had £165,000 of funding approved under the rural development programme.

The Rural Development Commission has just begun a review of its rural priority areas. It has published its proposals for handling the review, which it expects to complete later this year.

Enterprise support for small and medium-sized businesses in the Alnwick and Amble travel-to-work area is provided by the training and enterprise council for Northumberland at its customer support centre in Alnwick, and includes access to business counselling services. The Northumberland TEC also provides a range of training support measures, including the business enterprise programme and business growth training.

From its total budget for this financial year of over £14·8 million the TEC has contracted to provide 126,000 weeks of youth training, or more than 2,000 places, and 42,000 weeks of employment training, or a further 1,200 places. I am glad to say that it has been distinguished as the only north-east TEC, and only one of three nationally, to achieve four bonus points in the TEC performance awards for 1991-92.

I congratulate the TEC on its achievements to date. I am sure that it will continue to make a major contribution to the development of the skills of the work force of the area. As I am sure the right hon. Gentleman agrees, the development of skills is particularly important when it comes to ensuring economic revival and the strength of the

area's economy. I look forward in due course to seeing the Northumberland TEC's response to the invitation to bid for a one-stop shop.

Mr. Beith: The Minister referred to a number of bodies that are helping in the area. I hope he will note that every one of those bodies treats the coalfield area as a whole and works throughout it. Not one of them divides it into three separate categories of eligibility, as his Department has done up to now, and as I hope it will stop doing when it publishes its new map.

Mr. Sainsbury: I note what the right hon. Gentleman says, and I am sure that they, like my Department, are seeking to target their help effectively to where it is most needed. I recognise that the area, like the rest of Britain, has been experiencing difficult trading conditions in recent times, and I note from the submission made by the district council that the position of the area in relation to the whole of Great Britain is broadly the same now as it was in 1984.

I was also pleased to note, from the same source, its estimate of a net increase of 12 per cent. in the number of VAT-registered businesses in the area over the same period, even in the face of the difficulties to which the submissions, and the right hon. Member, referred. The Government will continue their efforts to dismantle unnecessary bureaucracy and encourage the formation of new businesses.

Despite its relatively small size—approximately 1,000 businesses and a work force of about 14,000—I am pleased to note from local press reports the successes achieved by businesses in the area. I understand that Phoenix Mountaineering, which was set up in Amble 11 years ago, has grown to employ 130 people and has, for the fourth season, been the supplier of ski wear to the British Olympic team. The right hon. Gentleman will join me in congratulating the company on that. The enterprise of local residents has been further demonstrated by 3 Bears Playthings of Rothbury, which recently received a European Community award under the women's enterprise initiative for creating employment opportunities for women in a rural area.

Understandably, the right hon. Gentleman referred to reductions in employment in the coal industry. I am very much aware of the importance attached by the local community to the last deep mine in Northumberland; as the right hon. Member knows, Ellington is not among the collieries currently under review. My officials in the DTI north-east regional office, and my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy, in his capacity as Minister for the north-east, have had discussions with members of the local business community about the strategic interdependence of coal mining at Ellington, the activities of the port of Blyth and aluminium manufacture at the British Alcan smelter.

The importance of those activities to employment in the immediate area and beyond is recognised. As a result, I assure the right hon. Member that I am fully aware of the local situation and its effect on the local community.

The county of Northumberland has a proud history as one of the earliest areas in which coal was mined on an industrial scale. It is perhaps inevitable that there have been extensive closures in the last 20 years as coal reserves have become worked out or too costly to access. Northumberland county council has clearly brought out in its submission to me the position since 1980, with closures of six collieries, the last being Ashington in 1988. I recognise that the closure of the Ashington complex, like Ellington outside the Alnwick and Amble travel -to-work area, undoubtedly had its effects in the right hon. Member's constituency.

In recognition of the difficulties faced in the Wansbeck district of the Morpeth and Ashington travel-to-work area, my Department is supporting the work of the Wansbeck initiative. That body involves local authority, central Government and enterprise agency members and is aimed at the regeneration of the area, which includes the former Ashington complex. Substantial progress has been made in dealing with the residues of coal mining, and the plans for the Ashington business park mark the next stage in the reclamation of the area. When completed, those will provide landscaped amenity land and a 50-acre business park capable of providing 500,000 sq ft of accommodation.

The right hon. Member will welcome the efforts currently being made by the reconstituted Northumberland coalfields task force, in which my Department participates, to regenerate the area from Alnwick to Cramlington. It has set up a number of subordinate task groups, each served by a particular district. It is perhaps most appropriate to the subject of the economic regeneration of the Alnwick and Amble travel-to-work area that Alnwick district council looks after the business development group on which DTI, English Estates, British Coal Enterprise, the Rural Development Commission and other bodies are represented, and that co-operation is valuable.

I have carefully noted what the right hon. Gentleman said. I assure him that the points he raised will be carefully considered and taken into account with all the other submissions I have received, including those from Northumberland county council and Alnwick district council specifically concerning the area.

Mr. Beith: I am sure that the Minister will remember that the relevant part of Castle Morpeth borough, and the parishes to which I referred, must also feature in his study.

Mr. Sainsbury: As I said, I have carefully noted everything that the right hon. Gentleman said. He will appreciate that I cannot today anticipate the completion of the assisted area map review as a whole and make a specific announcement about a particular area. The review will be concluded as early as possible in 1993. Taking account of the coal inquiry, an announcement will be made as soon as possible after the necessary clearance with the European Commission.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 15 January 1993

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Local Authority Tenants

9.34 am

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): I wish to present a petition from 500 local authority tenants who reside in the city of Cambridge in my constituency. Their concern is

That Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985, part of the original Tenants Charter of the Housing Act 1980, gives a most important right to council tenants in England and Wales in that it obliges their landlord authority to consult them on matters of housing management.

The right of tenants to be consulted and to have their views taken into account when any subsequent decision is made is the foundation for tenant participation in housing management.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House: Will instruct the Government to make no amendment to reduce tenants' rights under Section 105, Housing Act 1985 (1985 c. 68) and to therefore strike out Clause 114(2) of the Housing and Urban Development Bill, published on Thursday, 22nd October 1992, and strike out clause 115(1) of the Bill insofar as it concerns the proposed amendment made in Section 27(AA)4 of the 1985 Act.

To lie upon the Table.

Treaty of Maastricht (Referendum)

9.36 am

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I present the second group of petitions signed by many tens of thousands of people from all over the United Kingdom who are in favour of and opposed to the Maastricht treaty and represent a wide range of political opinion. The petitioners state:

That the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty, which was negotiated by the heads of Government of the member states within the European Community, are designed to bring about a European Union, complete with its own constitution, in which all the countries that are party to it, will belong; That this union, and its laws, will have a profound effect upon the way in which the United Kingdom is governed, and upon the democratic rights of the citizens of this country to elect and remove those who now enact and administer the laws of this nation".

The main point of the petition is

That the British people have been given no right to determine, for themselves, in a democratic vote, whether or not they wish these constitutional changes to be made".

The Petition ends in the traditional way:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House: Will ensure that before the Maastricht Treaty, or any modification or amendment of it, is approved by Parliament, or ratified by Her Majesty's Government, the citizens of the United Kingdom shall be given the right to vote for, or against, that Treaty, in a National Referendum, and that the decision reached in that Referendum be accepted as binding upon the Government and Parliament.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Osteopaths Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.38 am

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It is a singular privilege for me to have a double opportunity this morning, first to present a private Member's Bill but especially to present such an important piece of legislation which will not only enhance dramatically the professional status of the osteopathic profession but will be a milestone on the road to recognition for complementary medicine as a whole.

I begin by thanking the King's Fund and its working party, and in particular Simon Fielding, who has been a great help to me in the past few months. I am glad that he is present today. I thank officials from the Department of Health, who have given me every assistance possible, and Lord Walton, whose Bill I have taken over because his original Bill fell in the Lords earlier this year. I thank hon. Members of all parties who have supported the Bill, and I especially thank Opposition Members who will speak in its support today.

Some consternation was expressed to me just before Christmas when it was discovered that I was about to embark on a week's skiing with the Lords and Commons ski team. There was the prospect either that I would be standing here with one or more limbs in plaster or that I would be flat on my back, which would not have been the most auspicious circumstances in which to present the Bill.

Osteopathy is a system of diagnosis and treatment which lays its main emphasis on the structural and mechanical problems of the body. It is not regarded as an alternative to conventional medicine, but rather as a complementary therapy, offering patients an additional option in the treatment of certain conditions affecting the body's mechanical functions.

Osteopathic treatment predominantly comprises gentle manual methods. It utilises a diagnostic procedure similar to conventional medical examination, but it pays especial attention to the patient's musculo-skeletal system. Osteopathy is the most widely used of the complementary therapies. I am sure that many hon. Members have availed themselves of the services of an osteopath at some time, and many are here today to support the Bill.

It is estimated that there are now well over 2,000 osteopaths practising in the United Kingdom, and that they are visited by 100,000 patients every week. Given its growing popularity and widespread use, it is of key importance that there should also be safeguards for the public which will ensure, for example, adequate clinical training for all those who are entitled to call themselves osteopaths.

An essential element of the training is to equip practitioners with the ability to recognise conditions for which osteopathic treatment is inappropriate and cases in which the patient should be referred to a registered medical practitioner. The final essential component of the safeguards needs to be the provision of effective disciplinary procedures to ensure that the profession achieves and maintains the very highest standards.

[Mr. Malcolm Moss]

I was encouraged in my decision to take the Bill forward by the support now given by the medical profession to osteopaths in their quest for statutory registration. For some time, the British Medical Association has accepted that there is

"an organised, reputable and coherent body of knowledge underlying osteopathic practice".

The BMA has also stated its belief that the increasing practice of cross-referral between general medical practitioners and osteopaths has been of immense benefit to patients.

The support has not always been so warm. Until the mid-1970s, doctors were prevented from referring patients to any practitioner who was not medically qualified. I very much welcome the change of heart which is demonstrated by the increasing interest of doctors in osteopathy, and by an increasing willingness to refer patients to osteopaths. There is also a growing public interest in a variety of complementary therapies, not least osteopathy, which leads me to believe that the Bill is very timely.

The Bill is modelled on the recommendations for statutory regulation presented in the report by the King's Fund working party on osteopathy, which were enshrined in the Bill presented by Lord Walton of Detchant in the previous Session. I know that the osteopathic profession would wish to join me in paying tribute to the King's Fund working party—and especially to its chairman, Sir Thomas Bingham—for its considerable contribution in advancing the cause for statutory regulation of osteopaths.

I appreciate that, at first glance, the similarity between my Bill and Lord Walton's may not be evident. That is primarily because the two pieces of legislation were penned by different hands. However, I can assure the House and the profession that both the fundamental principles and the key purposes of the two Bills are identical. The first purpose is to establish a representative governing body for osteopaths and the second is to set in place a fair and practical system of statutory regulation for the profession.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I welcome the legislation, and especially the part to which my hon. Friend has just referred. Does he agree that a professional body in medicine established now has an opportunity to set new standards for such professional bodies simply by being newly established and by not carrying with it the bag and baggage of some of the older professional bodies in medicine, which have sometimes seemed over-protective of their members?

Mr. Moss: The Bill breaks new ground in setting standards of regulation that have not yet been met by some of the other medical groups. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) will realise as I continue my speech that a great deal of thought has gone into the Bill, not only to make it a landmark for future legislation to encompass more medical groups, but to incorporate in it some clauses that existing medical groups that have regulation may want to take up at a later date.

I also assure the House that the Bill encapsulates the recommendations for initial registration made in the working party's report to enable, as far as possible, osteopaths in current practice to qualify for registration. The Bill also extends the provisions to enable certain other practitioners who might not otherwise have been able to meet the conditions for registration to be registered.

I shall explain in greater detail later the different ways in which practitioners will be able to qualify for registration. I have mentioned the point now about extending eligibility to illustrate not only how the Bill is firmly rooted in the working party's recommendations, but how it builds on that solid foundation. That reflects the input in policy from across government, the experiences of similar statutory schemes such as the General Medical Council, our European obligations, competition laws and aspects of human rights.

The primary object of the Bill is to set in place a professionally led, statutory registration scheme for osteopaths. It would be similar to those existing for many other professional groups, including all the key health professionals. The scheme would be achieved primarily through the establishment of a General Osteopathic Council, which would have the statutory responsibility to develop, to promote and to regulate the profession of osteopathy throughout the United Kingdom, and to set educational standards and standards of professional conduct.

The Bill would also establish four statutory committees of the General Osteopathic Council. The first would be the education committee, which would have the responsibility of promoting high standards of education in osteopathy and of providing the general council with advice on all matters concerning education, training and examinations in osteopathy. The three other committees would be the investigating committee, the professional conduct committee and the health committee, which collectively would provide the fitness-to-practise machinery.

The three committees would provide the key function of ensuring that an allegation made against an osteopath concerning his professional conduct or competence to practise was properly investigated and dealt with effectively. The committee's remit would also cover allegations that a practitioner had been convicted of a criminal offence, or that he or she was unfit to practise for reasons of ill health.

The statutory scheme would replace the current system of voluntary regulation. That has worked exceptionally well for the majority of practitioners, and it has played a key role in paving the way for statutory regulation. However, by its very nature, a voluntary system is unable to enforce standards of competence or conduct. If a practitioner chooses not to participate in the scheme, the regulatory body is completely powerless to exercise any jurisdiction over that individual's practice.

That fundamental weakness brings into sharp focus the need for the statutory scheme. As the law stands, anyone can call himself or herself an osteopath and set up in practice. There is no obligation to undergo any formal training or to comply with standards of professional competence. Members of the public therefore have no guarantee that a person holding himself out as an osteopath is properly qualified and competent to do so. The only recourse that patients have in the event of mishap is through the common law.

Under my Bill, the system of voluntary regulation would be replaced by a single statutory body capable of enforcing standards of training, education, proficiency and professional conduct throughout the profession in the United Kingdom. The body would also have powers to

require anyone wishing to practise as an osteopath to conform to those standards, be registered with the statutory council and submit himself to its authority. The statutory council would thus have the unique ability to unite the profession and sweep aside the current fragmentation.

The achievement of statutory regulation would, I believe, herald the dawn of an exciting new era for the osteopathic profession. It is essential, however, that, in reaching out for the prize of tomorrow, the profession does not let go the trophies that it holds today.

I have mentioned that the current systems of voluntary registration have provided the solid foundation for a statutory scheme, but, even assuming the successful passage of the Bill, it could take up to two years before the machinery to drive the statutory scheme is fully in place. I therefore urge individuals in the profession, many of whom are here today, not to abandon the current schemes prematurely. The successful transition to statutory regulation will depend heavily on their continued support and maintenance.

I emphasise that the statutory scheme would be not only led but regulated by the profession. For that reason, 12 of the proposed 24 members of the General Osteopathic Council would be osteopaths elected by the profession itself. Eight of the remaining members would be non-osteopaths, appointed by the Privy Council. Those members would represent wider interests and, in particular, the views of patients. That would help to increase the breadth of experience within the general council and ensure that the profession had a firm and balanced basis on which to develop in future.

The other four members of the general council would include a person with experience in medical education, nominated by the Secretary of State, and three members appointed by the education committee to represent the interests of training institutions in the United Kingdom. The balance of different members is mirrored in all other statutory regulatory schemes; the scheme, like all its counterparts, would be overseen by the Privy Council.

Eagle-eyed Members may have spotted an omission from the Bill—there are no arrangements for establishing the very first General Osteopathic Council. It is not possible for the arrangements currently in the schedule to apply to the first general council because, at the start of the scheme, there will be no registered osteopaths to be elected or to vote. Special transitional arrangements will therefore need to be provided, and I propose to specify them in an amendment to the schedule in Committee.

What I have in mind is that the initial osteopathic and lay members of the general council would be appointed by the Privy Council. That is in keeping with the practice followed in the establishment of other statutory schemes, and was endorsed by the working party in its report.

To ensure that the general council reflects a balance of good professional opinion, experience and practice, the initial osteopathic members would, of course, be appointed after consultation with those bodies that administer the current scheme of voluntary registration. The individuals would not, however, be representatives of any particular organisation—nor would they be beholden to any sectoral interests. Instead, they would be selected on the basis of their individual ability and merit and would, in effect, be ambassadors for the profession as a whole.

The working party on osteopathy regarded the primary objective of any scheme of regulation to be the benefit and protection of patients. Having studied statutory schemes governing other professions, the working party concluded: "for all practical purposes there is no viable alternative to the statutory registration of osteopaths which should be open to inspection by members of the public."

That view was supported by all the organisations consulted by the working party, and I hope that it will be supported by the House today.

A statutory register of osteopaths would therefore form the core of the regulatory scheme. The register would be maintained by the registrar appointed by the general council. In future, all practitioners wishing to call themselves osteopaths would be required to be registered on the register. That requirement would be backed up by a provision in the Bill making it a criminal offence for an unregistered practitioner to use that title or any variation of it.

The closure of professional title was one of the key recommendations in the working party report. It is also a central provision of the Bill. I emphasise, however, that the offence will be related to the use of the title "osteopath". The Bill does not in any way seek to prohibit the use of osteopathic techniques by other manipulative therapists such as physiotherapists, or prevent them from telling their patients that they are using such techniques.

That brings me to the nub of the scheme—the proposed criteria for registration, which will clearly be of central concern to many people, not least those in the profession itself. As this is such a crucial part of the regulatory scheme, I should like to explain in detail the different categories of registration proposed under the Bill—and, in particular, the transitional arrangements that would apply.

Application for registration would be on a strictly individual basis. Membership of a particular professional body would not, therefore, confer any automatic right or advantage on an individual, although it is, of course, intended that the statutory scheme should embrace, so far as is practicable, practitioners currently registered under the system of voluntary registration.

The Bill provides for the "full" and "conditional" registration of existing practitioners. That is based on the recommendations made in the working party report, although "conditional registration", as referred to in the Bill, is what the working party called "provisional registration". The different title that we have selected more accurately reflects the conditional nature of that category of registration, and also offers the profession scope to introduce a more familiar system of provisional registration, along the lines of pre-registration for doctors, if it so wishes.

Entitlement to full registration is founded on the same principles of good character, qualification and experience as outlined in the working party's report. The provisions are intended to enable as many osteopaths in current practice as possible to qualify for registration, without compromising the key principle of providing the public with adequate and effective safeguards against inexperienced and untrained practitioners.

The Bill does, however, impose an additional requirement: practitioners would also have to be in good physical and mental health. A similar provision exists in the Dentists Act 1984. The intention is to enable the registrar at the outset to refuse registration to an applicant

[Mr. Moss]

whose known state of health raises serious doubts about his ability to practise. Without such a provision, the registrar might have no other option but to register the practitioner and hope that he would be able to secure an early suspension of the osteopath's registration by immediately referring the matter to the health committee.

For an initial two-year transitional period, commencing on the day on which the register opens, a practitioner who does not hold a qualification recognised by the general council as one that equips him or her with the standards of education and training required for the safe and competent practice of osteopathy may still be entitled to full registration. That would be on the basis that he or she can satisfy the registrar that, for at least five of the preceding seven years, he or she has spent a substantial part of his or her working time in the safe, lawful and competent practice of osteopathy.

That arrangement follows the working party's recommendation and acknowledges that experienced practitioners who may not have the benefit of a properly structured course of training but who have been practising safely and competently in the name of osteopathy for many years should be brought within the scope of the regulatory scheme.

The Bill does, however, require that such practice should have been "lawful". That provision has been included so that the General Osteopathic Council is not, say, placed under an obligation to register an overseas practitioner on the basis of what might have been illegal practice in his home country. Conditional registration would be simply a transitional arrangement, with applications for that category of registration being permitted only during the two-year transitional period which I mentioned a few moments ago. I have already said that conditional registration is modelled closely on the working party's recommendations for provisional registration.

The purpose of conditional registration is to enable registration of practitioners who do not hold a recognised qualification, and who are unable to muster the five years out of seven safe, lawful and competent practice of osteopathy required for full registration. It is not in any way intended to create a two-tier system of registration, but was recommended by the working party as a mechanism to ensure that as many practitioners as possible are included under the Act.

Practitioners who are registered with conditional registration would fall into two categories. The first will be those who just fail to meet the five years out of seven criterion for full registration. Those practitioners will be eligible for full registration if they have spent a substantial part of their working time in the safe, lawful and competent practice of osteopathy for a total of four years out of the six years preceding the opening of the register. In addition, they may be required to undergo a test of competence and give an undertaking that, within a specified period, which would not exceed five years from the opening of the register, they will complete any further training and acquire such additional experience as specified by the registrar. I should add that, if a practitioner were found to be fully competent in the skills and knowledge required for full registration, no additional training would be specified, and he would be able to apply to have his registration suitably converted.

I said that the grounds under which practitioners will be able to qualify for registration had been extended to include a group that might not otherwise have been eligible. To be more accurate, practitioners in that group were more likely to have fallen between two stools. It had been assumed that all qualifications would be either recognised or rejected for recognition. On that basis, if a practitioner were told that his qualification was not a recognised one, he could still hope to qualify for registration on the strength of current or recent practice if an application were made within the two-year transitional period.

As a result of representations made to me, it became evident that practitioners may possess qualifications from an institution that has perhaps ceased to exist and that they may not have been in current or recent practice—because, for example, they have been bringing up their family or caring for sick or elderly relatives. Such practitioners face a potentially no-win situation.

On the one hand, the general council and the education committee might not have been able to find sufficient information about the qualification to decide whether it should be recognised. On the other, the practitioner might have no means of being able to satisfy the practice criteria for registration. Such practitioners will therefore be unable to get on the register unless they obtain another recognised qualification, although they may be perfectly competent. Although that group is expected to comprise only a small number of individuals, the Bill now extends the provisions of conditional registration so as not to exclude them.

Consequently, practitioners who are unable to satisfy the practice criteria for either full or conditional registration will still be eligible for conditional registration if they hold a qualification for osteopathy that has not been refused recognition, although it is not a recognised qualification. Practitioners who qualify for registration on those grounds will be subject to the same conditions of further training and acquiring the additional experience which I described earlier.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): I wonder whether my hon. Friend could clarify one point. Is it intended that osteopaths will be required to carry professional indemnity cover during the preliminary period?

Mr. Moss: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that point, which I shall come to later in my speech. It is an important part of the Bill, and I will explain its ramifications later.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): On such an important Bill, which affects the welfare of millions of our fellow citizens who suffer from back pain, is my hon. Friend aware that there are no less than 16 hon. Members present in the House but only two Opposition Members, although it is Friday? Does that not show that Conservative Members have a much greater interest than Labour Members in such an important Bill?

Mr. Moss: I am not sure whether that comment means that Conservative Members have a greater interest in such matters, or that they suffer more from back pain.

I have referred several times to recognised qualifications. I am aware that feelings of uncertainty exist in

certain quarters about how that aspect of the scheme will operate. It may help if I begin with the European dimension. European Community qualifications will automatically be recognised by virtue of enforceable Community rights or obligations.

The recognition of other qualifications will depend on whether the General Osteopathic Council, in consultation with its education committee, considers that such qualifications meet the standards of education, training and proficiency specified by the general council for the safe and competent practise of osteopathy. To ensure that such decisions will be impartial, no qualification will be afforded recognition until the general council has sought and secured the consent of the Privy Council.

While I am on the subject of professional education, I should mention that, although it will be the responsibility of the education committee to satisfy itself that those schools whose qualifications have been recognised continue to meet the required standards of proficiency, it will not be for the committee or the General Osteopathic Council to prescribe how the curriculum is taught.

Diversity of approach stimulates innovation. In medical schools, considerable differences in emphasis exist for specific elements of the curriculum and the way in which they are taught. However, they all produce safe and competent doctors. Therefore, it is essential that a similar diversity be allowed to flourish under the osteopaths statutory scheme.

The newest category of registration is provisional registration. As I have already mentioned, care must be taken not to confuse provisional registration as provided in the Bill with the concept of provisional registration set out in the working party's report and Lord Walton's Bill in the last session.

An initial year of supervised practise is rapidly becoming the norm in a growing number of professional groups. It offers practitioners the advantages of being able to widen gradually their field of experience, especially in the running of a practice, and have the support and advice of more experienced colleagues readily available.

I appreciate that provisional registration does not exist in the profession's current system of voluntary registration. However, it may be one which the profession would wish to adopt in time. One of the disadvantages of a statutory scheme is that, once it is set in place, it can subsequently prove to be difficult to amend. Therefore, I have tried to provide now for the future.

The provision in the Bill is an enabling one. It will give the general council the necessary scope to introduce a system of provisional registration at a later date if it so chooses and after it has consulted the profession and provided Parliament with an opportunity to scrutinise its proposals.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): Can my hon. Friend expand his arguments and explain why he decided not to incorporate in his Bill the requirement of a provisional registration state as opposed to leaving the option open for the future if the council chooses to implement it?

Mr. Moss: Initially, we felt that the Bill incorporated a great number of different clauses which advanced the progress and tightness of the regulations. It was important to get the basics on the statute book, introduce conditional registration, which is a new idea, and make provision to enable the profession to introduce the provisional category at a later date if it so chooses. It is questionable whether the profession can accommodate the changes in one go during the early period—certainly the transitional period. It is much more sensible to get the basics in place and then allow the profession to move in a direction which it so chooses at its own pace.

Provisional registration will apply for the initial year of registration. During that time, osteopaths will be permitted to practise only under the supervision of a fully registered osteopath. For many practitioners, that will coincide with their first postgraduate year. However, the provisions in the Bill are sufficiently broad to include practitioners who are returning to the profession after an absence of some years—because, for example, they have been bringing up a family—and those who are applying for registration for the first time. Again, that is recognised as good practice among many professions and is a matter which the general council may wish to consider if and when it ever decided to go down this road.

Before leaving the subject of registration, I should like briefly to mention three other matters. My hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) raised a point about professional indemnity insurance. That was considered by the working party to be of such key importance in securing better protection for patients that it recommended that such insurance should be held as a condition of registration. Unfortunately, making that a statutory requirement could distort the otherwise free workings of the insurance market, potentially to the detriment of both insurers and osteopaths.

In order to square that circle, the Bill would empower the General Osteopathic Council through its rules of registration to require professional indemnity insurance to be held by practising osteopaths. The general council would also have the power to check that a practitioner had renewed his cover at the appropriate time and, most importantly, to initiate disciplinary proceedings in cases where he had not.

Linking the need to hold insurance with the right to practise would give osteopaths who have retired or are taking time out to bring up a family the possibility of maintaining their registration without having to take out what would otherwise be unnecessary insurance cover.

The second matter is post-registration training. The working party recommended that a practitioner's continued registration should be made subject to him or her satisfactorily completing post-graduate training or refresher courses. In that way, members of the public could be assured that practitioners were keeping up to date with the latest techniques and developments in their field. That is one of the many areas in which the working party's recommendations broke new ground in the realm of professional self-regulation.

However, the working party also recognised that that recommendation could not be introduced immediately, because the profession's training and education resources would need to be devoted to existing practitioners who will hold conditional registration during the first few years of the scheme.

In order to avoid the need to make a specific amendment to the Act at a later date, clause 16 of the Bill will permit the General Osteopathic Council to introduce a scheme of post-registration training in the future if the profession so wishes. However, once again, the general council would first be required to consult the profession and, in this case, any other parties that it might think

[Mr. Moss]

appropriate, such as other groups of health care professionals. The council would also have to obtain the consent of the Privy Council and give Parliament an opportunity to scrutinise the detail of its proposals before it could introduce such a scheme.

The third postscript on registration involves fraudulent registration. The Bill contains a provision similar to section 39(1) of the Medical Act 1983 to enable the general council to erase from the register the name of a practitioner who obtained registration by fraudulent means. However, the register would have in addition to that power, the power to impose an immediate suspension of a practitioner's registration while the allegation was being investigated, if he was satisfied that such action was necessary for the protection of members of the public.

I hope that the House will agree that all the provisions to which I have referred would form a fair and just system of registration and would provide the cornerstone of a statutory scheme. They seek to bring as many bona fide practitioners of osteopathy as possible within its scope. That is not only of key importance to practitioners but would benefit the public, as it is far better to have all the practitioners of a profession governed by a single statutory body capable of enforcing appropriate standards of practice.

The other essential component of the regulatory scheme is a mechanism to ensure that high standards of professional conduct and competence are maintained and that members of the public are not put at risk by practitioners who are unfit to practise for reasons of ill health. That would be provided by the General Osteopathic Council's investigating, professional conduct and health committees. Broadly speaking, those comittees would perform the same function as their counterparts in other schemes. Allegations would initially be considered by the investigating committee. They would then be referred, as appropriate, to the professional conduct or health committee for further investigation and action. However, I should like to highlight some important differences in the powers that the committees would be able to exercise—differences which illustrate yet again where the osteopaths scheme would break new ground.

For the first time under any statutory scheme governing the health professions, professional incompetence would be specifically identified as a trigger point for disciplinary investigation. I know that other professional groups—in particular the medical profession—are considering the introduction of a similar concept for its members. Their solutions may be different, but the osteopaths can take justifiable pride in being the first health care profession to make the concept an integral part of its statutory scheme.

Another matter on which the osteopaths scheme scores a first is the breadth of the powers of the professional conduct and health committees to take immediate action to suspend an osteopath's registration where they considered such action to be necessary for the protection of members of the public. The power proposed for the investigating committees—the ability to impose an immediate suspension of up to two months—would be similar to that exercised, for example, by the General Medical Council's equivalent committee.

However, for the first time, the professional conduct and health committees would be able to impose their own suspension where they considered such action to be necessary to protect members of the public and to do so before they investigated the allegation. Although likely to be exercised only rarely, the power might be used, for example, where the allegation made against an osteopath was also the subject of a series criminal investigation. In such a case, the professional conduct committee might choose to defer its proceedings until after the criminal proceedings had been dealth with. In a similar way, the health committee might decide that an allegation about an osteopath's health was such that he or she posed an obvious and definite risk to his or her patients.

In making provisions for those powers, the Bill also ensures that the practitioner's rights are protected. For example, before a suspension order could be imposed, a practitioner would first have to be given an opportunity to appear before the relevant committee to state why he or she considered such action to be unnecessary. The pratitioner would be entitled to be legally represented at such a hearing and would have an additional right of appeal to the courts.

Like their counterparts in other statutory schemes, the professional conduct and health committees would be able to suspend an osteopath's registration or impose conditions on his or her right to practise if they determined that the allegation against him or her was proven. The professional conduct committee would in addition be able to admonish the osteopath or order his name to be erased from the register.

Another first for the osteopaths scheme is the proposal to give the professional conduct committee the explicit power to impose conditions on an osteopath's right to practise following a period of erasure. As the Bill reinforces the powers of fitness-to-practise committees in those ways, the public will be able to exercise the utmost confidence in the statutory scheme and be assured that it affords them the highest level of protection of any of today's regulatory schemes.

I have mentioned briefly that the Bill makes provision to safeguard the human rights of osteopaths. That is of key importance. I can assure the House and the profession that great care has been taken to ensure that the panoply of appeal provisions within the Bill are founded firmly on the principles of natural justice and reflect European law on human rights. In that way, members of the profession can likewise be fully confident that the statutory scheme would rigorously protect their interests and be one in which they can take justifiable pride.

I mentioned that, in keeping with other statutory schemes, the work of the General Osteopathic Council and its four statutory committees would be overseen by the Privy Council. In the unlikely event that the council failed to perform its functions under the Act, the Privy Council would have the power to direct it to perform any of its functions that the Privy Council considered that it had failed to fulfil. As a final resort, the Privy Council would be able to step in and take over the functions of the council and do anything that it could have done under the Act.

Let me end where I began. Due to the sterling work of the working party on osteopathy, the profession has a well thought out and carefully structured scheme that reflects the most up-to-date thinking on professional self-regulation. I hope that the House and the profession will agree that the proposals will not only provide the means to enable the profession to control its destiny and set its future direction but secure better patient protection,

safeguard the interests of the public and provide a model for other statutory self-regulatory schemes for the 1990s and beyond.

10.19 am

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): I must declare an interest as I am one of two parliamentary advisers to the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) on introducing the Bill. Although I do not suffer from back pain—having voted for the Maastricht measures so far—I suspect that many of our colleagues may well need the services of professions that specialise in the manipulative therapies, something of which the Conservative Front Bench is only too well aware.

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy is supportive of the moves by its sister profession to introduce regulation. There are estimated to be about 2,000 osteopaths, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy has 24,000 members and there are about 700 chiropractors, which demonstrates that at least three professions are intimately involved with such work.

Physiotherapists work in hospitals and in private practice and about a third of their number are actively involved with the manipulation of the back and the neck. Among physiotherapists there is a view that it would have been better for the three professions to come together for regulation rather than moving separately, but that does not mean that the Bill is not welcome.

There is a substantial overlap between osteopaths, chiropractors and physiotherapists, and the latter do everything that osteopaths can do and considerably more.

Physiotherapists are regulated by the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960, which is now rather out of date. It was introduced when physiotherapists principally worked in hospitals and doctors prescribed their work for them. Their regulatory framework is therefore seriously outmoded and needs to be updated. For that reason, I believe that the King's Fund rejected using the 1960 Act for the regulation of osteopaths and that there is now a case for the urgent revision of that Act.

The Bill will introduce modern, regulatory structures for osteopaths and we should like those provisions to be extended to physiotherapists as soon as possible. We congratulate the osteopaths on achieving the Bill. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East said, it will be the first profession to have that modern structure, which is very welcome.

There is concern that the protection in clause 29 of the title osteopath might lead to problems for other professions, including medical practitioners and physiotherapists, as it might prevent such professions from claiming to use osteopathic techniques. My hon. Friend may wish to return to that subject in Committee so that there may be a clear understanding that other professions are already using such techniques and that they should not be prevented from making such a claim although they are not osteopaths. A comment on that subject from my hon. Friend the Minister would also be welcome.

Title protection is to be given to osteopaths, but the title of physiotherapist is not protected and anyone can practise as such or claim to be a physiotherapist. Only the terms "state registered physiotherapist" or "chartered physiotherapist" are protected by the 1960 Act, so the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy looks at the Bill with some envy and would like equal protection to be given to the short titles of all the professions involved. If that could be achieved it would be in the public interest.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East mentioned the disciplinary procedures in the Bill, which are very welcome. Physiotherapists feel that they do not have sufficient powers to discipline their own profession or, for example, to investigate the claims of overseas practitioners in physiotherapy. Again, he is setting out procedures that will be helpful to the profession and we should like that to be reflected in the Minister's remarks.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East and the working party of osteopaths for their work. I urge all the professions practising such techniques to get together so that we can set down new regulations for them all as soon as possible, as that will be in the public interest.

10.24 am

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I extend my support and that of my party to the Bill, which is a most welcome response to the King's Fund report on osteopathy and the subsequent Bill that was introduced by Lord Walton in another place in December 1991. I also thank the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) for his work thus far on the Bill. I hope that he steers it through the House to a successful conclusion.

Osteopathy came to Britain at the turn of the century and the first attempt to put it on a statutory footing was in 1931. Just over 60 years later it looks as if we shall at last be successful—another fine example of the British Parliament responding rapidly to new ideas and changing circumstances.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I thank the hon. Lady for her comments on the Bill, and must add to her reflections about its popularity. A MORI poll has shown that osteopathy is the most popular complementary medicine, and 63 per cent. of those polled were very satisifed and only 9 per cent. dissatisfied.

Ms. Lynne: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. Osteopaths responded to Parliament's inaction by establishing registering bodies and it is to their credit that the profession is among the leading advocates of statutory regulation.

The Bill is of particular importance, as it represents the first statutory recognition of the role of complementary medicine in the health of the nation. I hope and expect it to become a model for future Bills.

It is well known that the Chiropractic Advancement Association is hoping for official regulation soon after the Bill is enacted. Initially, it was thought that chiropractors could be included in the Bill introduced in December 1991. The Government have given some indications that they might soon be recognised, but I am a little concerned about the statement by Baroness Hooper, in a Lords debate on complementary medicine in May 1990, that an appropriate level of maturity is required on the part of the relevant professions before legislation would be considered. I should have thought that when professions are immature they can do the most harm and that that is when they need the most regulation. While I recognise the practical difficulties of proceeding along the path of

[Ms. Lynne]

regulation too soon, I hope that the Government will take a more active role to bring the various complementary therapies into a statutory framework.

The key points in the Bill are those dealing with the registration and education of osteopaths. Both aspects of the Bill are greatly to be welcomed. I am particularly pleased about the proposal that the General Osteopathic Council may require osteopaths to have further training after registration.

While it is clear that only accredited qualifications will be acceptable, and that educational establishments will have independent assessors, the Bill does not state that such establishments will be accredited. That would seem to be a logical extension of the existing proposals and it might clear up any confusion for anyone wishing to train as an osteopath.

In addition to my general comments, I have some specific remarks to make on the Bill. The Bill contains no definition of osteopathy. Only after detailed consultation was it decided that there were sufficient differences between osteopathy and chiropractic for them not to be covered by the same Bill. A definition is important because, without it, I cannot see how an effective code of practice can be established.

I should like the general council that the Bill will establish to ensure that, in drawing up the code of practice, there are the widest possible consultations with users of the service and their representatives. Once produced, the code of practice should be made easily available to members of the public, preferably free or via public libraries, but, if necessary, at a reasonable cost as stated in the Bill. The Bill does not say whether a "reasonable" cost is reasonable in the view of the council or the user.

I naturally agree with the establishment of a register of osteopaths, but, as in the case of the code of practice, the register should be easily available for inspection. The Bill allows for that to happen, but does not say where the register will be available, although I assume that it may be at the general council's offices. Perhaps consideration should be given to making it available at major libraries. I should also like to see a provision in the Bill or a declaration from the general council stating that osteopaths must display their registration at their place of work and clearly indicate their category of registration.

There should also be further protection for prospective patients. Last year in the United States, for instance, guidelines for quality assurance and practice were laid down. The document that was produced ran to some 200 pages. In particular, it was recommended that practitioners provide a written diagnosis for the patients and tell them what to do if the treatment does not work in two weeks and when to ask for a second opinion. In addition, particular emphasis should be placed on making it clear to patients how a complaint should be made.

With so many functions proposed in the Bill, I am concerned that the general council may not have enough resources to carry them all out effectively. I presume that the council is expected to be self-financing and I am therefore a little worried that it may have difficulties performing all its tasks. Experience in America, where legislation has been in place for more than 20 years, is that practitioners do not have the time or training to administer such a body effectively. I hope that that question will be dealt with in this country.

Could some light be shed on whether cranial osteopathy will be covered by the Bill? An article in *The Guardian* on 12 January says that there is some debate among osteopaths themselves about its value.

Despite the points that I have raised, the Bill is a major step forward and points the way for many complementary therapies. I urge all hon. Members to support it.

10.31 am

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I must declare an interest as a patron of the National Back Pain Association, the headquarters of which is in Teddington in my constituency. I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) on this excellent Bill. I wish it every success and I hope that it will go on to the statute book without delay. However, my hon. Friend's speech dealt largely with internal, structural and technical matters to do with the osteopathy profession. It was almost as if he had received a large amount of briefing from that profession. It is important for the House to see the wood as well as the trees with which he dealt so extensively. I know that he will not mind if I say that much of what he said was on Committee points.

The whole purpose of osteopathy is to relieve back pain in people. Osteopaths are not an end in themselves but a means to an end. Back pain is a scourge and a pestilence which afflicts millions of our fellow citizens, including the Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), and myself.

Lady Olga Maitland: May I add to my hon. Friend's comments the fact that in 1979, 11·5 million working days were lost through back pain? That was a great loss to the country and cost our social security system enormous sums.

Mr. Jessel: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I believe that the figure is even greater. The figure that I have seen is 230,000 people per working day. Multiplied by the number of working days, that comes to considerably more than 11·5 million. There is doubtless a substantial loss to the country in terms of days off work, and I believe that, proportionately, women are affected even more than men.

A huge amount of pain and discomfort is caused, but because the causes are complicated and it is not a "glamour" welfare cause such as a disease affecting children, heart attacks or cancer, which cause death—*[Interruption.]* It is a little trying for me to have my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East carrying on a conversation just four yards away from me.

Because back pain affects such a large number of people and is not a "glamour" welfare cause afflicting children or resulting in death, it is difficult to get the body politic or the public generally to pay as much attention to it as it deserves, despite the large number of people whom it affects. That is why the debate on the Bill is welcome, even if it is somewhat narrow. I happen to go to a chiropractor and I think that they are at least as good as osteopaths, if not better. I am sorry that they could not be included in the Bill, but I hope that there will be as little delay as possible before a Bill is introduced on chiropractic.

The Government's White Paper, "The Health of the Nation", published last year, singled out five key areas for priority action: coronary heart disease and strokes; cancer; mental illness; AIDS; and accidents. However, the document also referred to five other candidates with a strong claim to key area status next: rehabilitation; the health of elderly people; asthma; drug misuse; and back pain. The inclusion of back pain in that list followed a meeting between Mr. Stanley Grundy CBE, founder of the National Back Pain Association, his director Dr. Mervyn Bryn Jones, Lord Joseph and myself with my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), the Secretary of State for Health in the last Parliament. The meeting was to stress the great importance of back pain.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will be kind enough to explain the position of that second grouping of five priority areas, and say what he thinks the Government can do to focus attention on it and to make progress as fast as possible in dealing with the scourge of back pain.

My hon. Friend the Minister has shown a tremendous interest in the problem of back pain, having attended and addressed the association's conference in central London last November. He has also seen Mr. Grundy several times, and I understand that my hon. Friend hopes, within his busy programme, to find time to visit the association's headquarters before long.

The association promotes research, whether by osteopaths, doctors, or chiropractors; it establishes branches throughout the country to promote interest in back pain, to provide means by which people can exercise, and to spread information; and it publishes educational material—such as a most useful recent manual for nurses on the correct way to lift patients. The national health service suffers a considerable loss of nurses' time when they hurt their backs lifting patients. I understand that 5,000 copies of that manual have already been sold.

Can my hon. Friend the Minister make it clear that general practitioners who are health service budget holders may use their budgets to refer patients both to osteopaths and to chiropractors? Will he also make clear the position in respect of value added tax on fees paid privately, whether under insurance policies or otherwise, both to osteopaths and to chiropractors? For many years the Department of Health has discussed that question with the Treasury, which decides in the light of legislation whether VAT should be attached to such fees. The Treasury has sought advice from the Department as to what is and is not deemed medical, because that affects whether or not VAT is applied. The Department has in turn referred the matter to a somewhat moribund body called the Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine. The medical professions as well as the supplementary professions are represented on that council, and for years that body has put a stop on exempting osteopathy and chiropractic from VAT.

Mr. Moss: My hon. Friend has introduced a most important point. I wonder if he realises that osteopaths are obliged to charge VAT on their bills to patients while physiotherapists are not?

Mr. Jessel: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's clarification. It is nonsensical that physiotherapists approved by that council do not have to charge VAT while osteopaths and chiropractors, who are not so approved, must do so. I hope that the Department will indicate that if the Bill becomes law it will draw that matter to the attention of the Treasury so that it can be reviewed without delay.

If the Bill is passed and osteopaths become, in the eyes of the law, members of a profession, I hope that it will not go to their heads. In Britain, professionalism has an up side and a down side. The up side is that members of any profession—barristers, solicitors, accountants, doctors or dentists—endeavour to uphold standards. The down side is that they become somewhat introverted, in that they care about one another's good opinion rather than that of the public. Barristers care mainly about the good opinion of other barristers, doctors about the good opinion of other doctors, and so on. They tend to assume that qualification, which is essential in any profession, is so all-important that nothing else much matters. It is thought that a person who is qualified must be good and one who is not qualified must be no good at all.

Professional qualification is a necessary condition, but it is not a sufficient condition for professional competence. It remains vital for any professional, if he or she is to be good at his or her work, to possess flair, zest, and insight, among other gifts. I hope that there will not be so much harping on professional qualifications to the extent that those other qualities are played down. That would not be in the interests of the public. I hope that osteopaths will regard their professional status as a means of improvement and not take it to mean that everything has now been done. It is only a step.

10.45 am

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) on his good fortune in the ballot and on his choice of Bill. I was grateful for his invitation to be a sponsor, because, as he knows, I am particularly interested in the greater recognition of another so-called complementary profession—chiropractic. From my personal experience and that of many of my constituents and others, I am as fully convinced of the benefits of chiropractic as I am of osteopathy. I am privileged to have the Anglo-European College of Chiropractic in my constituency, which I hope right hon. and hon. Members will visit.

Both osteopathy and chiropractic were founded in the belief that many everyday disorders are caused by spinal defects impeding the work of our immune system. I welcome the Bill not only for the undoubted benefits that it will bring to patients in the proper regulation, registration and, above all, recognition of osteopaths but because it will pave the way for a similar Bill for chiropractors, which the King's Fund working party will also draft—based on what we hope will be the successful outcome of this Bill. I hope that it will be taken on board by one of my ballot-lucky right hon. or hon. Friends in the next Session.

I take this opportunity to express my deep regret that the complementary professions have been denied recognition for so long because of the failure of successive Governments to pass appropriate legislation on their behalf. Instead, each of those professions is being advised to pursue its own Bill, such as that before us. That will take years, which I find totally unacceptable. I am certain that

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any Government initiative to legislate for other uncontroversial complementary professions, given their ever-growing use and appreciation by patients—who find them successful where NHS-prescribed conventional surgery or drugs have failed—would be widely welcomed. Unfortunately, as my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) implied, the so-called orthodox professions, as represented on the Medical Research Council and the Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine, continue to withhold their sanction and support —thus sabotaging proper recognition of those who are properly qualified, to the detriment of patients.

In so doing, they are allowing unqualified cowboys and unscrupulous quacks to do untold damage to those members of the public who use them, and who find it extremely difficult to obtain legal redress. It is time to end that closed shop in the medical profession, which inhibits such competition.

I very much hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will stop sitting on the fence of Government neutrality towards the complementary professions. He could do that by renewing his Department's grant to the Research Council for Complementary Medicine; its recent termination is incomprehensible, given the enormous sums that are rightly spent on orthodox medical research and the amounts spent by other European Governments on research into complementary medicines. Moreover, the termination of the grant is contrary to the recommendations made some years ago by the Department's own working group on back pain.

My hon. Friend the Minister could also announce that the Government now intend to extend the Professions Supplementary to Medicines Act 1960 to include complementary medicines, and he could invite the research council to make appropriate recommendations to him. As my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham pointed out, after 33 years there is now an overwhelming case for a review of the Act. Alternatively, my hon. Friend the Minister could announce a Government inquiry into the most popular complementary medicines, to subject them to scientific validation with the ultimate aim of integrating orthodox and complementary medicines. Such integration has already taken place in the Netherlands.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East has made an outstanding case for the benefits to patients that would undoubtedly result from the legislation. The statutory recognition of osteopaths would encourage more patients to use their services—especially now that fund-holding GPs can pay for them out of their own budgets: I commend the action taken last year by the Minister's predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), to allow them to do so. The Bill will, I hope, encourage health authorities, hospital staff and doctors to work more closely with the osteopathic profession. As osteopathy, chiropractic and other such therapies do not require such expensive equipment as national health service treatment, and also do not require increasingly expensive drugs, their statutory recognition would result in enormous savings in the health service, despite patients having to bear the cost of treatment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham rightly enjoined the Minister to urge our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to consider whether the cost of alternative treatment should be exempt from VAT.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My hon. Friend and I have travelled down the path of complementary medicine for many years. Does he agree that the new arrangements for fund holders could be used to enable patients to receive the complementary and alternative treatment that they want through their local GPs? I believe that that is already happening to some extent. Appropriate arrangements could be set up with complementary and alternative practitioners.

Mr. Atkinson: That is still a back-door method. My hon. Friend and I have been working for years to try to bring about proper recognition of complementary medicine: I pay tribute to the work that has been done to enable Bills such as this—and, we hope, subsequent Bills —to establish such recognition. He was engaged in that work long before he became a Member of Parliament.

I hope that the Bill will also encourage companies to become more aware of the opportunities for them to refer employees to osteopaths or chiropractors. Widespread absenteeism resulting from back pain is costing the national economy an enormous amount. I am sure that if the Bill is passed, more and more operators of private health insurance schemes will be encouraged to reimburse subscribers for the cost of osteopathic treatment. I also believe that increasing use of osteopathy and other complementary treatments will lead to greater accuracy in the diagnosis of disorders that still baffle the NHS, such as allergies and ME.

I hope that the Bill will be given an unimpeded passage through both Houses. Let me again congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East—and Lord Walton on his pioneering work in introducing a similar Bill last year in the other place. I also pay tribute to the work of the King's Fund.

I hope that a similar Bill to deal with chiropractic will follow this one—or that, better still, the Government will present a Bill to give proper statutory recognition to all the complementary medical professions, for which an increasing number of our constituents are voting with their feet.

10.54 am

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): There is no doubt in my mind that, indirectly, I owe my seat in the House to the work of chiropractors and osteopaths. Fifteen years ago, I suffered an accident and broke three vertebrae in my back. Having lain in bed for several months, I was put back together by such practitioners, and I therefore owe them a particular personal debt.

I note with interest that other hon. Members—for instance, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and my hon. Friends the Members for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) and for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn)—suffer from back problems. My hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton mentioned the impact of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill: having looked at next week's business, I think that hon. Members on both sides

of the House may need the services of osteopaths and chiropractors, but not every Conservative Member may agree with that.

Apart from the treatment that I received at the time of my accident, the treatment that I have received in subsequent years has been very important. My message to the public is that the disciplines of osteopathy and chiropractic can be enormously beneficial.

I also speak as treasurer of the all-party parliamentary group for alternative and complementary medicine. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who is sitting beside me on the Back Benches——

Mr. Cash: For ever.

Mr. Tredinnick: I had better not comment on that.

However, I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's work on alternative medicine, and to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson). I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford and I were the only two Members of Parliament who attended the launch of the King's Fund by the Prince of Wales in December 1991. We were also involved in the attempt to take Lord Walton's Bill through the House of Commons; it fell at the last general election.

I welcome the Bill particularly because I think that it will shake out the tiny minority of charlatans in the profession. My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East referred to unqualified quacks, and there are certainly a few unscrupulous people around. The Bill will also provide an understandable framework, and will encourage the use of osteopathy to relieve the pain described by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham. I understand that he had an accident that hurt him quite badly, and he has probably suffered considerable pain over the past two weeks.

The Bill will also give confidence to people who were wondering how to solve their back problems. Only yesterday, I spoke to a senior Canadian Member of Parliament who suffers from muscular and skeletal pain. I asked him why he did not see an osteopath or chiropractor. He said, "I am not sure about these people; they are not regulated."

That is the nub of the problem: if people were made confident by regulation, more of them would take advantage of such treatment. We have already heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) about the large number of people who are attracted to osteopathy, and I believe that, with regulation, many more will follow.

In my experience, GPs have no great understanding of back problems unless they are specialists. A close supporter of mine in the general election campaign suddenly developed great back pain. She was advised to rest for two weeks, which was not possible during the campaign. She went to a osteopath who was a chiropractor, and within a day some relief had been given and she was back on the road.

Just after Christmas, my five-year-old daughter was acting out the part of a children's play with a big cushion on her head when she suddenly developed acute pain. She was checked by a doctor who, fortunately, found nothing serious. The doctor said, "The problem will go away with time; children at this age are very resilient." I took her to an osteopath in Leinster square who was open on the Saturday after the new year, and two osteopaths kindly treated her. She came away an hour later and has not mentioned that back pain again. Those are practical demonstrations of how people can benefit from such treatment.

Over the years, there has been a marked shift of opinion towards alternative and complementary medicine and osteopathy. In its 1986 report, the British Medical Association dismissed alternative medicine as a passing fashion. A number of surveys showed otherwise, and gradually medical opinion has shifted ground. For example, a 1986 *Which*? survey suggested that osteopathy was the most widely used complementary therapy, and 82 per cent. of patients interviewed claimed to have been cured or improved by the treatment.

Another *Which*? survey last November reported that each year one in four readers visited an alternative practitioner, which includes osteopathy—twice as many as the 1986 survey—and were highly satisfied. Four out of five users claim to have been improved or cured by alternative treatments; three out of four would use this form of treatment again.

Those findings confirm the results of the 1989 MORI survey, which revealed that 93 per cent. of users were satisfied with chiropractic treatment and 83 per cent. of users were satisfied with osteopathy. My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam dropped 20 per cent. when she gave her figure. The figure that I have is 83 per cent., not 63 per cent. Some 80 per cent. were satisfied with homoeopathic treatment. The MORI survey showed that homoeopathy, osteopathy and acupuncture were the most widely used alternative medicines.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): My hon. Friend has used the term "alternative medicine" several times. Does he intend to use the term "complementary medicine"? Many of the forms of treatment that he has mentioned are complementary rather than alternative.

Mr. Tredinnick: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. I have used the term "alternative medicine" as the shortened version of "alternative and complementary medicine". He will recall that I referred to the fact that I am treasurer of the all-party group for alternative and complementary medicine. There is a debate about what is alternative and what is complementary, but I certainly speak for both.

Last November's *Which*? survey quoted a study in which four out of five medical students said that they would like some form of alternative training incorporated into their course.

I argue that the Bill is not the end of a road but very much the beginning of a new relationship between alternative and complementary medicine, including osteopathy, and the health service. I am delighted to see my old and hon. Friend the Under-Secretary in his place on the Front Bench. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not too old."] I think that I can count him as an old friend; we have known each other for 25 years.

I firmly believe that the Bill is the start of a new relationship between alternative and complementary medicine and the health service. With the greater recognition and regulation that the Bill will give, it should be possible to achieve greater integration of the work of osteopaths and other alternative practitioners within the health service.

The previous Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), made a

[Mr. Tredinnick]

significant contribution towards achieving that integration when he ruled in the last Parliament that GP fund holders could employ alternative practitioners, which of course includes osteopaths, if they took clinical responsibility. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will see fit to go further and make it possible for other general practitioners to use the services of alternative and complementary practitioners. I believe that that is very important. I tell my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, in the presence of its chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford, that the all-party parliamentary group aims to achieve full integration of most of the various alternative disciplines in the health service.

The House will consider other Bills in the future. At one stage, chiropractors hoped that their work would be included in the Bill. The different schools of chiropractic, such as the McTimoney school and others, have taken tremendous strides towards bringing their disciplines together in an understandable framework.

Mr. David Atkinson *indicated assent.*

Mr. Tredinnick: My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East nods in assent.

They have put their house in order, as requested by the Department, and I hope that the next Bill will be for chiropractors.

Other disciplines such as acupuncture may benefit from such regulation. My hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton referred to physiotherapy, which is important. In addition, there are disciplines such as aromatherapy. I have the largest factory of aromatherapy and essential oils and the largest practice in the world in my constituency. I opened its new premises yesterday. It used to work out of an attic in a disused hosiery factory, but it now has a splendid new building. It is training not only lay practitioners who express an interest but is teaching medical practitioners; nurses are being taught these skills. The work of aromatherapy is relevant to osteopathy because before treatment an osteopath can use oils such as roman chamomile, juniper berry, lavender and sweet marjoram to relax and warm up muscles.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Ooh, nice!

Mr. Tredinnick: I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) might find this amusing, but it is not amusing to someone suffering from pain.

My hon. Friend makes the point well: any hon. Member who had talked about osteopathy or chiropractory in the House 10 years ago would have been laughed at. I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton, as I strike him with a rubber mallet, that these disciplines, which may seem a little weird to the majority, will eventually become mainstream.

Some say that by iridology, the study of the colours of eyes and shape of pupils, one can diagnose different ailments that affect the body. I venture to suggest that that and phrenology, the study of the shape and condition of the head, will eventually come within the scope of the health service.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will find a tremendous opportunity to save costs if he pursues this route, because it has been found that alternative practitioners who are medically qualified issue far fewer prescriptions. Furthermore, homoeopathic prescriptions are less expensive, and homoeopathic preparations are increasingly available in the huge number of homoeopathic shops that are bursting into bloom all over the country as a result of public demand. This move is market-led—I say that although I do not want to upset the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), whom I have in the past seen stand on a bench to make a point.

The serious point to all this is that cost savings can be made, much happiness can be given, and many problems can be solved by alternative and complementary medicine, including osteopathy. I appeal to the House to take the alternative and complementary medicine much more seriously than it has been taken. I welcome the Bill, which is a major step forward. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss), and look forward to the successful passage of the Bill through all its stages.

11.11 am

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I join other hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) not only on promoting the Bill but on the way in which he has tackled the subject. Over the past nearly 20 years, I have been the legal adviser in relation to complementary and alternative medicine. I started in the days when, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) said, one could not talk about it easily because people either did not know about it or thought that it was based on quackery, which it was not.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) played an important part in the beginnings of the objective analysis of complementary medicine. He served on the Committee—which took evidence—that examined a private Bill, in which I also happened to be involved, back in about 1975. That Bill was aimed at driving acupuncturists out of business and was strongly attacked. My hon. Friend listened to the cross-examination of witnesses from both the medical profession and acupuncturists. The Committee unanimously concluded that the acupuncturists had a good case. I give that as an example of the way in which Parliament has helped to break down the barriers and I pay tribute to my hon. Friend and to other distinguished Members who have joined me in the all-party group on complementary and alternative medicine, of which I have the honour to be joint chairman with the right hon. Earl Baldwin of Bewdley. I should declare an interest in that I give continuing legal advice on these matters.

Let me also pay tribute to Simon Fielding, who is here in the House under the Gallery. I have known him for a long time and those who know about the Bill and the work that he has put into ensuring that osteopathy should be——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he has been here a long time and should be aware that he is not supposed to refer to people in the Gallery.

Mr. Cash: I have made my point, but I withdraw the reference on that basis.

I congratulate the Department on the way in which it has moved in relation to complementary and alternative

medicine. The atmosphere has changed greatly and much diligent and effective thinking has been given to those matters. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Minister will be giving the Bill the additional support that it will require to ensure that it gets on to the statute book.

I have no intention or desire to go through all the points that have been made by my hon. Friends the Members for Cambridgeshire, North-East, for Bosworth, for Bournemouth, East, and for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel). However, I wish to get one or two points on the record because there has been a significant change in the policy on osteopathy over the past 20 years. Back in the mid-1970s, the BMA handbook said that doctors should have nothing to do with osteopaths because osteopathy was not a science. This was put in extremely strong language. The General Medical Council took a rather different view. The Bill is a testament to the work of osteopaths and demonstrates how attitudes in the medical profession have changed substantially in the past 20 years.

The BMA set up an inquiry seven years ago in which there was a general attack on complementary and alternative medicine. I tabled an early-day motion, which about 150 Members of Parliament supported, and we saw off that attack pretty well. I do not wish to cast aspersions on the medical peofession in this context because there has been a learning curve. There was bias, but there has been a significant change in the attitude of doctors towards osteopathy and other complementary therapies.

I intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East to speak about general practitioner fund-holding arrangements to which I strongly believe that serious attention should be given. We had an interesting meeting the other day with Baroness Cumberlege, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, in which some of those ideas were developed. We have already heard questions about whether grants could or should be made. The withdrawal of grant aid was not a sensible move, and I strongly opposed it. However, through the aegis of the Medical Research Council, further funds could and should be made available.

Osteopathy, along with chiropractic, acupuncture and herbal remedies, has to be taken seriously. Therefore, we must give those sectors a reasonable amount of help because they have nothing to fall back on. It is not as though they have the large funds of the Medical Research Council behind them. Those who know just how large those funds are will agree that reasonable help should be given, and my urgent plea is that it should be, because that would be in the interests of everybody, including the medical profession. My hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) is a doctor.

Mr. Kynoch: No.

Mr. Cash: I am sorry. I thought that my hon. Friend was a doctor.

Mr. Kynoch: I should declare my interest. My wife is a doctor. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that the medical profession has accepted osteopathy because it is seen as a complementary rather than, as it was portrayed years ago, an alternative medicine. Is not that an important point?

Mr. Cash: I agree. It is very important to stress that aspect, because there is a mutuality. Each can learn from the other and there is a learning curve all round. The Bill represents the culmination of a great deal of hard work on that learning curve.

Important questions arise in relation to other member states of the European Community and their approach to these issues. If we pass an Act of Parliament, we should bear in mind that if there were an extension of competence in the Community to embrace health generally and that fell within the single market—as the herbal remedy question does at the moment—an application of article 100a through a directive could, in theory, override the provisions of the Bill.

I leave that point on the table for consideration. We must bear in mind the fact that we can work together in the European Community with other member states as we want to and not be disadvantaged, as might be the case if a regulation or directive of the type that I have described were to emerge. I exhort my hon. Friend the Minister, as he has a good nose for such things, to keep a watchful eye on that aspect of complementary and alternative medicine in its application to the United Kingdom.

I trust and believe that self-regulation in osteopathy is about to become a reality. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East, all hon. Members involved in the exercise and everyone in the complementary field who has helped to push the Bill along deserve credit for what they have achieved.

We should remember what happened to George III around 1800 and the way that he was treated. By the 1840s and 1850s, things had begun to change. After the Medical Act 1858 was passed, huge arguments developed between different parts of the medical profession. Each side believed that it knew best. The lesson that we must learn from the way in which medicine has developed is that it must do so on an open and reasonable basis, learning from the complementary side as well as giving to it.

On that note, I strongly recommend that the Bill should reach the statute book. I congratulate everyone concerned and the Department on the helpful way in which they have accelerated the Bill's progress.

11.22 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): On behalf of the Government, I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) on his success in the ballot and on his choice of Bill. I begin by stating that the Government fully support the Bill and hope that it will also receive the support of the House.

Osteopathy was developed by an American doctor called Andrew Taylor Still and first came to Britain around the turn of the century. It was brought over by a group of American-trained practitioners who later formed the British Osteopathic Association. The first osteopathic training institution—the British School of Osteopathy—was founded in London in 1917 by Doctor J. Martin Littlejohn who had studied under Andrew Taylor Still.

Today, the medical profession regards osteopathy as truly complementary to the treatment provided by medical practitioners and one which enhances the range of possible treatment options available to patients. Given the increasingly common instances of cross-referral between general practitioners and osteopaths, it would not be

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unusual these days for an osteopath to be treating a patient who is currently receiving medication from his or her doctor.

Each week, around 100,000 men and women from all walks of life and from across a wide section of the population consult an osteopath. About half of them do so because of low back pain. Of those, nearly 90 per cent. claim to be cured or to experience an improvement in their condition as a result of treatment.

However, the gentle manual manipulative techniques which comprise osteopathy have also proved to be effective in the treatment of tension headaches, neck and shoulder pains, for many types of joint strains such as in the wrists, elbows, knees, ankles and feet—indeed, anything to do with the biomechanics of the body and its mechanical functions.

For example, many women choose osteopathic treatment as an alternative to drugs for the relief of aches and pains and other discomforts often associated with pregnancy. Sportsmen and women often consult an osteopath following injuries or to help alleviate problems that have previously prevented them from performing at their best.

However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East has already said, at the present time anyone can call himself or herself an osteopath and set up in practice. There is no obligation for practitioners to undergo formal training of any kind or to comply with any standards of professional competence or ethical practice. Members of the public, therefore, have no guarantee that a person calling himself or herself an osteopath is either properly qualified or competent in the practice of osteopathy or in the skills of differential diagnosis to know when osteopathy is inappropriate or when medical attention is more properly and, perhaps, more urgently required.

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): My hon. Friend the Minister has just said that it is important that there is a correct standard of qualification. Will he reconsider the way in which qualifications are supported by the Government? A constituent of mine gained a place to study physiotherapy for which her fees would have been paid under the mandatory award system. However, she also gained a place at the British School of Osteopathy where she would have received only £695 a year towards her fees. If we want the high standard of qualification necessary to put in place the admirable benefits of the Bill, we must ensure that there is proper support for those who wish to study in this area.

Mr. Sackville: My hon. Friend has made an important point which we should certainly address.

While it is widely accepted that patients should have the freedom to choose whom they consult, the osteopathic profession is concerned that there should be adequate safeguards. Under the terms of the Bill a single statutory body—the General Osteopathic Council—will be established to develop, promote and regulate the profession of osteopathy and to set educational standards and standards of professional competence. The general council will also be the shop window of the profession and will play a key role in helping to raise the profile of osteopathy, especially during the formative years of the scheme.

As has been said, the osteopathic profession has been seeking statutory regulation for the past 60 years. Throughout this time no fewer than six private Members' Bills have been introduced to Parliament in an effort to achieve this goal—this compares with the 20 attempts it took to pass the first Medical Act—and that demonstrates a determination and perseverance which have become the hallmarks of the profession.

In 1935, an Osteopaths Bill introduced by the late Viscount Elibank, successfully gained its Second Reading in the House of Lords. It was then referred to a Select Committee where it was felt that

"a sufficiently strong case had not been made for the proposals in the Bill at that time".

As a result the Bill was withdrawn, but its supporters responded swiftly to a suggestion made by the then Minister of Health for the establishment of a voluntary register of osteopaths which should require its members to achieve a level of excellence in training, practice and professional behaviour. In June 1935, a decision was taken to implement this recommendation and in 1936 the General Council and Register of Osteopaths was formed. While that body governs the majority of professional regulated osteopaths, there are also a number of other, smaller bona fide osteopathic registering bodies which regulate and represent the interests of their members. I believe that it is a cherished hope of all those groups that one day their roles might be superseded by the establishment of a single statutory regulatory body which would incorporate the breadth and experience of expertise contained in all branches of the profession. The Bill will, I hope, make that longed-for day a reality.

In 1985, Lord Glenarthur, the Under-Secretary of State in what was then the Department of Health and Social Security, outlined the criteria that the Government expected professions of non-conventional medicine to fulfil before being considered suitable for statutory regulation. The osteopathic profession has been fulfilling those criteria now for a number of years.

However, without doubt, the watershed came in 1988 when the Prince of Wales hosted a luncheon at Kensington palace attended by Health Ministers, presidents of the royal medical colleges and the president of the General Medical Council. At that lunch, the presidents discussed the difference between the therapies that the medical profession considered alternative to orthodox medicine and those that they regarded as complementary. At the end of their discussion, the presidents said that they believed that the way was clear to proceed with proposals to secure the statutory regulation of the osteopathic profession.

It was following a suggestion from his royal highness that the best way forward might be to set up a working party to consider the case for legislation that, in the autumn of 1989, the King's Fund set up its working party on osteopathy. It was chaired by Sir Thomas Bingham, who was then a Lord Justice of Appeal and is now Master of the Rolls.

The King's Fund working party report was launched at a major press conference on 3 December 1991. The conference was attended by the Prince of Wales and a stunning array of dignitaries, royal college presidents and elder statesmen of the medical profession. The Prince of Wales paid tribute on that occasion to the many years

during which the osteopathic profession had been providing high standards of responsible care and conduct which, he said,

"had been of real value to a large number of people".

He congratulated the working party on its report and expressed his hope that, after all its hard work, legislation would follow at an early date. On 17 December Lord Walton introduced the Osteopaths Bill, which the working party had appended to its report, as a private peer's Bill in another place.

Before leaving that subject, I again express the Goverhment's thanks to the working party's chairman, Sir Thomas Bingham, its members and the King's Fund. The working party unquestionably made a significant and central contribution to the osteopaths' pursuit of statutory regulation. The policy underpinning the proposals in the Bill are modelled principally on its recommendations which have provided a fair, sound and practical basis for statutory regulation of established practitioners and provide the public with safeguards for the future.

As the House already knows, the King's Fund has set up a further working party to consider proposals for the statutory regulation of the chiropractic profession. That working party is also chaired by Sir Thomas Bingham and we look forward to receiving its recommendations when it reports shortly. The Government's gratitude to Sir Thomas for his interest in complementary medicine has already been recorded.

I also add my congratulations on the sterling work performed by Simon Fielding in the profession's quest for statutory regulation. Mr. Fielding, himself an osteopath, has worked ceaselessly for that cause virtually all his professional life. He was a key member of the King's Fund working party and also played a vital role in persuading my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East to sponsor his current Bill. It is not only fitting but justly deserved that he has recently been appointed chairman of the General Council and Register of Osteopaths.

I have mentioned Lord Walton's Bill in the previous Session. It attracted all-party and Government support and brought to life the recommendations presented in the working party's report. The Bill went on to complete a successful Committee stage before the dissolution of Parliament last March and, in its own right, played a pivotal role in the profession's quest. I am pleased that the noble Lord has agreed to steer the latest Osteopaths Bill on its journey through another place following what we hope will be its successful passage through this House.

I shall now deal with the current Bill, the seventh and latest. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East has already outlined the purpose and content of the Bill and its major provisions. The regulatory system proposed for the osteopathic profession is, of course, modelled closely on that which exists for other major professions, including key health care professions. It also follows the principles for statutory regulation recommended by the King's Fund working party. However, I can confirm that, thanks to the working party, it embodies the most up-to-date thinking on professional self-regulation and will, as my hon. Friend said, provide a model for others to follow.

The Bill explicitly designates professional incompetence as a basis for a disciplinary investigation. I know that other professions, in particular the medical profession, are also investigating ways of introducing that concept for their own members. The solutions reached may be different for the different professions, but I believe that osteopaths can take credit for the fact that the scheme that they propose seeks to provide the public with the protection that the provision can offer from the outset of the statutory scheme.

Similarly, the Bill contains a provision for the introduction of compulsory refresher training as a condition of continuing registration. Again, I know that that is in line with current thinking in a number of health care professions, offering the reassurance to the public that the practitioners whom they consult are keeping up to date in their fields.

Perhaps one of the most important elements of the Bill is the creation of an offence of using the title "osteopath", or any variation of the term, without being a registered osteopath. I know that that provision is of interest to many related professions. I reiterate the fact that that is not intended to prevent other professionals such as physiotherapists using osteopathic techniques in their practice or telling patients that they are using such techniques.

The offence provides for closure of title, not closure of function. I hope that my remarks will provide some reassurance for those involved. I know that other professions are anxious to secure the closure of their professional title. Our advice to them is to follow the example of the osteopaths and to seek their goal through private Member's legislation.

As careful readers will have noted, the Bill also contains a panoply of appeal rights at various stages of the proposed disciplinary procedures and as part of the registration process. The Government's view is that they are desirable and necessary to fulfil our obligations in human rights terms. The Bill also reflects our European Community obligations in relation to the recognition of professional qualifications.

Added protection for the public is provided through the exemption of registered osteopaths from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. That will bring osteopaths into line with other health care professionals and will mean that practitioners will be required to declare all their criminal convictions, including spent convictions, if asked to do so when applying for registration. The General Osteopathic Council will also have the power to ensure that practising osteopaths hold professional indemnity insurance and to take disciplinary proceedings against a practitioner who fails to comply with that requirement.

Nothing in the Bill affects the rights of members of the public to consult osteopaths directly or the osteopaths' professional freedom to treat patients. With all its statutory powers, the General Osteopathic Council will not be able to interfere with the free market in terms of the scale of fees osteopaths may charge. Should the need ever arise, powers of intervention are provided against any anti-competitive practices that the General Osteopathic Council may contemplate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East has already drawn attention to the fact that the Bill is expected to have only minor implications for public expenditure. That would arise only in the unlikely event of the Privy Council having to exercise its default powers over the General Osteopathic Council. I confirm that assessment.

The passage of the Bill is not related to the availability or otherwise of osteopathy on the NHS, because, as with

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all other services, the purchase of osteopathy is a matter for local decision based on the assessed health needs of the local population, competing priorities and resources. However, we hope that statutory regulation will stimulate the continued growth of the profession and will encourage more people to consider osteopathy as a career.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Does my hon. Friend believe that the Bill will make osteopathy more easily available on the NHS—perhaps as easily available as conventional treatment is?

Mr. Sackville: I cannot go further than what I have just said, which is that the Bill will further encourage district health authorities to consider making osteopathy available. It will remain a matter for local choice.

Mr. Jessel: Will general practitioners who are budget holders be able to use their budgets to send their patients to osteopaths if the Bill is passed?

Mr. Sackville: General practitioners have the right to employ osteopaths. I confirm that that is already the case.

The statutory regulations will help to foster closer working relationships between doctors and the profession. I reiterate the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East about the professional and lay members of the first General Osteopathic Council. They will be appointed by the Privy Council after consultation not only with the bodies that currently administer the systems of voluntary registration, but with those that reflect wider views, such as those of the public, of educationists and of the medical profession. The initial members will be appointed on the basis of their individual merit, and for their ability to help to secure the highest standards of clinical practice and to bring out the best ideas from all quarters of the profession.

I underscore the importance of the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East, that the profession should not upset the stability it currently enjoys through the premature anticipation of future change. It is important that individual members of the osteopathic profession continue to support the existing schemes of voluntary registration right up to the time when the new General Osteopathic Council takes on its statutory responsibilities. Failure to do that would result in a loss of public confidence in the profession, it would undermine all that has been achieved so far and it would call into question the professional integrity of those who abandoned a scheme that had brought them and their profession to the brink of achieving their ultimate goal.

I thank hon. Members who have taken part in the debate, in which a number of interesting points have been made. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) mentioned apparent anomalies in terms of VAT. I shall investigate the matter and write to him. My hon. Friend also mentioned the various key areas and targets set in the White Paper "The Health of the Nation". Further targets, as he probably knows, are under discussion, especially on the question of back pain in which my hon. Friend expresses great interest. He will know that the clinical standards advisory committee is studying the area as one of its special areas of interest. I hope that we shall have more to say on that. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham also mentioned the question of GPs with which I have just dealt.

I welcome what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick), who has taken an active interest in the House in complementary and alternative medicines. I reiterate his hope that the Bill will take alternative and complementary medicine a little further down the road of acceptance by the medical profession.

We also heard a speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who is taking a rest from his usual nightly exertions in the House. Some of us were relieved to hear him say that he would leave the European ramifications of the Bill on the table. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East is grateful for that. Yet again, I congratulate my hon. Friend on introducing the Bill.

I should declare a personal, family interest. I have just discovered—to my shame, only a few minutes ago—that my late father was the president of the General Council and Register of Osteopaths—*[Laughter.]* He was a dark horse. I was aware that he was active in another place in promoting the interests of the profession, but the fact that he reached such heights has only just come to my attention.

The osteopathic profession has been running the race in pursuit of statutory legislation for more than 60 years. The Government believe that the case presented by the profession is deserving and justifiable. The King's Fund working party report and the Bill introduced by Lord Walton in the previous Session have taken the profession down the back straight. It is our hope that the Bill will bring the profession not only round the final bend and along the home stretch, but across the finishing line where it can hold aloft the long-sought prize of the Osteopaths Act 1993.

11.46 am

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): My remarks will be briefer than I had intended because many hon. Members have made the points in the debate. It is not worth detaining the House on legislation for which clearly there is so much support.

It is a shame that the Minister drew an analogy between complementary medicines and crossing the finishing line in a horse race. It should have been Government policy to address the important points made today about complementary and alternative medicine. There should have been a positive lead from the Government on how to incorporate the valuable contributions made to the NHS by those medicines.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) has received many accolades this morning. I congratulate him on the Bill, and on his thorough and clear explanation of the range of the Bill, of its intentions and of the clear benefits, especially for osteopaths. Qualification for registration is important. It is important that it should be an offence for anybody to call himself an osteopath without being registered. The whole point of the legislation is to provide protection for the patient.

I hope that, when the Bill is in Committee, the important points made by the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) will be taken on board. The Bill will then be improved as it makes its speedy way through Committee.

The hon. Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) referred to chiropractors and physiotherapists as well as osteopaths. Physiotherapists have made the same points to Opposition Members, expressing their support for and envy of the provisions envisaged for osteopaths. I sincerely hope that we shall make rapid progress in addressing those matters.

The hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) made an important contribution to the debate, in which he drew attention to the suffering and problems that back pain causes. Back pain is not a fringe consideration: it affects people's lives, work and ability to take part in other activities. We do not pay enough attention to that fact and I hope that, in considering "The Health of the Nation" and improvements in the national health service, we shall bear it in mind.

Before I speak glowingly of osteopaths' contribution, I have been advised to give as my definition of osteopathy that which appears in the King's Fund report, which makes clear the complementary nature of the discipline. Page 10 of the report states:

"Osteopathy is a system of diagnosis and treatment which lays its main emphasis on structural and mechanical problems of the body. It is not an alternative to conventional medicine but a complementary discipline which offers patients an additional treatment option for certain conditions which can affect the body's framework. In short, osteopaths are concerned with the biochemics of the body and the maintenance of proper mechanical function."

This is not a debate about complementary medicine, although we urgently need such a debate, as complementary medicine should be available within the NHS.

In expressing its support for the Bill, the British Medical Association has made it clear that it recognises the regulation, education and training of osteopaths in the United Kingdom as most important and believes it to be entirely appropriate that those wishing to practise osteopathy should have to register to do so. It welcomes the establishment of such a register as a guarantee of professional conduct and integrity, which will also afford greater protection to the patient from the potential harm of treatments by unskilled and unauthorised practitioners. The BMA goes on to say that it is currently investigating the control and practice of a wide range of complementary therapies. I suggest that this House, too, should turn its attention to that matter.

A senior clinical tutor at the London College of Osteopathic Medicine tells me that Bernard Shaw performed the opening ceremony at the association's clinic in Vincent square in 1927. I shall not be giving a complete history of osteopathy—although I must say that I am surprised that the Minister omitted his grandfather from the history he gave, and I am glad that he was informed of the fact in time.

On top of his many other talents, Bernard Shaw was a health enthusiasts. Indeed, the reference in the introduction to "The Doctor's Dilemma" to the doctors who were not registered by the General Medical Council but who were "rather more successful" than some of their registered colleagues is thought to refer to doctors of osteopathy.

Many people use osteopathy, and the Bill is intended to ensure that greater protection is afforded to them as patients. A study published in this month's *British Journal of General Practice* draws together some important evidence about the work of osteopaths:

"Most of the estimated four million consultations per year in the United Kingdom for complementary medicine are for pain. There are 1,706 registered osteopaths, more than any other group of complementary therapists. Of general practitioners in England, 72 per cent. refer patients to complementary therapy, most commonly for manipulation".

Some practices are already sufficiently convinced of the benefits of osteopathy to offer the service free of charge to their patients within the national health service.

Osteopathy is a little-researched adjunct to conventional primary care. It seems to me that we should be considering the role that it has to play in primary care. It is predominantly used by patients in their working years, especially those with spinal problems, which are often self-limiting. The study reported in the *British Journal of General Practice* suggests that three visits were usually sufficient to improve the symptoms, and that in respect of women, who attended more frequently than men, the improvement was considerably more marked.

The Bill makes no difference to the availability of osteopathy under the NHS. In considering "The Health of the Nation", we must examine the arguments—and remember the speech made by the hon. Member for Twickenham. Osteopathy has a very good success rate, particulary in relieving spinal pain. In addition to regulation and registration, we should urgently consider including osteopathy in an extended primary health care team and, in the acute sector, as part of the muscle and joint team—rheumatology, orthopaedics, physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

Mr. Tredinnick: Is the hon. Lady aware that a recent survey showed that, in some hospitals, it was found more effective to send patients suffering from back pain to an osteopath rather than giving them the traditional out-patient care? Does she agree that that further illustrates the effectiveness of osteopathy and tells us how important it is that it should be further integrated into the health service?

Ms. Primarolo: I have not seen that survey, but I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we should not neglect the skills, talents and abilities of osteopaths to deal with some types of back pain and spinal injury but should use them to the full. That would have clear benefits not only for patients but for the NHS.

The study to which I have referred shows that spinal joint strain—back problems—shows significantly better symptom improvement at four months with osteopathy than with drug therapy. We must investigate this matter further because if it is true that osteopathy is more effective, there will be bonuses to patients and the NHS alike. For instance, if, in some cases, the complementary use of osteopathy rendered drug therapy unnecessary, there would be a significant saving to the NHS drugs budget. The drug therapies prescribed are often both expensive for the NHS and traumatic for the patient. I do not suggest that the process should be automatic—merely that the possibility needs to be investigated. Moreover, if that were shown to be the case, the dreadful side effects that sometimes result from the use of drug therapies might be prevented.

There is a strong case, on the basis of prevention, health promotion and cure, for examining the role of osteopathy and the other forms of complementary medicines that are available. We agree with the Government that the Bill should have the wholehearted support of the House and that its Committee stage should proceed as quickly as

[Ms. Primarolo]

possible. The Bill demonstrates the way forward for incorporating complementary medicines into the national health service—a debate which the House should have had a long time ago. I hope that after prodding from the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East we will not shirk the consideration of other complementary medicines. Again, I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the excellent debate which he initiated this morning.

12.1 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I am glad to have the opportunity to add my voice to the supporting choir of hon. Members on both sides of the House, and many organisations and individuals outside the House, in welcoming the Bill. I add my congratulations to those already extended to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss). I wish him well, and I wish the Bill a speedy and successful passage through the House.

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) reminded us of the lengthy process before the Bill came before us. Undoubtedly, that lengthy time is regretted. Perhaps the hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) were over-generous in not being more regretful that the Government have not found the opportunity over the years to introduce this measure and that they rely on my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East to make amends for that.

Without detracting from the applause which is rightly due to my hon. Friend, I wish to refer to one or two parts of the Bill on which it would be profitable to have a lengthy debate in Committee. I shall be selective; I am aware that other hon. Members have referred to many of the salient features of the Bill. Important business is to follow this debate, and undoubtedly one or two other hon. Members also wish to catch Mr. Deputy Speaker's eye.

I shall refer to the register and the principles of registration. Essentially, the kernel of the Bill is the establishment of a register of lawful practitioners and how such a register will be operated. I do not for one moment quarrel with the principle of the establishment of a register. I think that it is right, and I welcome it.

I share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East that it is right to enshrine two categories of registration. One category is for those practitioners who fully and immediately satisfy the qualification, experience and character requirements. It is right that there should be a category of provisional registration for practitioners who do not fully and immediately satisfy the requirements.

In an intervention to my hon. Friend I suggested that perhaps the Bill would be better if it incorporated provisional registration. I accepted my hon. Friend's reply. In an ideal world, the Bill would incorporate provisional registration, but I accept that perhaps it would be too much to ask the profession to accept that innovation initially, as well as many other innovations.

I seek further reassurance that there will be sufficient protection of the interests of patients during the two-year transitional period. Conditional registration is defined in clause 4(2)(d) which deals with practitioners who are deemed not to have spent a substantial part of their working time over a period of four or more years in the lawful, safe and competent practice of osteopathy. I doubt whether there is sufficient protection for patients while a register is being compiled in the transitional phase.

After studying the Bill carefully, I am not sure how the disciplinary measures in clauses 19 to 24 will apply during the registration period before the register is complete. If the House permits my hon. Friend to speak again in this debate, perhaps he can clarify the extent to which the regulations in clauses 19 to 24 will be applied before the register is completed.

I believe that clause 4(2)(f) requires greater clarification because it seems to hang at the end of the clause. That provision says:

"gives the required undertaking."

In the previous 93 lines in the Bill, there is no reference to any undertaking. What is meant to be undertaken, by whom and in what circumstances? It is hard to follow that provision, and I seek clarification on it.

There is another potential conflict in the Bill. I am aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) urged us not to raise Committee points on Second Reading. However, we will not all have the opportunity to participate in the Committee. The potential conflict is between clauses 3 and 4 and the clause which relates to allegations of criminal conviction. Is the concept of the lawful practice of osteopathy in clauses 3 and 4 inclusive or exclusive of unlawful practice overseas? The distinction that unlawful overseas practices are included is made clear later in the Bill. Is that also the case in clauses 3 and 4?

Moving away from the question of the register and the process of registration, I should like to address the issue of post-registration training. It can be argued that the general council should give a greater statutory commitment to post-registration than the Bill provides at present. As hon. Members will know, the working party dealt with that measure in paragraph 47 on pages 28 and 29 of its report. For the sake of brevity, I will not quote the relevant sections of the report. It is available for hon. Members to read if they have not already done so.

Clearly, the working party approached the issue of post-registration training with the view that significant demands should be imposed on the council. In the course of its inquiry, the working party diluted its understanding and its demands until we have the wording in the Bill. Clause 16 would be much better if it read not that:

"The General Council may make rules requiring registered osteopaths to undertake further courses of training"

but rather "shall make". The working party said that that had changed and that the efforts of the council and the education and training would be directed at raising conditional registration to full registration. That can be accommodated by introducing a time factor—by saying that the post-registration training should start after a certain length of time, following the implementation of the register. I hope that the House will re-examine the "shall" and "may" factor in clause 16.

I shall select one point from those which I intended to make about which I feel strongly. I refer to clause 19(1)(c). The allegations against a registered osteopath which will trigger the disciplinary machinery include the allegation that he has been convicted of a criminal offence. Lord Walton's Bill provided that overseas convictions should be included. This Bill is restricted to criminal convictions in

the United Kingdom. In the helpful notes that my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East gave to many of us, he offers justification for that:

"Given, however, the differences that exist between the United Kingdom's judicial system and those of other countries it is felt that this could prove too difficult to implement without the Professional Conduct Committee assuming the role of quasi-judicial body, which is not what it is intended to be."

With great respect to my hon. Friend, I quarrel with him on this point. I can clearly envisage criminal offences committed overseas which his Bill would exclude from consideration but which would seriously affect the right of someone to practise osteopathy in Britain. Therefore, I urge that that point be reconsidered. It is in the interests of the patients, and therefore in the long-term interests of the profession, that it is reconsidered. The point which Lord Walton sought to make in his Bill should be restated in this Bill.

I stress that I warmly welcome the Bill. It is long overdue. However, I feel that there are one or two points on which we could have further profitable debate.

12.9 pm

Mr. Moss: With leave of the House. I should like to thank hon. Members on both sides of the House for their excellent speeches in the interesting and wide-ranging, as well as long overdue, debate that we have had on this important matter. I thank the Labour and Liberal Front-Bench spokesmen for their speeches and support. I assure the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) that the matters that she raised will be examined in detail in Committee. I hope that she will be a member of that Committee and bring her expert knowledge to it.

I also thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his speech and for the support of his Department. In all undertakings one usually looks for a sign of the outcome. When my hon. Friend revealed his auspicious link with the osteopathic profession through his illustrious forebear, I knew that, rather than the winning post rushing forward, here was a star on the route to Bethlehem which told me that my Bill would have an easy passage through this morning's proceedings and the Committee stage. I thank my hon. Friend for all his contributions to the Bill.

I thank the sponsors of my Bill, many of whom have been present this morning. I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) and for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) for attending the debate. I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe), and for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant), the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), my hon. Friends the Members for Woodspring (Dr. Fox), for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) and for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) for agreeing to sponsor this important legislation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) rightly said that the physiotherapists were worried that they did not have a protected title—something which the Bill gives to the osteopathic profession. But I point my hon. Friend in the direction of the inadequacy of the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960, which needs some improvement. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) also referred to that Act.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham also raised the important issue of value added tax on osteopaths' bills. Physiotherapists do not have to charge VAT. I was delighted that my hon. Friend attended the debate this morning. He, too, was a member of the Lords and Commons ski team in Devosse. He fell in a race with the Swiss parliamentarians and ended up in Devosse hospital. I was told that he was receiving excellent physiotherapy treatment under water. One wag in our party was heard to ask how long he had to hold his breath for that treatment.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East for his speech. He referred to chiropractors. I assure him that the King's Fund is to report on the position of chiropractors, in the spring, we hope. There is every sign that the model that we have discussed today will be adopted for that profession.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick). I welcomed his speech as the treasurer of the all-party parliamentary group on complementary medicine. He spoke eloquently about the progress and growing acceptance of complementary medicine, and rightly said that the Bill could be an important forerunner of legislation for other groups in the future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is the chairman of the all-party group. He recognised the sea change in attitude among the public and in the British Medical Association to complementary medicine. I confirm that by reading from a letter from the BMA which I received the other day:

"The BMA supports the legislation which seeks to regulate the education and training of osteopaths in the United Kingdom. We believe it is entirely appropriate that those wishing to practise osteopathy should have to register to do so and would welcome such a register as a guarantee of professional conduct and integrity . . . The BMA's Board of Science and Education is currently investigating the control and practice of a wide range of complementary therapies and will produce a comprehensive report in June 1993."

So my hon. Friend was right to point out that there has been a dramatic change in the attitude of the medical profession.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) made a detailed speech. I am mindful of all the issues that he raised. I assure him that if he tables amendments on the points that he made, they will be considered carefully in Committee.

Judging from the speeches of support that have been made today, it appears that the Bill will achieve its Second Reading. That is testimony to the tremendous efforts of many people associated with the osteopathic profession over many years. If congratulations are in order, it is entirely due to them.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Medicines Information Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

12.15 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This is an important Bill which has all-party support, as the list of sponsors on the back of the Bill shows. Several other Members of Parliament have spoken to me to say that they support the principles of the Bill. Outside Parliament the Bill has the support of the National Consumer Council, the Freedom of Information Campaign and Social Audit. Significantly, it is also supported by a wide range of medical and patients groups, including the British Medical Association, the Association of Community Health Councils, the Patients Association, the Association for Consumer Research and MIND.

I also understand that the Government, committed as they are in their manifesto to greater openness and providing more information for patients, are sympathetic to the principles behind the Bill. The Secretary of State was reported in a newspaper two days ago as saying that she thought that the Bill ought to get a fair wind. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster told the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on Wednesday that he was broadly sympathetic to the aims of the Bill, charged as he is by the Prime Minister with the duty of creating more openness in government.

The purpose of the Bill is to remove the all-embracing secrecy that surrounds all aspects of the licensing of medicines, both human and veterinary. Section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968 prevents the licensing authorities from giving any information about the licensing process. That means that at present the licensing authorities cannot disclose the safety studies that they obtain from manufacturers, including the results of trials of new medicines on patients. They cannot disclose their reasons for granting, suspending or revoking the licence. They cannot disclose the advice received by Ministers from bodies such as the Committee on Safety of Medicines and the Veterinary Products Committee. They cannot disclose the results of inspections showing whether pharmaceutical plants comply with quality control and hygiene standards.

Indeed, when Members of Parliament ask questions of Ministers they come up against a brick wall. For example, when my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) asked what was being done to deal with the problem of counterfeit medicines, he was told by the Secretary of State that section 118 prevented an answer being given to him. That is the problem which faces all of us when we want to ask questions on behalf of our constituents about drugs and their side effects. That is unacceptable.

Section 118 prevents doctors and medical experts from examining the safety aspects of drugs that they prescribe, which is even more important than the problem facing Members of Parliament when they represent their constituents, and could be to the detriment of patients. While we all accept and admire the benefits that can be derived from modern medicine, powerful drugs, by their very nature, also carry risks. A proper balance can be struck only if we get all the available information about the risks and benefits. We rest our case on the fact that, under the present licensing system, one cannot achieve a proper balance. Doctors are made familiar with the benefits of drugs by the drug companies and receive a book on drugs being produced and licensed, but, because of the secrecy surrounding the licensing system, it is much harder to establish a full picture of the risks.

May I use a visual aid, Madam Deputy Speaker? There is a drug called Retrovir—I always find it difficult to pronounce the names of modern drugs, but I think that that is correct—and I now show the House the information about it provided for doctors by the industry. As hon. Members know, information about licensing is much more open in the United States of America, and I also show hon. Members the information provided there about the same drug—the summary basis of approval.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Could the hon. Member give a brief description of the information, as I think he knows that it is not in order to use a visual aid which cannot be translated into writing?

Mr. Radice: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I understand that. I was trying to point out that if a doctor in Britain receives a description from the industry it is likely to be very brief, whereas a doctor in the United States, with the benefit of a more open licensing system, has access to much more information and can therefore draw a more effective conclusion about the balance between the benefits and risks of medicines.

In some instances, the lack of information could be harmful. I am not trying to be sensational, but I shall quote four examples to the House and it is important for hon. Members to understand the problems that can arise.

First, in the case of the painkiller for arthritis, Opren, we did not know that the drug had been inadequately tested on the elderly patients who were the most likely to use it. Later, 7,000 people contacted the Opren action group to report side effects from the drug and to find out more information. However, they were not able to get the information because of the problems inherent in our licensing system.

The anti-depressant drug Prozac is another example. In 1991, Norway and Sweden refused to licence the drug on the ground that the manufacturer Eli Lilly sells the product only in 20 mg capsules. Some patients need only 5 mg, but the product is not available in that dose, which was why the licence was refused in Norway and Sweden. However, Prozac is licensed in the United Kingdom and is widely used at the recommended dose of 20 mg, rising to a maximum of 80 mg. The secrecy over information means that doctors cannot judge why it is recommended here at levels which are apparently regarded in other countries as excessive for some patients.

Another example is in veterinary medicine and has already been mentioned in the House of Lords. There is growing concern about the toxic effects on humans of using organo-phosphate sheep dips, which have been licensed since the 1970s. Under the present system there is no way to find out whether any trials were conducted on the dips before licensing and, if they were, what they showed.

In 1991, the licence of the tranquilliser Halcion was suddenly withdrawn. Neither patients who were taking the drug, which had been available for about 10 years, nor the doctors prescribing it were allowed to know the reasons behind the withdrawal of the licence.

By reducing the secrecy surrounding licenced medicines and by providing more balanced information, the Bill will

lead to more rational prescribing, which will benefit doctors, pharmacists and publications such as the *Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin*, from which many doctors get their information. Also, it would have the benefit of making the licensing authorities and the industry more accountable. It would be good for consumers to have full confidence in the medicines that they take and in the regulatory system under which those medicines are licensed. The Bill will also ensure that patients either directly or indirectly, which is the more likely, will have access to information about the potential risks and benefits of the medicines that they take, which is essential.

The Bill, and the model that it suggests, follow the precedent set by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the case of pesticides, introduced in 1986, which is to be extended. Like the Bill, the pesticide arrangements involve making a detailed evaluation available, which often amounts to about 90 pages, as well as access to the full data on request and it bars commercial requesters, which is important. We are trying to follow a model which has been set up and is working in this country. In a sense, that strengthens the case for the Bill.

I shall briefly describe the main elements of the Bill. Clause 1 is definitional and clause 2 requires the Minister to maintain an index, which can be held in any form—electronic or otherwise. The index would identify three types of information: first, it would identify drugs that are subject to certificates and licences under the 1968 Act; secondly, it would identify types of information to which the public would have access; and thirdly, it would identify convictions under the 1968 Act.

Clause 3 is important because it is central to the Bill. It establishes a right of access to information on licences in force; the summary and evaluation of drugs—notably information about the safety and effectiveness of drugs; information considered by the licensing authority before granting a licence or before suspending, varying or revoking a licence; advice given by bodies such as the Committee on Safety of Medicines; and inspection reports on the manufacture and premises of firms that produce drugs.

May I make it clear that all information available under the Bill will be subject to two safeguards. I realise that a number of hon. Members and the drug companies are worried about that. The two safeguards cover, first, trade secrets and, secondly, the fact that the information will become available only once the product has been licensed and launched.

Clause 4 establishes, subject to ministerial approval, a wider right of access to information and extracts of information about the safety, quality and effectiveness of medicines, which may be necessary if the summary and evaluation are not detailed enough.

Safeguards are considered important by the industry and the country as a whole. Clause 6(2) excludes information about the manufacturing process that would damage commercial interests. It also excludes information about a product being developed, which has not yet been licensed. Clause 8 continues to make it a criminal offence to release information about the manufacturing process or a product being developed.

Clause 5 allows Ministers to exclude from wider access under clause 4 any person acting on behalf of a commercial interest. The Minister must be satisfied that the person has no commercial interest and may require legally enforceable undertakings to that effect.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): May I first declare an interest? I advise a pharmaceutical company, so there should be no misunderstandings on that. I am particularly worried about what the hon. Gentleman has just said, because the safeguards in the Bill seem to be weak in the extreme. Although undertakings may be given, it would not be the first time if such undertakings were not adhered to. What real safeguards is the hon. Gentleman putting into the Bill to prevent someone who has signed an undertaking from passing that information on to copyists or, in some ways more frightening, to an animal liberation outfit that could gain information about animal testing? That is of considerable concern to people working in the industry.

Mr. Radice: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concerns, but the Bill is modelled on the pesticides arrangements and they have not led to the problems that he suggests might arise. After all, he must bear in mind the fact that some of the companies that produce drugs also produce pesticides. I am well aware of the problem. If the Bill is given a Second Reading, I hope that he will give his advice and help in Committee so that we can tighen up any weaknesses in the Bill. I hope that he will consider what I have said in a sympathetic light.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I do not have an interest to declare, but I have major pharmaceutical companies in my constituency. A great deal of investment in the United Kingdom industry comes from foreign companies. It is feared that a regime such as that outlined by the hon. Gentleman will deter investment. It is not just a question of its implications in practice; it would deter further investment and thus undermine the prosperity of the United Kingdom's pharmaceutical industry.

Mr. Radice: My understanding is that the very open system of regulation that operates in the United States has not deterred investment by foreign companies. I am not convinced that the problem is as serious as the hon. Gentleman suggests, but clearly we should examine that aspect. I do not believe that companies will have anything to fear if their drugs are properly tested. The trend that the hon. Gentleman suggested has not been seen under the pesticides model—neither does it occur in the United States.

If foreign companies want to market their products in the United Kingdom, they will have to license them here, which means that we shall have access to their data. That will ultimately be useful to United Kingdom companies. Again, that matter can be reviewed in Committee. It does concern me, and it is important that we get it right.

Clause 3(2) and clause 4 make it clear that information will be available only after the product has been licensed and launched. The Bill also provides protection for other groups. The identity of patients, doctors, and researchers undertaking animal experimentation will not be disclosed.

The industry has suggested that the Bill could become a counterfeiters' charter. We have tried to bar commercial interests, on the pesticides model. Only extracts will be published, not full data, and information about the manufacturing process and about products under development and not yet licensed will not be divulged. All those safeguards should be taken into consideration.

The hon. Gentleman raised the question of cost. That matter is for discussion and for the Government to decide. As the Bill bars commercial interests, the cost is likely to

[Mr. Radice]

be far smaller than in the United States where, because commercial interests are not barred, the system is more expensive. I suspect that the system proposed by the Bill would not be very costly. I pray in aid again the pesticide arrangements, which are not costly. Costs can be exaggerated as an argument against giving the Bill a Second Reading.

In any case, as I have made clear, I fully expect the Bill to be amended in Committee. I have had helpful discussions with the Department of Health at six meetings over a number of months, but they have not yet been concluded. The Government have not produced any firm, detailed proposals of their own, so the Bill is inevitably in draft form. I do not pretend otherwise. I would of course have responded before Second Reading if the Government had made their intentions clear and said what they wanted. I could not, so perhaps some of the Bill's imperfections—if it has any—are not entirely of my own making or that of the Bill's sponsors or outside groups that support it.

I hope that those who have problems with the Bill will sit on the Committee and try to improve it, so that we can introduce more openness in regard to important licensing decisions, while protecting the legitimate commercial interests of drug companies, which I am anxious to do.

The Bill will give doctors more information about the medicines that they prescribe, and will let patients know more about the possible side effects of those medicines. The licensing agencies will be able to explain the reasons for their decisions and pharmaceutical manufacturers will have the discipline of knowing that the safety of their medicines will be subject to wider scrutiny. That will be good for doctors, patients, the licensing authorities and, I believe, the pharmaceutical industry. I hope that the House will give my Bill a Second Reading.

12.40 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I welcome the Bill, in the light of the experiences of a number of my constituents and many other people who have written to me about the often permanent damage to children's skin which has resulted from long-term application of steroid creams to combat eczema. A recent *Sunday Express* campaign exposed the extent of those sad cases; I believe that the Bill will do much to reduce them by providing GPs, patients and their families with more information about the products concerned. It will also concentrate the minds of GPs who prescribe ointments without regard to either their efficacy or their effects on patients.

The ointments most frequently mentioned are Betnovate N, Dermovate, Eumovate and Propaderm A. They should of course be used sparingly; certainly they should not be persevered with if they are not working. Unfortunately, the *Sunday Express* and I have been informed of all too many cases of such prescriptions being repeated by GPs—sometimes for years—without any evidence of their efficacy. Permanent scarring has resulted; skins has become almost transparent in places, with blood vessels and veins becoming clearly visible. We can only imagine the psychological distress caused, to, in particular, young people of both sexes. Indeed, suicides have been known. Other side effects are obesity, owing to the cortisone ingredients absorbed into the bloodstream, and a loss of natural immunisation against infection.

Some GPs are clearly unaware of those dangers, and some do not appear to be particularly interested when patients discover alternative therapies—for instance, homoeopathic or aromatherapeutic herbal medicines—that succeed, often within weeks, where pharmaceutical products have failed, as well as being much cheaper. Producers will claim that they provide the widest possible advice on the application and administration of their products—which, in any case, must satisfy the Committee on Safety of Medicines before a licence can be issued.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will investigate the worst of the cases of which I have been informed. I shall send him the details.

I am sure that the Bill will go a long way towards ensuring that such sad and unnecessary cases of suffering are never repeated, and I hope that it will be given a clear passage. I congratulate the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) on introducing it.

12.44 pm

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I welcome the Bill, which is a positive step towards ensuring that patients and doctors have more information. We should ensure that we get rid of the secrecy that surrounds so many areas of our life.

I know several patients who have been to doctors and been prescribed treatment without being told of the side effects. They have seen their doctors numerous times and said, "I am suffering from this," but quite often their doctors do not know what the side effects are. That is why I support the Bill, which will bring our legislation into line with the extremely good legislation of the United States, under which people are able to discover the side effects of treatment.

I know that some European countries do not have such strong legislation. If the Bill is passed, we should put pressure on our European colleagues to ensure that legislation is introduced across Europe. That would go some way to allay the fears of some Conservative Members that competition would be difficult and that people would not want to invest in this country. It would help if we could make legislation apply across Europe.

I can understand the fears of the pharmaceutical industry about, for example, trade secrets, but that is covered by the Bill. Perhaps, as the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) said, the Bill's provisions need tightening, but that can be addressed in Committee. The most important thing to remember is that people's health is paramount, as the Government suggest in their White Paper "The Health of the Nation". People should take more responsibility for their health care needs. If the Government believe in the proposals set out in the White Paper, they should support the Bill.

Some drugs have been withdrawn. The tranquilliser Halcion was withdrawn in 1991, but none of us has been told why. We are unaware of the side effects of similar drugs that are on the market. More drugs are being produced without our knowing their side effects, but we need to know in order to protect our health and that of our constituents. It is unacceptable to use the trade secret argument when the health of people should be paramount.

I should like to give my wholehearted support to the Bill. Obviously amendments will be tabled in Committee, but I should like to give the Bill the support of my party.

12.48 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I had not intended to speak, but I repeat that I advise a pharmaceutical company in Kent. I make no apology for offering the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) some of the fears of the industry. I know that he has been approached by companies and by the industry's association, the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, in various letters and meetings.

Mr. Radice: I have had meetings with the industry, but more meetings, particularly at the Committee stage, would be extremely useful.

Mr. Couchman: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's assurance on that point. It is important that, if the Bill gets its Second Reading and goes into Committee, a better Bill emerges.

The pharmaceutical industry is one of our success industries. Our companies lead the world. Four out of 10 of the world's leading products come from the British industry, which is a strong industry that provides the country with a substantial trade surplus of £1·2 billion. Not too many of our industries are in that happy state. It is important that we maintain the investment confidence of the industry. I am worried about that confidence, given that, unhappily, the Bill is being presented at the same time as the Department is threatening an extension of the limited list provisions, which is also seen as a threat to investment by the pharmaceutical industry.

One reason why this country has attracted industry from overseas is the strength of our research and science, and our development of the pharmaceutical industry. It is a shining example to other manufacturing and research-based industries. I am worried that, as a result of the unhappy concomitants of the perceived threats to the industry, investment decisions prejudicial to the United Kingdom will be taken.

I hope that I may be able to take up the invitation extended by the hon. Member for Durham, North to join the Committee, but I am also tied up with a number of other Friday Bills, which may have to take precedence over his for my services.

I see the Bill as a threat to the intellectual property rights of the research-based pharmaceutical industry. In my intervention in his speech, I told the hon. Gentleman that the safeguards in the Bill to prevent dissemination of information are weak. They are seen as highly threatening because of the danger that generic copyists, or even people who might make fraudulent applications for product licences, as has happened recently in the United States, might get their hands on the information. Research workers in the industry are also worried by the prospect that their safety could be threatened by the Animal Liberation Front, which has extreme views on people doing research in the industry.

The hon. Gentleman placed great store on comparisons with the pesticides industry, but the two are not the same. The pesticides industry does not have the same amount of generic competition as the pharmaceutical industry, and the scale of the industries is also different. The pesticides industry has an annual turnover of £700 million, whereas that for the pharmaceutical industry is almost 10 times bigger. In addition, although innovative pharmaceutical manufacturers receive limited patent protection, no such protection exists for vaccines and products of bio-technology.

I am also concerned that the European agency proposed for pharmaceutical licensing will not come here if we pass the Bill. That would be regrettable, because, in respect of the pharmaceutical industry, we lead in Europe. It would be a great benefit if the European Medicines Evaluation Agency were to be located in this country when it is formed.

The hon. Member for Durham, North pre-empted my second intervention in respect of the cost of the legislation. At the moment, the pharmaceutical industry pays money to the Medicines Control Agency for product licences, because it perceives the licence as a service provided by the MCA to the industry. The industry would view the Bill as a disservice rather than a service to it. It would certainly be highly unlikely to be a willing contributor to the cost of the dissemination of the information.

Therefore, the hon. Member for Durham, North must recognise that the people who seek information under the Bill will have to pay for it themselves—which could amount to more than just the cost of providing a large quantity of photocopied material—or the cost will fall on the taxpayer. I am sure that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) will have something to say about the likelihood of the Treasury wishing to pay for information to be disseminated at a time when the Treasury is seeking to curb the drugs bill.

I have probably said enough now to show the industry's concerns. The industry is taking steps to disseminate more information about medicines. It would much prefer to see a basis whereby the Medicines Control Agency acceded to the EC initiative to provide summary bases of approval in respect of all newly licensed medicines. That certainly seems to be a way forward to provide more information to doctors and to patients.

While I wish the hon. Gentleman's Bill a fair wind, I hope that, in Committee or on Report, if necessary, he will be prepared to accept amendments that truly safeguard the rights and justified commercial interests of an important industry—the pharmaceutical industry.

12.56 pm

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): Like motherhood and apple pie, we are all in favour of as much information as possible being given to as many people as possible in all aspects of life. Having worked in government, I know that many papers that cross one's desk marked "confidential" probably need not have been confidential. I welcome the fact that the Government are committed to much more open government in all its aspects and to extending the information that is provided to people. However, there must be a balance. We should not go to the opposite extreme and remove confidentiality, when there are valid reasons for it. As other hon. Members have said, there is a risk that the Bill could damage commercial interests.

Most medicines take many years to develop. I believe that the average time is 12 years. Their development involves substantial costs. Up to £150 million can be involved in the development of a medicine. Even when medicines are developed and licensed, many are not commercial successes. Therefore, there is a high cost to the

[Mrs. Judith Chaplin]

pharmaceutical industry in respect of developing medicines which we all want to deal with illnesses that afflict us today.

Patents can cover 20 years, but they are registered at the beginning of the process. Therefore, medicines are not protected for a particularly long period. The Bill could provide competitors with an unfair advantage. Indeed, it could damage the pharmaceutical industry in this country and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) said, the pharmaceutical industry is a very important industry in this country.

I have examined the Bill carefully, and I do not see how clause 5 can be enforced or effective. I am always worried about legislation which cannot be enforced correctly.

For example, people involved in industrial espionage do not pull a hat down over their faces and put on dark glasses. One cannot tell who is a spy and who is an ordinary person making innocent inquiries about the ingredients of a medicine. Therefore, it is extremely unlikely that the clauses which seek to prevent commercial spying will be effective. If they are not effective, there is the risk of damage to the industry in this country, and the risk that it will go elsewhere.

It has been suggested that it would be acceptable if similar legislation were in force across Europe, but that would still not be sufficient to prevent companies from manufacturing in other countries and therefore reducing the amount of work they carry out here. It is extremely easy for most of the companies involved, many of which are in any case international companies, to re-base where they do the bulk of their work, which could do great damage to our balance of trade if several moved overseas. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) said, there is a great trade surplus from the pharmaceutical industry, and we need to keep it here.

We also need to protect the jobs provided by the industry—about 80,000 direct and about 200,000 indirect jobs. Even more important, we must keep the research and development skills of people in the industry. By that I mean research and development not only in the industry itself but in universities and elsewhere. We should not wish skilled people to go overseas, which would be a possibility if there were a threat to the industry. The Labour party shares those aims, so I am sure that the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) has borne them in mind when considering the Bill.

The Bill leads us to ask whether the current secrecy is too great. I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Durham, North that it is, but that does not mean that we should go to the other extreme and give too much information. I hope that I have made it clear that I would not wish us to go to the extreme proposed in the Bill, but there is no reason why the data sheets, or compendiums, about medicines available to people should not be re-examined to ascertain whether more information can be given without running the risk of damage to commercial interests.

Mr. Radice: I hope that, in making her measured speech, the hon. Lady has taken on board the fact that we are discussing safety studies, not general information about the manufactured product or the development process. I should have thought that safety studies should be available in the public interest.

Mrs. Chaplin: I agree that more detail should be available of studies and tests that have been carried out and what effects have been recorded. However, the difficulties relating to Opren or some medicines for eczema appear to have occurred because of inadequate testing rather than the lack of information available on them. It is absolutely right that there should be wider discussion about such tests, but that does not mean giving information that could damage the competitive advantages of those who have produced a drug.

I agree that section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968 must be reconsidered, but not to the extent of an excessive removal of restrictions, which could lead to a greater threat of our industry going overseas. I also agree that the Medicines Control Agency should give details on, for example, why it has withdrawn a drug, further details of standard testing and what has been decided about different aspects of a drug. All these issues could be reconsidered so that more information could be given, enabling people to decide for themselves whether a drug's side effects are too great.

I have some doubt about whether that is the best approach. All of us know that, when looking at an encyclopedia of the 100 most common diseases, many people decide that they have at least 90 per cent. of them, and that their death is imminent. I am concerned about people being made nervous about a medicine which they could take quite safely and which would benefit them.

I believe that an area of information can be expanded without going to the extremes that appear in the Bill. The Bill requires substantial alteration before I can support it.

1.4 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): I congratulate the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) on introducing the Bill, which is principally designed to push back the frontiers of secrecy. Incidentally, the Bill seeks to reverse a measure passed by a Labour Administration in 1968. I am glad that the Bill commands obvious support in the House and beyond. I support the basic principles behind the Bill and although I have some reservations of detail, none would stop my general support for the Bill.

There are two particular reasons why I am keen on the Bill. I am strongly committed to freedom of information. I believe that all information should be freely available unless there are overwhelming reasons against that availability. That point should be as relevant to all appointed statutory bodies, such as those governing the safety of medicines, as it is to elected bodies.

The spirit that applies is the same as that eloquently set out by Lady Thatcher in her maiden speech in this House. She said:

> "The public has the right, in the first instance, to know what its elected representatives are doing."—[*Official Report*, 5 February 1960; Vol. 616, c. 1350.]

She was speaking on what became the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960. The public has an equal right to know what those appointed to guard its safety on medicine and drugs are doing and why they are doing it.

Freedom of information was further enhanced as a general subject in 1985 with the Local Government (Access to Information) Bill, which was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire). I was lucky enough to be able to support it in a speech in the House. The same principles that drove me to do that

encourage me to support the Bill today. In both cases, there are exceptions to the general principle of freedom of information. The Bill recognises that and it specifically grants exclusions to genuine trade and commercial secrets. The Local Government (Access to Information) Act grants exclusions for personnel matters. It is right that the Bill should allow exclusions.

I attach great importance to the need to protect pharmaceutical companies in that way. I do not believe that the hon. Member for Durham, North seeks to diminish that protection. However, I have some doubt about the sufficiency of the Bill in that respect. The hon. Member has been gracious enough to say that he is willing to be flexible in that area.

We must be careful not to discourage the huge investment that pharmaceutical companies put into the commercially risky and uncertain area of research. It is difficult for companies to assess in advance exactly how great the resources need to be to bring a research project to fruition. In many cases, research projects do not come to fruition.

We must ensure that pharmaceutical companies, which are strongly based in this country, do not lose confidence as a result of the Bill to the extent that they seriously consider moving their operations offshore where they could use a safety regime that might not be as onerous in its requirement to publicise the information gained in research and in bringing the drug to the market.

I am a little worried, too, about the implications that may flow from the single European market. Directives governing such matters are, of course, in train, but we all know that, although on paper such directives may place the various countries of Europe on an equal footing, in practice, there are some countries whose regimes may be less onerous and therefore more acceptable to companies that are worried about such matters. I am not as convinced as some of my hon. Friends that that is a real danger. I agree that the possibility exists, but feel that the difference between the safety regime established under the Bill and the safety regimes of other countries would have to be very great to persuade companies to move offshore. Given that many countries are now moving to tighten their safety regimes, I doubt whether the differences would be sufficiently great for that situation to arise. It is, however, something which needs to be watched.

I am especially doubtful about the clause to which my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin) referred, which permits access to certain information on a selective basis; access must be given only to people who the Minister is satisfied are not connected with the drugs industry. In the age of photocopiers and faxes, not to mention telephoto lenses and listening devices, it is hard to imagine that those involved in a highly competitive industry will for long be denied information that is available to other people—no matter how that information might be transmitted. We need to examine more closely the practice of that clause, rather than confining ourselves to the theory behind it.

Having made those cautionary points, I come to my second reason for supporting the Bill. More and more medicines are available and more and more are prescribed. The public are more aware and better educated than ever before about medical matters. That is a good thing and, as has been said, the process is being encouraged by the Government: the public are being urged to look in detail to their own medical care. They are rightly entitled to information about the drugs that may be prescribed to them. There have been some tragic safety lapses. It is only right, therefore, that there should be an effective and credible system to protect the public which is not just thorough and fair but is clearly seen to be thorough and fair.

At present, the system is not seen to be thorough and fair because of the restrictions imposed under the Medicines Act 1968, some of which are clearly absurd. To my mind, the restriction on reporting by factory inspectors on quality control and hygiene in pharmaceutical manufacturing plants is quite unacceptable. Information concerning manufacturing units in Britain that is not available publicly in this country because of the 1968 Act is available in the United States of America, so any argument against making such information available falls at the first hurdle.

Hon. Members who have asked parliamentary questions on entirely innocuous matters have been given no information because of the requirements of the Act. For example, on 5 February 1987, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) asked about the location—only about the location—of overseas manufacturing sites of Generics UK Limited that had been inspected and was given the answer that the information was not available because of the requirements of the 1968 Act. The Bill corrects such problems and, at the same time, makes vital information available to doctors, patients and the public. With such information, they can play an active role in monitoring the system not only of drug safety but the drugs themselves. They can feed back vital information which can play an important part in establishing whether the drugs in use are safe. That would extend not simply the feeding of information but the safety of medicines generally.

1.15 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): On the face of it, this Bill looks like a good idea. However, on close investigation, it could prove more harmful than all the benefits it could give. It could have devastating effects on the pharmaceutical industry which, without doubt, is one of the United Kingdom's greatest success stories.

The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) proposed the Bill in a most reasonable way. He said that he expected the Committee to be able to provide the safeguards. However, people who are anxious about safeguards expect them to be better spelt out and agreed with the industry involved, rather than the matter being left to the speculative results of the Standing Committee.

As with many other Bills with good intentions, this Bill, which gives patients and doctors more information on which the safety of medicines will be judged, is flawed because it increases access to commercially confidential information in a way that no other country allows. It is a recipe for ensuring that pharmaceutical companies in the United Kingdom will seriously consider leaving this country. I know that that is not the wish of the Bill's sponsors, but they must recognise the side effects which it could produce.

The United Kingdom has always recognised intellectual property rights. The Bill undermines those rights; they could be swept away with one blow. Industries that have built up commercial know-how and expertise, and which

[Mr. Richard Alexander]

always believed that Britain would protect them, now find that properly patented rights are worthless. That is the danger with the Bill.

The sponsor of the Bill seems to recognise that both the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, to which reference has been made, and the National Office of Animal Health Ltd. think that the safeguards in the Bill are meaningless. Those organisations live with the facts of that daily. The piracy of patented goods and products is an international problem, as any owner of a genuine Rolex watch will soon tell us. The Bill will immediately make confidential secrets and know-how international property. If it is to see the light of day, it must contain more meaningful safeguards.

Pharmaceutical companies in the United Kingdom cannot introduce expensive research, knowing that the patent protection which existed previously will be worthless. The potential loss of employment in companies, universities and medical and veterinary schools will be considerable. People outside Britain sometimes think that we can never have a successful industry without a politician wanting to interfere with it, for very good reasons, and ruin it by a side wind.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) said that there is hope that the European Medicines Valuation Agency will be sited in the United Kingdom. There is expertise here on which it could draw. We could say goodbye to any such prospect if the Bill were passed.

Of course patients should receive more information about the benefits and risks of medicines prescribed to them. Patient information is growing in Britain and we all welcome that. Of course regulatory authorities must have access to the facts on which newly patented medicines are approved. But a Bill giving access to all safety, quality and efficacy data in support of a product licence application would be open to abuse and commercial exploitation by competitors.

Mr. Radice: It is not all the information. It is a summary of the information. It is the information provided by the licensing authority. While I have every sympathy with the anxieties of the industry, it does not help to exaggerate in the way that the hon. Gentleman has just done.

Mr. Alexander: I am not a spokesman for the industry. I have studied the Bill. I have no commercial interest to declare. The hon. Gentleman has made his points and I am making mine.

It is all very well to say that the information could not be passed on to a person with a commercial interest in that product. But how can anyone prevent the information from being passed on? That is the nub of the objections to the Bill. I understand that, apart from Denmark, no country has comparable legislation or proposes to introduce it.

As a result of the Bill, British and foreign-owned companies would no longer make product licence applications to the United Kingdom Medicines Control Agency. That is a genuine fear. They would be sensible to go elsewhere. Another of Britain's major industries would fade away as a result of well-meaning politicians interfering in matters about which industry knows best.

As our pharmaceutical industry obtains product licences in Britain, British patients are often the first to benefit from new medicines. That advantage would also be lost if the Bill proceeded. We could forget the prospect of foreign companies considering pharmaceutical research and production in Britain if they had not already obtained licences.

The industry produces a trade surplus of £1·2 billion for Britain. The Bill would put much of that at risk. The danger is as strong as that. The National Office of Animal Health Ltd. has described the Bill as

"well meaning but potentially damaging and dangerous".

For that reason, I cannot give it my support.

1.22 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I have listened to the debate with tremendous interest and sympathy. I congratulate the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) on having the spirit and enterprise to concentrate on removing secrecy where it is not needed. We have covered a tremendous amount of ground in that regard. The secrecy element of section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968 is clearly outdated.

In the anxiety to make good a weakness, there is a tremendous danger that we could throw out the baby with the bath water. As other hon. Members have said, we must be careful about hitting the pharmaceutical industry too hard and therefore killing the golden goose—if I may use two metaphors in a row. This is almost a case of overkill.

The United Kingdom pharmaceutical industry is the best in the world. It is the fourth largest exporter after Switzerland, Germany and the United States of America. It employs, directly and indirectly, more than 300,000 people. That is many jobs. The industry made about £550 million worth of capital investment in 1990. Four of the world's top-selling medicines were developed in Britain. The industry's exports are valued at nearly £3 billion, making it the second largest contributor to Britain's net balance of trade after power generating machinery.

In short, we owe the industry a debt for its research, investment and innovative science, which raises a valid question about the balance between the interests of customers, the consumers, patients, doctors and the industry. I acknowledge that the hon. Member for Durham, North and his sponsors recognise that that is a sensitive area which must be examined. The problems have been highlighted by my hon. Friends the Members for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin) and for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) and I make no apologies for repeating some of their concerns. We should consider the industry's fears that commercial interests could be adversely affected if it has to make all the data available, as set out in clause 4. It sounds reasonable enough to say that information on safety, quality and efficacy should be given, but that could cover a wealth of information which could be poached by an industrial rival, such as detailed results from clinical trials.

I should like to know what the hon. Member for Durham, North means by a "summary"—I think that that would allow abuses of the system. The Bill does not go far enough to safeguard commercial interests. Under the 1968 Act, volumes of information could be made publicly available because companies have freely submitted information in the knowledge that it would not be revealed to a competitor or a third party. As the data are so

detailed, it could be abused by potential counterfeitors. Companies might use the information as a basis for a fraudulent licence application, as has happened several times in the United States in recent months, where such material is available under freedom of information legislation. That might also happen here as the Bill could aid potential generic copyists here or abroad. An example of such a case in America was when Bolar and Vitarine were charged in 1990 with undercutting Smith, Kline and Beecham in a generic drug scandal. PharmaKinetics was charged with fraud in a similar case in 1991. Those are serious occupational hazards.

The safeguards in the Bill against data being used and exploited are flimsy and easily open to abuse. The Bill seeks to give access to all data to everyone except "a person with a commercial interest in the industry". Who will decide who is a suitable person? How does one prove that they are not? How can one assess someone's intentions? The Bill is fraught with dangers, which could result in legislation and plenty of work for the lawyers, but I am not sure that it would have much benefit for other people.

The Bill states that it will keep from the public only genuine trade secrets, such as techniques for manufacturing drugs, but people will have access to information on the rest of the trials submitted if it can be shown that they wish to further "public discussion" of the safety and efficacy of the drugs concerned. It would therefore be wise for the sponsors to stiffen the safeguards against the misuse and exploitation of such information.

We must bear in mind companies' reactions if they are faced with the almost crippling requirements in the Bill. They would take off elsewhere and that would be a great shame, as the industry has such high standards in this country. That would mean that our launch pad for the pharmaceutical industry would never be the same again.

The hon. Member for Durham, North mentioned parallel legislation in the pesticides industry. However, pesticides manufacturers are not subject to the same intensity of generic competition as the pharmaceutical industry, so it is not a real parallel.

In spirit, I welcome the proposed Bill, despite my remarks. Section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968 is a suitable case for treatment. There are benefits, but, as with all drugs, they must be taken with care.

1.29 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I congratulate the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) on introducing the Bill. He was characteristically well informed in his assessment of the Government's attitude. We do not object to the principle of the Bill.

First, may I give a little background to drug regulation in this country? The drug regulation system in the United Kingdom is one of the most stringent in the world and provides the nation with the reassurance that the medicines they take are safe, efficacious and of good quality. That is something we should be grateful for. But this has not always been so. The pharmaceutical market remained comparatively free from controls until the early 1960s, when the promotional claims for a specific drug were seen to be tragically inaccurate. The Medicines Act 1968 provided a framework for the regulation of the safety, quality and efficacy of all medicinal products and was designed to close regulatory loopholes that allowed a drug such as thalidomide to be given to women in early pregnancy, with consequences of which we are all sadly too well aware. The Act achieves its aim by a number of integrated controls but chiefly by means of a licensing system that grants, renews, refuses or revokes permission for the supply of medicinal products for human or animal consumption. Those controls include the manufacture, distribution, marketing and advertising of medicinal products.

However, medicines regulation is an area where there are extensive restrictions on the disclosure of information. Under section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968, the disclosure of information supplied to the licensing authority is generally forbidden. The only exception to that is where there is a "duty" to do so—either as part of the function of licensing or where public health or safety are at risk. That is because there is an underpinning common law obligation to respect the confidentiality of the information presented by companies seeking marketing authorisations. There is also a duty to maintain the anonymity of individuals whose identities may be known because they have taken part in clinical trials or post-marketing surveillance studies. The amendment to section 118 is at the heart of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Durham, North has already eloquently outlined the benefits of the Bill as he sees them, and I need not take up the House's time in repeating them. None the less, it is worth making it clear that the Government are committed to promoting greater openness in government. To make more information available to the public in the field of medicines and medicines control in general would no doubt contribute a positive step in that direction. I recognise that the Medicines Act has been regarded and quoted as one of the long-standing statutes that provide for little or no information to be provided publicly, and I am sure that it is right to view very positively the prospects for opening up to public scrutiny at least some of the information held by the United Kingdom Medicines Licensing Authority. I am sure that steps in that direction are, in principle, something which the Government would wish to consider very positively.

The Bill would require the licensing authories dealing with both human and veterinary medicines to publish detailed information about their decisions and make available on request full information about the safety, quality and efficacy of medicinal products. Again, I am sure that access to increased information would represent a very important contribution to public information in an area that impinges on the day-to-day lives of virtually every member of the community.

Information about the medicines that people are taking, their side effects, and warnings that need to be given are important pieces of information with which individuals can balance the risks against the benefits of medicines. The consumer safety information provided with applications for veterinary medicines for use in food-producing animals, the residues of which might enter the food chain, is also very important. In addition, and importantly, doctors and vets could obtain more information about the medicines that they prescribe to enable them, too, to learn more about the medicines, benefits and their potential side effects, so that they would be in a position to give fuller advice to their patients and users of animal medicines.

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

Access by the public to information on adverse drug reactions is also a potentially important development. Great care would need to be taken in ensuring that the data that are available to individual members of the public are fully validated, and presented in a balanced way which avoids the risk of unnecessary public anxieties—or, worse, patients being panicked into no longer taking medicines that are in fact remarkably safe and efficacious for them. Where animal medicines are involved, withholding them could lead to animal welfare risks. In addition to information on medicines, their benefits and their risks, the public could also benefit greatly from more informed discussion in the scientific and medical community and also by patient and consumer bodies of the advantages and risks of particular medicines. Again, that would contribute to ensuring that medicines are prescribed and used appropriately.

However, the issues are more complex than might at first be apparent. Against the advantages that greater freedom of information would bring, some of which I have just outlined, we also need to consider some potential disadvantages and dangers. Some of the proposals in the Bill as drafted may go further in providing information than is necessary to permit informed analysis of the medicines available. Clause 4, for example, would require all data files to be opened up.

We need to consider very carefully the additional burden that the proposals would put on the pharmaceutical industry and the very real risks that the Bill, as drafted, would run in endangering the information—some of which is commercially highly sensitive—that companies have lodged with the licensing authority. There is also the danger that the United Kingdom may get too far out of line and prejudice its position as the European Community develops systems for the future licensing and control of medicines.

As everyone knows, the pharmaceutical industry is one of the jewels in our trading crown. It is a buoyant industry. United Kingdom drug manufacturers have produced a large balance of trade surplus over the decades. The United Kingdom pharmaceutical industry is the third largest exporter of medicines in the world. In 1990, the value of exports topped £2·2 billion. However, these are difficult times for all manufacturers and I am concerned that at a time when we are determined to reduce the burden government places upon industry, the Bill could increase them. Not only would there be the additional cost of establishing the scheme, which would add significantly to the fees industry pays to license human medicines——

Mr. Couchman: I touched on that aspect during my speech. Is my hon. Friend saying that he expects that if the Bill reached the statute book the industry would have to pay for that imposition on it?

Mr. Sackville: That would be a matter for discussion. Either way, it would become a burden on industry—directly or indirectly.

There would also be the additional cost, which cannot be estimated but could be very significant, that industry and the Government would face in ensuring the security of commercially sensitive information. The threat of legal challenge should not be underestimated; nor should the level of open-ended legal costs. In that respect it is worth bearing in mind the experience in the United States, where every year three or four significant judicial reviews are undertaken in the medicines field alone.

As currently drafted, the Bill provides for, among other things, unlimited access to data. There are a number of exclusions, including most products that are under development—although not animal medicines being tested in field trials in food-producing animals. The industry has expressed concern that that will inhibit the research and development work necessary to bring new products on to the United Kingdom market. Details of the manufacturing process itself are also excluded. While those definitions may look straightforward, as has already been said, in practice a good deal of work and difficulty could be involved in identifying the data to be excluded. That could add significantly to burdens on the industry, and to the regulatory authority's costs, which in the United Kingdom, uniquely, are provided entirely by the industry through fees.

The provisions seek to prevent persons with a commercial interest from obtaining sight of data that has been classified as commercially sensitive would surely be open to abuse. The definition of "commercial interest" is so narrow that it would seem to enable those who are prepared to make a living out of buying and selling commercial information to do so, particularly in view of the potential benefits to be gained from obtaining a competitor's confidential data in a multi-million-pound industry.

Mr. Radice: Has the Minister any evidence that such practices have taken place under the pesticides regime?

Mr. Sackville: I have no specific information, but I can imagine the potential scope.

In the United States of America, for example—where freedom of information legislation exists—commercial interests have sprung up to provide competitors with data. The Americans—one can see why—do not think it feasible to try to limit either access to information for those with a commercial interest, or the uses to be made of the data. They take the view that the most practicable approach is to restrict the type of information to be made available, rather than trying—inevitably, unsuccessfully—to restrict the number of people with access, or the use to which it will be put without its being necessary for the competitors to disclose their interest. An obvious benefit of that approach is the reduction of the threat of the legal challenge, which is significant in any event even with those provisions in place.

I know that the industry supports, in principle, the right of patients and animal owners to be more fully informed about the benefits and risks of licensed medicines prescribed for them by their doctors and veterinary practitioners. Currently, the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry and the National Office of Animal Health make available data sheets in the form of compendiums, and I know that the Pharmaceutical Association of Great Britain is planning to do the same for non-prescription products. Although those publications are compiled specifically for prescribing practitioners and dispensing pharmacists, they are made available to public libraries and, on request, are sold to individual members of the public via bookshops.

On the human medicines side, I also know that the ABPI is committed to publishing in 1994 a compendium of "user-friendly" patient information leaflets designed essentially to meet the specific needs of patients. I am sure that that will provide very useful information, but although data sheets give a detailed description of the licensed medicine, they cannot give the reason why licensing decisions were taken, the risk/benefit ratio that has applied or data on adverse reactions. For veterinary medicines, the National Office of Animal Health has launched what it calls QEST—pronounced "quest"—initiative to provide user-friendly descriptions of each medicine, including a contribution from the Veterinary Medicines Directorate summarising the pre-licensing assessment.

It is vital to consider the European perspective. Although the European Commission has been asked to consider measures to improve public access to information by the end of 1993, it is becoming increasingly clear that other EC member states are showing little enthusiasm for more openness in the pharmaceutical field. It is argued that the Bill could put us out of step with our EC partners in terms of freedom of information. Even Denmark, which has had a freedom of information Act for some years, does not permit the disclosure of information that it considers to be commercially sensitive; nor does it open its data files to public scrutiny. I shall leave the hon. Member for Durham, North, with his enthusiasm for European matters, to say what he thinks of that, but the point that cannot be underestimated is the potential for United Kingdom applicant companies to choose not only to submit their product licence applications to one of the other European Community regulatory agencies but to make new investment decisions to the United Kingdom's disadvantage. They may not wait until the new EC proposals come into force in 1996.

The Government are committed to making more information available. We are conscious that medicines and medicines control affect the day-to-day lives of virtually everyone in this country and therefore seek to be as open as possible. The Medicines Act 1968 has been seen as providing a virtual block on the making available of relevant information, but that is not entirely true. For example, it provides no bar to the disclosure of information necessary to protect public and animal safety. It must be acknowledged, however that the pharmaceutical industry sends an enormous amount of commercially sensitive data to the licensing authority. This has been protected by the requirements of the Medicines Act and by the common law presumption that confidentiality would be maintained. Information on medicinal products is potentially highly sensitive commercially and there is a risk that without adequate safeguards the provisions of public information could be seriously abused.

The pharmaceutical industry is concerned about the commercial sensitivity of the data that it provides and about the additional burdens that the Bill could place on it and the extent to which it would be taking the United Kingdom out of line with other member states. This is a particularly crucial issue at a time when new EC licensing systems are in the process of being agreed, under which there will be a choice about where medicines licensing business is placed. We should not wish to see the position of the United Kingdom, as the licensing authority or a centre of pharmaceutical excellence, jeopardised.

I said that we do not object to the principles of the Bill. A number of its aspects on more freedom of information in the medicinal licensing field would be beneficial, but we would have difficulty in accepting a number of specific aspects in their present form.

1.47 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On behalf of the Opposition, I support the Bill. The previous Bill on which my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) and I worked together was on electricity privatisation, at the end of which he said that one day I would speak from the Dispatch Box. Neither of us thought that the first time that I would do so in this Parliament would be in support of his Bill. It gives me much pleasure to do so.

It is the second occasion in 24 hours that the Under-Secretary and I have faced each other. Yesterday morning, we clashed swords about district health authorities, but, having listened to him this afternoon, I can say that we share more areas of agreement than disagreement on this Bill.

A number of key factors lead the official Opposition, the Liberal party and some Conservative Members to support the Bill, although the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) adopted a toe-in-both camps approach. I look forward to discovering in Committee which camp she will finally jump into, although I already have a view about that. I shall deal briefly with the objections of the hon. Members for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin) and for Newark (Mr. Alexander), which fell into three general patterns. I do so because the Under-Secretary and I both represent constituencies in the region that is the heart of the pharmaceutical industry—the north-west. I am a member of the parliamentary pharmaceutical group and have been since I came to the House in 1987. Hon. Members on both sides of the House who support the Bill are not necessarily anti the industry. Indeed, a long-term supporter of the industry and of the development of its product base, its standing in the community and its ability to sell its products should support the Bill and its proposals on the availability of information.

The industry would do itself a disservice if it used the Bill to squeeze the Department and the Minister in its clashes over the pricing policy negotiations with the NHS. It would over-egg the pudding if it used the Bill as such a vehicle, and would also put out the wrong message both to the international community and the British public. For a long time, the British public has been a purchaser of pharmaceutical goods in their billions. That purchasing power of the NHS and the British public has been of the greatest benefit to the development of the industry in the United Kingdom.

Access to information has been denied by the draconian powers of section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968. As the hon. Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) said, that Act was passed by a Labour Government. I am trying to make amends for my forefathers. In the 1960s, 1970s and the early part of the 1980s, legislation from Governments of both parties leant towards curtailing the provision of information to the public. The Bill will enhance the ability of the British people to obtain information that will enable them to take decisions about their daily lives. Much of

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

British society is blighted by lack of information and secrecy about all aspects of life. That is another basic reason why the Bill should be given a fair wind.

The Bill will remove the blanket secrecy imposed by the pharmaceutical industry. Speeches in the debate have shown us what that has meant in respect of some of the difficulties that have arisen as a result of mistakes. Often, those mistakes have been identified through medical accidents that the provision of information would have prevented.

The Bill will immediately improve the quality of information provided to patients, the clients of doctors, to pharmacists and the veterinary profession. It will enable them to determine the potential risks and benefits of the medicines that we take or those given to animals that eventually end up in the human food chain. It will provide equality of access for national comparisons and for regulation. It is nonsense when United Kingdom companies have to produce information in the United States marketplace that can be looked at by their competitors but that information cannot be looked at by patients, doctors, vets and pharmacists in the United Kingdom. Even if he wished to give us that information, the Minister could not do so. The Bill would rectify that anomaly.

The Bill will improve the equality of access needed to monitor safety and efficacy. All those involved in the health business will want to retain that principle in the whole gamut of health care issues, including the prevention of sickness and the alleviation of illness. That is why it is vital that the Bill is supported not just on the Floor of the House today but in Committee. I hope that no one will table wrecking amendments aimed at preventing the Bill from becoming law. When we know that the Bill is right, we must not take steps in privacy in Committee to strangle the measure and prevent it from reaching the statute book.

The Bill will also develop more rational prescribing regimes and thus benefit doctors, pharmacists and the national health service. That is vital given that on 12 November 1992, the Government indicated in a press statement that negotiations are likely to commence in respect of further restrictions on drugs that doctors can prescribe and increased generic prescribing and negotiations with the industry in respect of the cost to be borne by the NHS for purchasing drugs from United Kingdom manufacturers.

If the Government intend to reduce the amount and type of drugs that general practitioners and pharmacists can prescribe, it is important that when GPs change prescribing patterns they have information to ensure that their decisions are professional in the sense that they can improve and monitor the drugs that they issue and that those drugs benefit the individual to whom they are prescribed.

Little or no academic work has been carried out by the Department of Health into the cost to the national health service of the side effect of drugs since the early 1960s. However, it is commonly accepted that hundreds of thousands of people receive corrective treatment and counselling to regulate the side effects of prescribed drugs. For many unfortunate citizens, that treatment and counselling will continue for many years.

The cost to the national health service is huge while so many of our fellow citizens are restricted by unnecessary and avoidable pain and suffering. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) supported that point and the Bill will seek to address that problem. It will not address the issue completely, but it will be a step on the preventive path to ensure that people are not prescribed individually or collectively drugs that are inappropriate to their condition and which, being inappropriate, cause them years of suffering thereafter. That is another important reason why the Bill should be supported.

I want now to consider the objections to the Bill. In some respects, the objections are legitimate in that no legislation that passes through this Parliament should fail to take account of the effects that it will have on those who need to operate within the constraints of that legislation. Legislation from this place should be the best possible legislation. However, it should not be part of the process of determining that legislation to be frightened off at the outset by interests which do not believe in providing the necessary information to promote the interests of patient care in the United Kingdom.

The objections raised today fell into three basic categories in respect of safeguards for the industry—intellectual property rights, patent product development and retail rights and research and development. All those are outwith the gambit of the Bill. They were all dealt with in two ways.

Intellectual property rights and patent product development and retail rights were dealt with exclusively in the previous Parliament when the Government, with the Opposition's support, provided additional safeguards to the United Kingdom pharmaceutical industry with the patent legislation. Although the industry still believes that the legislation is inadequate, we cannot emasculate this Bill to try to improve product and patent legislation.

If there are problems with patent legislation here, in Europe or in the international context, the matter should come back here and we will examine it and try to improve legislation to ensure that the United Kingdom-based industry is not placed in a difficult position because of trading relationships.

Research and development is very important in the north-west and much of the resources involved in research and development are spent in constituencies like mine. Much of those resources do not arise through a partnership with the Government. Through the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme, the Government take account of the cost of development and production of drugs.

If, in advance of the negotiations, the industry wants more from the negotiations than the Government, the industry should be honest enough to state that. The industry should tell the Government precisely why it believes that the Government are not going to offer a proper deal for its products. However, it must not try to emasculate the legislation in an attempt to put pressure on the Government to give it a far better deal in the negotiations which will soon take place on a price regulation scheme. It is important that the industry gets a return on research and development, but it is also important that it recognises the need to ensure safety and that access to information on product development is available to doctors, pharmacists and the general public.

Mr. Couchman: Does the hon. Gentleman not understand that there is a perception that the Bill is an attack on the industry and that perception will prejudice investment decisions for research and development facilities in this country? Companies from abroad have no need to put their facilities in this country—they have done so for very good reasons, but the Bill will prejudice that situation.

Mr. McCartney: The hon. Gentleman's fears are unfounded. First, as I said, information is already freely available to competitors in the United States and elsewhere. Secondly, companies base their research and development in this country because the product base is excellent and there are massive customers in the form of the national health service and the British public who buy off-the-shelf medicines. We also have a massive work force who are probably the most expert and skilled in Europe; indeed, we are internationally renowned for our skills. Such circumstances could not be replicated outside the United Kingdom, certainly not in the short term, let alone in the long term.

We have a partnership with the industry—it provides research and employment opportunities, but, in return, the United Kindom mark, in the form of the health service and the public, provides it with billions of pounds of resources and a product base which is safe, unlike many of its international markets which come and go. The House will do nothing to undermine the industry's ability to maintain its research and development projects.

The hon. Member for Gillingham is an adviser to Pfizers and also an adviser to the Gin and Vodka Association. I do not know whether that means one has to have a double gin or a bloody mary whenever one takes a tablet from Pfizers, but it is interesting that he is an adviser to the drink and drugs industries at the same time.

There is common ground between our parties on the European evaluation project—I do not want to embarrass the Under-Secretary by repeatedly citing our agreement on it. The Government support the project and a submission from the north-west of England for it to be situated in the Manchester conurbation. Much work has been done to ensure that the project comes to the United Kingdom. It has the full support of the pharmaceutical group in the House, of which I am a member.

The House can be assured that my party will do nothing during the passage of the Bill to undermine the industry's ability to ensure that the project comes to the United Kingdom and that the industry benefits in terms of inward investment and the possible by-product of the sales of products in markets outside the United Kingdom.

The Bill deals with the important consideration of confidentiality and tries to ensure that it is not destroyed and that the levels of disclosure of information are appropriate by ending the blanket secrecy of section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968. The Bill deals exclusively with those issues and does not cover wider issues such as the exclusion of information, which are currently protected by other legislation.

It was wrong of the industry in principle and in tactical terms to cause a misunderstanding about the type of information that the Bill will be able to unlock to the public and the medical profession. Although the notion has been rubbished in some quarters today, it is true that the Safety of Pesticides Regulations 1986 are not a model to compare with this legislation. Let us compare the bulk expenditure and resources of the pesticide industry with those of the pharmaceutical industry. The issue is not about the purchasing power of each industry. It is about the principle of how information is released in the public domain without damaging or destroying the confidentiality required in the development and research of products prior to distribution in the marketplace. It is not an issue determined by the size of the market. The issue is how the market is developed and how products reach the market. The regulations provide clear guidance—*[Interruption.]*

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) is making it clear that before I sit down, I must commend the Bill. The Bill requires further and adequate consideration, but its principles should commend it to the House. I hope that hon. Members who are worried about the Bill do not take their concerns to the extent of trying to wreck the Bill's chances in Committee. Those outside the House would misread such an action and it would do a disservice to the Government and to their attempts through the White Paper to improve information to patients, to doctors and to the wider community involved in health. For those reasons, I commend the Bill and I believe that it deserves a safe passage through Committee.

2.5 pm

Mr. Radice: This has been a debate with many constructive contributions. I congratulated my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) on his notable speech at the Dispatch Box. I also congratulate the Minister on a positive contribution on the subject which has helped to put the debate into balance.

There has been general support for the principle of the Bill in the debate—with one or two exceptions—in the sense that most hon. Members agree that section 118 is outdated. The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland)—I refer to her words in an effort to get her on my side—rightly said that section 118 was a suitable case for treatment.

Concerns have been expressed on behalf of the industry about the Bill's impact on it. It is true that the industry is very important—the jewel in our trading crown, as the Minister said. That is why we have gone to such lengths in the Bill to try to safeguard the legitimate commercial innterest of the industry. However, we are also concerned about the safety of medicines and about freedom of information.

What we have tried to do—I believe that we have done it—is not to open up commercial secrets to competitors, as one or two hon. Members have suggested. We are trying to be more open about the safety of medicines and about safety trials. That is the Bill's purpose. Those who say that the Bill will lead to a wholesale plundering of commercial property are exaggerating greatly.

We shall look at all the details of the Bill. We must also consider the Bill in the wider European context. I point out to the Minister that a number of countries are adopting more open systems, so there will be pressure at European level for our Government to take similar action. It would be nice if we were in the lead on one or two issues rather than always opting out or following behind.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I very much support the Bill, so my intervention is not hostile. My hon. Friend must be aware that many doctors have problems in prescribing because of the restrictions on the NHS

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

prescribing list. Will the Bill assist doctors in finding other medicines as a result of their having better descriptions of the contents of medicines?

Mr. Radice: I will not follow my hon. Friend exactly down that line. All I can say is that doctors will certainly have more information about the safety of drugs because they will be able to find out the reasons licensing authorities give for licensing and for withdrawing licences. That is the basic principle of the Bill.

Despite the criticisms, there is general agreement that section 118 of the 1968 Act is outdated. I even detect a consensus on the idea of publishing summary bases of approval.

If the Bill has faults, as I realise it may, I hope that they can be rectified in Committee. I hope that those who are interested will serve on the Committee so that we can build on the consensus that exists to produce legislation that has the support of the House and the general public and takes into account the legitimate concerns of the industry. I hope that the House will give the Bill its Second Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons) (Amendment) Bill

2.10 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I beg to move, That the Bill be read a Second time.

I am sorry to say that we have nearly run out of time. I shall therefore give the shortest possible introduction to the Bill, in the hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will do his best in the remaining few minutes to state the Government's case regarding its provisions.

I introduced the Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons) Act 1980—known by publicans as the "Ban the Thugs Bill"—in an endeavour to control unruly villains by excluding them from the pub in which they had misbehaved for a period of, say, one year. The idea was that, if they went into the same pub while the exclusion order was in force, they could be removed by the police.

I am afraid that, for a number of reasons, the implementation of the Act broke down. It was not mandatory on the magistrates—apparently the same probably applies in this case—to use an exclusion order. Although magistrates clerks would have had the information, magistrates themselves apparently lacked it, and there was certainly no overwhelming attempt by the courts to serve exclusion orders. A certain amount of extra paperwork was involved. There was also the question of identification of the person who had been excluded and, if he attended the public house again, of the additional effort that had to be put in by the police to expel or—if he was violent—arrest him.

In 1980, it seemed that the original Act was sufficient, but I am afraid that we have now moved into more violent times. Every day we read in our newspapers of publicans, their staff and their other customers landing in the middle of a fracas simply because the people responsible are uncontrolled.

Perhaps I should tell the House at this point that the National Licensed Victuallers Association is no longer a national organisation. Since the end of 1992 its membership has reverted to regional bodies. That will make it even more difficult for the Home Office to introduce further legislation affecting the vast number of licensed victuallers.

The Bill was drafted hastily. The then NLVA ran out of money to pay the drafting solicitor so I was put in the difficult position of having to try to complete, with the minimum of help, what had already been started. I know that I may not measure up to the high standards of the Home Office in these matters. Nevertheless, the Home Office has kindly said in a letter to me that it will make it possible to send a reminder to the courts, though not anything that will create a priority——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hill: I am sorry, but time is too short. The Home Office would send a circular to make the courts aware of what was already enacted in 1980 with regard to the identification of those who had been excluded from public houses. I understand that the police and the licensed trade are already co-operating with the courts.

At one time there was a fear that there would be a sort of rogues gallery in every pub. That was not my intention.

I wanted the photographs, if any, to be put in the staff room or private part of the public house. In that way the public house would not become a rogues gallery.

On the question of where we go from here, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will tell me shortly. I am worried about an article in *Justice of the Peace* on 27 January 1990 which gave the impression that the 1980 Act was ineffective. I am not sure that that is so. I know that the Lord Chancellor's Department finds it difficult to keep up-to-date figures on the number of exclusion orders which have been issued. Certainly, the emphasis is that, once a magistrate knows about his ability to serve an exclusion order, he is only too delighted to do so because some of the cases that come before the courts are horrifying.

Having said very little, I rely on the sympathy of the House to ensure that the subject does not simply die. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will help me with that.

2.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): At the outset, I thank my hon. Friend for his clear, helpful and succinct explanation of the background to his Bill and what it seeks to achieve. My hon. Friend is a distinguished parliamentarian and a friend of long standing of the licensed trade. He has made a distinguished contribution to that sector of the economy for many years.

My hon. Friend explained that his purpose in introducing the Bill is to make a number of amendments that have been requested by his friends in the licensed trade and which he and they consider would strengthen the existing provisions of the Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons) Act 1980. He also seeks to make it a more effective response to the problem of violence on licensed premises.

The 1980 Act, which my hon. Friend played such a significant part in placing on the statute book, gives the courts a particular power to use against anyone convicted of a criminal offence which occurred on licensed premises and involved the use, threat or offer of violence. At its discretion, and in addition to any other sentence it imposes, a court may make an order prohibiting such an offender from entering any licensed premises it chooses to specify for between three months and two years without the express consent of the licensee or his staff.

A person who enters licensed premises in breach of such an order commits a fresh criminal offence which is punishable by a fine of up to £1,000 or imprisonment of up to a month, or both. A licensee is entitled to expel such a person from his premises and may demand the assistance of the police to do so.

I turn now to the detailed provisions of my hon. Friend's Bill. Clause 1 requires a court to consider making an exclusion order in all appropriate cases. It will give a court the power to provide that an exclusion order should apply to all licensed premises within a specified area—most commonly a licensing district—and make it clear that a licensee's consent to an excluded person entering his premises will be effective only if it is given in full knowledge that the person involved was the subject of an exclusion order.

Originally, it was my hon. Friend's intention that his Bill should require a court to make an exclusion order, applying at least to the premises in which the offence occurred, in every case where someone was convicted of a relevant offence. That would have been wrong in principle. It must be for the courts alone to determine whether to make an exclusion order in a specific case in the light of all the circumstances of the offence and the information pertaining to the offender. My hon. Friend is now prepared only to require the courts to consider making an exclusion order in relevant cases. However, it is unclear what that would achieve in practice. Courts are already expected to consider all the sentencing options at their disposal for a particular offence before passing sentence and they have their clerks to advise them in such matters. Therefore, the new provision seems unnecessary.

Similarly, given that the 1980 Act already places no limit on the number of premises from which a court may exclude an offender, we see no pressing need to amend the statute to provide that offenders may be excluded from all licensed premises in a designated area. Neither are we persuaded that there is any particular pressing need for the consent provision in this Bill.

My hon. Friend and his supporters have told us that not all courts appear to be readily aware of their powers under the 1980 Act and that too little use is made of it generally. I can tell the House that, to meet those concerns, we are certainly prepared to consider a fresh reminder to the courts about the 1980 Act. However, I must stress that any such advice could take the form only of a reminder of the powers that that Act gives to the courts. We cannot give the courts directions as to the sentence to impose in any particular category of case, as I know that my hon. Friend will appreciate.

The main purpose of clause 2 is to make the simple breach of an exclusion order an arrestable offence. This is objectionable in principle and disproportionate to the mischief concerned. Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the power to arrest without warrant usually exists only where the maximum penalty for an offence is five years' imprisonment or more. The present maximum custodial penalty for simple non-compliance with an exclusion order is one month's imprisonment.

The position may, of course, be different if another offence is committed at the time in question or if the offender resists expulsion. The police might then be able to arrest the offender either on account of the other offence, or for obstructing a police officer in the execution of his duty. Any breach of the peace or public nuisance could also lead to an offender being arrested.

To make a simple breach of an exclusion order an arrestable offence would also be likely, in our view, to be of limited practical value. Since there would be no grounds on which an offender could be detained once he or she had arrived at the police station, they would normally quickly be charged and bailed and thus free, if they so chose, to return to the premises concerned almost immediately—back to the pub, as it were.

My hon. Friend and his supporters also believe, I understand, that to make a simple breach of an exclusion order arrestable would also, indirectly, bring about a greater number of prosecutions for breaches of such orders. This seems to us unlikely. The decision whether to prosecute an individual ultimately rests with the independent Crown prosecution service, rather than with the police.

As for clause 4, we do not believe that primary legislation, again including powers of arrest without

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

warrant, is necessary to establish a scheme to secure the attachment of the photographs of excluded persons to exclusion orders. We readily accept the argument that to do so would enable licensees and their staff, particularly those unconnected directly with the offence that led to the imposition of the order, better to identify any excluded persons who might enter their premises in breach of an order. But we believe that this objective can, broadly speaking, be achieved administratively and, as my hon. Friend and his supporters are aware, we have already given some consideration to the ways in which this might be done. It is a valuable point.

In this context, there is justifiable concern that any photographs which it may prove possible to provide to licensees for this purpose should be treated with due care and attention. They ought not, in our view, to be publicly displayed for all to see, including customers. We believe that the best way to tackle this issue is to bring together representatives of the police and the various licensed trade organisations to discuss drawing up a voluntary code of practice and this we intend to do. I am grateful that my hon. Friend has prompted the Government in that regard.

I recognise that most—but, I hope, not all—of what I have said will come as a disappointment to my hon. Friend and his supporters in the licensed trade. I have to tell the House, however, that successive Home Office Ministers have made clear their attitude to these particular proposals, both in letters and at meetings over a fairly long period. It is not that we in any way condone or take a soft attitude to violence on licensed premises. We view it very seriously indeed and would expect the courts to do the same. At the same time, however, we believe that the particular changes to the 1980 Act that the Bill seeks to introduce are, as I have explained to the House, either wrong in principle, simply unnecessary, or achievable by other means short of primary legislation.

2.24 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I am grateful that I managed to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. The news that I was to address the mother of Parliaments has obviously travelled widely, as shown by the prayer cards that have been put in position for these Friday debates.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) on his success in the ballot and on bringing the Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons) (Amendment) Bill to the House. He is a senior and respected Member and has a long success list under the private Members' Bill procedure. As he said, he was largely responsible for the Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons) Act 1980, which the Bill seeks to amend.

I am sure that we are also grateful that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, Home Department is on the Front Bench. He stated the Government's position with his usual clarity, which was well matched by the clarity and precision of the letters that he and his staff have sent to all his Back-Bench colleagues, which is a lesson to one or two, but I shall not say which one or two.

That is the end of the good news for a few minutes because all future legislation will be subject to a little-known procedure—the Roger Knapman reduction of legislation regulations. They have not gone through the House formally but will mean that every time 10 Bills reach the stage of Royal Assent we shall have a debate to decide which Bill is the best and should proceed. In the unlikely event of a Labour Government, it will not be 10 Bills but 100; where the European Parliament is concerned, it will have to be one in 10,000, but we can usually manage that in a normal day.

The Bill has serious subject matter. I do not doubt that in some areas there is violence on licensed premises and I imagine that that is true in Stroud, Southampton and many other parts of the country.

I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Test will agree that he is seeking to ensure—as we all are—that the police, publicans and everyone else is protected from violence in such circumstances. I was interested to read the article about my hon. Friend and his Bill in the *Morning Advertiser* on 16 December, although I am not a regular subscriber to that paper. As well as a description of the Bill, that issue contained two articles entitled, "Gun law anger" and "Pubs caught in orgy of terror". My hon. Friend therefore does the House, the public and the trade a service by introducing the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Minister has already made his views on the issues fairly clear, but I wonder whether he could agree with my first general point, that it is essentially for the courts alone to determine whether to make an exclusion order in any particular circumstance, because the circumstances of both the offence and of the offenders must vary from place to place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Test touched on two of the Bill's main amendments to the original Act. Am I right in thinking that the first amendment would require the courts to consider making an exclusion order in all relevant cases?

I look forward to studying the record because it is not yet clear to me what the new provision would achieve in practice. Am I right in thinking that the courts are already required to consider all sentencing options for an offence at their disposal before passing sentence?

Mr. Michael Stern: (Bristol, North-West): My hon. Friend has hit on a major concern about the drafting of the Bill, however laudable its general aim. If we start to tell courts to consider one sentencing option as opposed to another in a particular case, we shall inevitably face demands from pressure groups and interested bodies to consider other sentencing options in other cases or even the same case. I speak with the experience of being married to someone who has just gone through training as a magistrate. Ultimately, the courts will be presented with so many options in so many cases that we shall negate the entire procedure.

Mr. Knapman: As my hon. Friend lives in Bristol and I do not live far away, I hope to meet his wife, but not on the conclusion of her training. The point that he makes is precisely the one that I should have wished to make——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed upon Friday 29 January.

Private Members' Bills

EUROPEAN UNION (PUBLIC INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

OCCUPATIONAL PENSIONS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

DISABLED PERSONS (SERVICES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Second Reading what day? No day named.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN RETIREMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 March.

PRIVATISATION OF GIPSY SITES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker Second Reading what day? No day named.

GAS (EXEMPT SUPPLIES) BILL *[LORDS]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Duncan.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

SLAUGHTERHOUSES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

DAMAGES (SCOTLAND) (No. 2) BILL *[LORDS]*

Ordered,

That the Damages (Scotland) (No. 2) Bill *[Lords]*, now standing committed to a Committee of the whole House, be committed to a Standing Committee.—*[Mr. Wilson.]*

Private Nursery Schools

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

2.33 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I welcome this opportunity to bring to the attention of the House the difficulties that are experienced by tens of thousands of small children throughout the country, their parents, and those who run play groups and nursery schools. It could reasonably be said that I want to talk about kiddie care being clobbered by callous councils.

Since the Government introduced new regulations applying to the Children Act 1989, there has been chaos in many parts of the country in which decent, nice, friendly mums and housewives and others run facilities for young children—particularly those aged between three and five. That is largely a voluntary activity. If done privately, it is often run on a shoestring, with few resources, thanks to the good will and tender loving care of those who take an interest.

There are thousands of private schools, and since the regulations became effective in October 1991 they have driven many of the people who run such schools crazy. Some are being forced to close down because they cannot afford to meet the new regulations. I am not blaming the 1989 Act or even the Government—although they introduced the regulations that qualified that Act to some extent.

The Government introduced guidelines that local authorities were meant to adopt with discretion and common sense, but they provided an opportunity for many social service departments to go absolutely crazy in demanding standards that are completely inappropriate and much too expensive.

When it comes to dealing with young children, one would think that, above all, a delicate touch would be needed. Instead, the typically heavy hand of bureaucracy is swiping them around the head. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister issued a direction to local authorities to lay off and to apply the regulations more sensibly, but the evidence reaching me does not suggest that his advice is being taken.

I want to reinforce the view that my hon. Friend the Minister has already taken—that local authorities must be made to be sensible. The Government would do better to withdraw the regulations, on the ground that there was never any great need for them in the first place. Nowadays, there are no examples of great abuse. Where abuse occurs, unfortunately it is in public sector nurseries and other organisations, in which highly qualified people in regulated premises still manage to run schools badly. Given the size of the semi-voluntary industry, it is extraordinaty how few complaints are made.

All child minders, nurseries, and nursery schools were required to be registered before the regulations were introduced, but the regulations require them to pay a licensing fee of £100. That is a lot of money to three or four mothers who are not doing it for the cash. There is also a fee of £75 payable for an inspection according to a new set of guidelines. That is where the trouble starts.

It is a good example of people being forced to pay for the rope that is used to hang them. As the regulations arrived at town halls, social service department busybodies called on all the little schools—many of them in private

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homes and village halls—and laid down the law. It gives me no pleasure, although perhaps some pride, to remind the House that I warned of that as a member of the Committee that considered the regulations. To their credit, many women Labour Members, who understood the reality of the situation, joined in my criticisms. Now that the regulations have been introduced, we must do something about them.

There is a huge difference between facilities resourced by the public sector—where money is often regarded as a bottomless pit—and those that are run on a shoestring, on a non-profit making and informal basis, by the private sector.

As I have said, the cost of registration and inspection is enough to cause problems. If I want someone from the gas board to spend an hour in my house inspecting the cooker, I am charged £20; if my premises had to be inspected under these regulations, I would be charged £75. That is only the beginning, because it is almost inevitable that something will be found to be wrong with the average domestic premises used for such purposes.

The guidelines contain standards relating to the space allotted to each child. They also contain regulations concerning sanitary facilities, staff ratios and the fitness or otherwise of the women—they are mostly women—who run such schools. In charge of making the necessary judgments are social workers, many of whom have no relevant experience and, indeed, are not formally qualified themselves. That is wholly inappropriate.

There are howling discrepancies in the staffing ratios. If a school is described as a nursery, it must have a ratio of one member of staff to five children; if it is described as a nursery school, the prescribed ratio is one to 13. Schools given other descriptions are required to have different staff ratios. Yet all the children attending such institutions are in the same age group: they are between three and five years old. That is ridiculous.

Nearly all the women who run the schools are experienced parents. Almost all have no formal qualifications, but they are told that they must acquire such qualifications or pay a qualified person. Paying a qualified person will of course cost money, and the fees will therefore have to rise; hardship cases—parents who can barely afford to pay £5 a morning for their children to attend nursery school—will be worst hit. The schools are not backed by charitable institutions that will find the money for those hardship cases, and mothers who may have to pay for several small children are driven away.

If a woman is forced to take a training course, she may have to travel some distance from home one day a week. She may have children of her own whom she cannot leave; if she manages to attend such a course, she will be instructed by some young person who will give her a formal description of common-sense practices that are second nature to a mother who regularly deals with small children. Telling such women about toilet training and tying shoelaces is almost an insult. A wholly inappropriate set of qualifications are being applied where they are not needed—and gaining such qualifications costs money.

The number of staff can vary enormously; so can the sanitary facilities. Most of the schools are in private homes, which will have a normal-sized loo and washbasin and a towel on the wall. Many others are in church halls, which are designed largely for adult use: the same conditions will apply there. Then along comes an inspector from the social services department, demanding that mini-loos be installed. Mini-loos cost a fortune—about £150—while an ordinary toilet can be picked up for £25. Mini-loos must be specially plumbed; they must be accompanied by mini-handbasins, mini-clothes pegs and mini-hand dryers—the children are not allowed to share a hand towel. No such conditions apply when the children are in their own homes, and, indeed, it is surely sensible to train them to climb onto a box step to use the toilet. After all, that is what they do at home.

Those requirements are not obligatory. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will tell me that the authorities are being over-zealous, but the women who run the schools do not know that; they feel that such action is demanded of them, and it is often for that reason, if for no other, that they decide to stop running schools in the premises that they have been using.

Some schools are being told that their outside play areas are unsatisfactory. The regulations call for soft surfaces such as grass and for areas to be fenced and gated. It is absurd to say that all these measures must be enforced. Sometimes a village hall will be surrounded by tarmac, which is perfectly all right for childen to play on if they are supervised, but schools are being told that they must have a soft play area or the children cannot go outside. In the summer, they must remain indoors. Any sane and normal person would think that that is another ridiculous requirement.

Most of the schools are run by women who have plenty of common sense and will not subject the children to danger. Schools are often held in an old village hall and those who run them are being told to install double glazing with shatter-proof glass, extra double ceilings, special curtains and more exits. People say that these schools should be safe, but they have not been unsafe for 25 or 30 years and will not suddenly become unsafe overnight. There have been examples of the fire inspector declaring a hall to be perfectly adequate but the social services officer saying that it is not. The many regulations mean that little schools can no longer afford to charge a price that parents can afford.

I agree with the Minister that quality is important, but that does not necessarily mean qualifications. It might mean common sense, experience and tender loving care —those are the qualities necessary in education, particularly for small children. Someone who has diplomas and certificates can be a complete idiot. Ten qualified people looking after a dozen children can create more chaos than three or four experienced mothers who know how to handle children and have been doing so for a long time. I do not deny that we want quality, but it cannot necessarily be qualified formally.

I discussed the problem with the Child Care Association, a voluntary body to which many private sector schools belong. The southern counties directory of day nurseries runs to 500 pages, which shows the size of this voluntary industry: it is big business. The association's secretary, Susan Hays, has had meetings with Baroness Seear in the Lords, who takes an interest, and with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health who takes an interest and is a mother herself. The association wants to do all the right things. It is not asking to be let off the hook but to have the regulations withdrawn.

My complaint is about not the Children Act but about the additional regulations that are being handled so badly. Heather Armstrong has been running a school in Orsett in my constituency for about 20 years. It is held in a typical old church hall building about half the size of the Chamber. It has three exits and 25 children attend four mornings a week. Heather Armstrong has three helpers who have been there 12 years or more. Those four experienced women have no paper qualifications. Along comes the woman from social services, who tells them that all the door handles must be raised to a point where the children cannot possibly open the door and run out. She tells them to install minature loos for boys and girls, basins, hand driers and little pegs. The village hall will not put up the money, and if the school is to do so it will have to raise £3,000 or £4,000. It charges £5 a session and the women draw £10 a day. It is charged £9 a day for the use of the village hall. That is the financial level with which we are dealing. It allows people in the village who are not well off and who have many children to use those much-loved, much-respected and much-needed facilities.

Now, the school has been told that the village hall authorities cannot implement all the regulations—there are others involving heating, play facilities out of doors and so on—so it will have to leave. After 20 odd years of being there, the school is being thrown out. The only other village hall has windows that are floor to ceiling and if the school uses that hall, the windows will have to be replaced with "shatter-proof" glass or the children must be corralled inside a fence in the hall so that they are nowhere near the windows. The whole thing is absurd.

Here we have a village with a much-loved little school, supported by the local people, having to raise £30,000 or more to build a facility. That is nonsense. It is not good enough and I am sure that the Minister did not intend it, but those women are now being told that they are running the school illegally and are liable to prosecution. What kind of a country do we have when silly regulations turn decent people, doing a sensible and useful job, into criminals?

That is one example, but there are others. Another woman who runs a nice nursery school has been told that all her ceilings must be double plasterboarded. Again, the school is run in a little hall and she has been told that she must have new emergency lighting, which will require the rewiring of the whole building. She must have additional fire doors put in, although there are more than adequate exits already. She has to have more partitions put up between toilets and she has to put in extra toilets. All those requirements and more are being demanded before she can get her school approved under the new regulations and she says that she has had in the authorities, including the fire inspector, who says that the facilities are not required. In the end, she has put the matter in the hands of a solicitor.

A woman in Wallsend has applied for registration under the new regulations. She recently borrowed money from the bank to expand the facilities and to take in more children, but she now faces bankruptcy because she cannot do so. I could go on giving names and examples from all around the country of people being driven mad for trying to perform a useful service to our community.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has expressed his concern about regulations and his determination that unnecessary regulations should be done away with because of their effects. He says that he will not put up with it and I believe him. I understand that he is having a meeting at Chequers next weekend. He might like to invite me down there so that I can give him good examples of regulations going mad. That example will be top of my list. I know that I can rely on my hon. Friend the Minister to put the case for me, and to do something to rescue those admirable activities from the dead weight of the state. The effects will not stop unless he intervenes.

It is no good hoping that the councils will take a more lenient view—they will not. Give a bureaucrat a regulation and he will stick to it like a leech. He will keep applying that leech to that little body of people doing a useful job until it sucks them dry. I know that the Government want to expand such facilities, to get rid of unnecessary obstructions and to reduce the effect of regulations. Here is an excellent opportunity for them to make a start. By and large, the problem will be solved not by qualifications but by common sense. We must support those who are prepared to give their time to do a useful job and who should be supported all along the way.

2.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) on securing this debate on such an important subject in the very week the Department of Health published its further guidance on the Children Act 1989 and day care services. I greatly appreciate my hon. Friend's characteristically colourful approach to the subject and her descriptions of the problem. Although with perhaps just the occasional hint of over-statement, she made a very powerful case.

My hon. Friend's application for this Adjournment debate was made before we issued our circular, which includes many important messages including some relating directly to the concerns expressed so eloquently by my hon. Friend. Although the circular contains many important messages, I am not sure whether my hon. Friend has had a chance yet to read it from cover to cover. I can assure her that there are no references to such things as the need for soft furnishings or soft floor coverings in play areas. I am not sure where my hon. Friend obtained her information about that.

I am happy to follow up specific cases where it appears that local authorities have taken decisions that clearly contravene our guidance. Where schemes have been refused registration, I hope that they have exercised their opportunity under the legislation to appeal against the imposition of unreasonable requirements on registration.

It is true that we have become more concerned about the rigid and unhelpful way in which some local authorities have applied the Children Act 1989. As my hon. Friend has said, we are very proud of the enormous and vital contribution that the private and voluntary sectors make in providing child care. We are also very proud of the huge army of child minders. We want those services to flourish and grow. Everyone, including parents with working commitments, must see that they can take advantage of the growth in services.

We also want acceptable standards in the facilities, and that must involve some form of statutory regulation. However, as we have made clear, it must be regulation with a light touch. There must be a framework which encourages people to set up services. We are afraid that

[Mr. Tim Yeo]

some local authorities are creating too many bureaucratic hurdles which hinder expansion and may even reduce provision. We certainly do not want that to happen.

The legislation provides a sound basis for regulating day care services and it is possible for them to flourish against that background. However, the law perhaps enables some local authorities to be over-rigid and unhelpful. Although we do not believe that the law itself is unhelpful, we have revised the guidance that we issued only a year after the Children Act came into force.

The law requires local authorities to decide whether someone applying for registration is fit to look after children aged under eight and that their premises and equipment are also fit. That concept demands a flexible approach. It most emphatically does not prescribe qualifications or conditions that an applicant must meet before being registered. The Act does not prescribe standards for particular services.

We recommend that the staff-child ratios which are often quoted in connection with representations on such matters are the same for nursery schools as for maintained schools and classes. As my hon. Friend said, they are lower than those for day care facilities. They allow larger groupings than those recommended for day care settings because the hours of operation are shorter in a school than in a nursery, which may operate from 8 am to 6 pm.

The problem is that some—though not all—local authorities have been applying the Department's guidance too rigidly. That is clear from my correspondence. I have met people who run playgroups and day nurseries. I have also met child minders, and I have received representations from parents concerned about the possibility that their children might not have a service to attend. Some providers and child minders are apparently being told that they must spend a lot of money on new furniture or equipment, which might put them out of business. In some cases, the registration officer has not appeared to give proper recognition to the skill and experience of the person who has, sometimes for many years, offered a good service to children and a service with which parents were wholly satisfied.

We did not believe that the situation could be left to settle on its own because there was a risk that some services would close altogether—it was not merely a case of the teething problems that one would expect with new legislation. That is why we issued the circular.

The circular has five main messages. First, the Government wish to encourage an expansion of day care services of an acceptable standard. Secondly, the wording of the legislation presupposes that applicants will be granted registration unless the local authority has one or more positive reasons for refusing it. Thirdly, our guidance does not prescribe legally required standards for registration. Fourthly, the guidance draws attention to factors that local authorities need to consider when deciding about registration. Fifthly, local authorities should use their own perception of local need in addition to our guidance when deciding whether to register a particular facility. Finally, the circular states that the guidance has been applied over-strictly by some authorities, which have insisted on even higher standards than those suggested but without any justification for such a demand.

The key message in the circular is that the particular standards recommended in the Children Act guidance are not prescriptive. They are common factors which we think are relevant to deciding that someone is fit to look after young children. They should be used as points of reference, but not applied rigidly. We have reminded local authorities that registration should not be refused merely because, for example, there are not enough lavatories or because the facility does not comply in every respect with recommended space standards. Facilities that fail to meet those two requirements may in other respects be perfectly capable of providing an acceptable quality of care. I cannot stress to my hon. Friend too strongly that all local authorities must examine each case separately on its merits and must base decisions on an overall assessment of each application for registration.

As for private nursery schools, we have just issued a circular that tells local authorities to adopt a lighter touch to registration generally. It is fair for us now to wait and see how it works in practice before we rush to make further judgments about what may be needed.

The current problems with the registration of day care services was not caused, therefore, by the Children Act itself. What was wrong—I think that my hon. Friend was making the same point—was the way some local authorities applied the legislation and the use that they made of the guidance issued jointly by the Departments of Health and Education. The standards recommended in that guidance seem to have been treated as having a prescriptive force and to have been applied sometimes in an unhelpfully rigid manner. That does not help the expansion of day care services, which is what we want to achieve—with the voluntary and private sectors in the vanguard of that process—and it is especially unhelpful to the private day care sector, which we expected to be leading the expansion process.

The circular that we published on Monday this week will remove many of the difficulties experienced by my hon. Friend and her constituents and by people elsewhere in the country. Nevertheless, I undertake to keep a close watch on the issue, and we shall not hesitate to take further action against local authorities that continue to work in a rigid and unhelpful way.

On the narrower subject of private nursery schools and the Children Act, I will ensure that the House is kept informed about the discussions that we are having with the Department for Education about any appropriate changes that may be needed to the regulation of such schools.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 14th December 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Services Ombudsman

Mr. French: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many cases have been dealt with by the legal services ombudsman.

Mr. John M. Taylor: A full investigation has been conducted and a report issued in 823 cases. Of these 766 related to complaints about solicitors, 53 to complaints about barristers and four to complaints about licensed conveyancers. The legal services ombudsman has received a further 883 complaints relating to solicitors, of which 559 failed to meet the criteria for investigation, and 324 are either awaiting or under investigation. He has also received a further 58 complaints relating to barristers, of which 42 failed to meet the criteria and 16 are either awaiting or under investigation. In addition, the legal services ombudsman has received a further four complaints relating to licensed conveyancers, none of which met the criteria.

The legal services ombudsman has also investigated and reported on 560 cases which had been referred to the lay observer prior to 31 December 1990, but which had not been dealt with by him before the legal services ombudsman replaced him on 1 January 1991.

Mr. French: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many solicitors have been ordered to pay compensation as a result of intervention by the legal services ombudsman.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Since 1 January 1991, the legal services ombudsman has recommended that 50 solicitors should pay compensation to complainants. In addition, he has recommended that the Solicitors Complaints Bureau should pay compensation in 10 cases.

Mr. French: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many people have made a complaint to the legal services ombudsman in relation to their dealings with the Solicitors' Complaints Bureau.

Mr. John Mr. Taylor: The legal services ombudsman has received 1,649 cases relating to the way in which the Solicitors Complaints Bureau has dealt with complaints about solicitors.

Mr. French: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to increase funding to the office of the legal services ombudsman.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The allocation to the ombudsman's office for 1993-94, excluding the accommodation charge, will be approximately £547,000. The allocation for 1992-93, on a comparable basis, was approximately £508,000.

Poll Tax

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will issue guidance to magistrates on the use of their powers to require means inquiries or to waive charges in cases of hardship in cases relating to non-payment of poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Where an application has been made to commit a community charge defaulter to prison, magistrates are required to hold an inquiry into the debtor's means, and have the power to remit amounts due where a committal warrant is neither made nor its issue postponed. Guidance on the operation of the community charge regulations was issued to magistrates courts by the Home Office in 1990. It would not be right for me to seek to interfere in the way in which magistrates exercise their discretion in individual cases.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Sees and Titles

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he expects to conclude consultation with the Roman Catholic Church on the official recognition of territorial sees and titles;

(2) if he will give a summary of action taken on consultations following the Prime Minister's statement on 18 May, *Official Report*, columns *5-6*, about the consideration of official recognition of territorial sees and titles of the Roman Catholic Church;

(3) if he will make a statement on progress towards official recognition of territorial sees and titles of the Roman Catholic Church.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply he was given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 10 December, at columns *753-54*.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in opposition to official recognition of territorial sees and titles of the Roman Catholic Church.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This department has received two letters expressing concern about the possibility of greater recognition being afforded to Roman Catholic territorial sees and titles.

Catholic Bishops Conference

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he provided a substantive reply to the letters dated 16 July and 7 October from the Right Rev. Monsignor Philip Carroll, General Secretary of the Catholic Bishops Conference.

Mr. Charles Wardle: An interim reply was sent on 28 July. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to be in a position to respond to the substantive points raised in those letters very shortly.

Remand Contract Units

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what prisons other than Strangeways have been the subject of funding for the remand contract unit in his Department for market testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None at present, but we have already announced that new prisons will be opened up to competitive tender and further plans are being considered.

Prisoners

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he is taking to reduce the number of people in prison.

Mr. Jack: It is for the court to decide, within the framework provided by Parliament, whether a custodial sentence is appropriate in any individual case.

A new sentencing framework was created by the Criminal Justice Act 1991, which came into force on 1 October 1992. It is based on the clear proposition that the sentence passed should match the seriousness of the offence committed. It provides, therefore, that the use of custodial sentences should be confined to offences whose seriousness is such that only a custodial sentence can be justified and as a consequence enhances the role of non-custodial sentences. Pre-sentence reports are now mandatory in an increased range of cases, to ensure that courts receive relevant advice on the suitability of possible community sentences.

The range of community sentences available to the courts is expanded and strengthened by the Act; a probation order becomes for the first time a sentence of the court and a court may now impose a combination order involving both probation and community service.

National standards have also been introduced from 1 October to strengthen the effectiveness and consistency of supervision in the community by probation and social services, and to assure courts and the public as to the quality of that work. Central Government funding for the probation service has increased by over 25 per cent since 1990-91.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many sentenced offenders aged *(a)* under 21 years, *(b)* under 18 years and *(c)* under 17 years were held in prison service establishments at the end of September, October and November and on the most recent available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest readily available information is given in the table:

Population of sentenced young offenders in Prison Service establishments by age: August, September and October 1992

	Number of persons				
	Aged under 17	*Aged 17*	*Aged 18-20*	[1]*Aged 21*	*All young offenders*
31 August	262	450	3,979	877	5,568
30 September[2]	—	—	—	—	5,384
31 October[2]	—	—	—	—	5,113

[1] Prisoners aged 21 who have not been reclassified from young offenders to adults.
[2] An age breakdown is not yet available for these dates.

Immigration

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arriving persons at United Kingdom points of entry have been allowed to go to temporary addresses while their cases have been considered in each of the last five years and the current year to date; and in each year how many have absconded.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information available is given in the table.

Number of Passengers at United Kingdom ports of entry

	Passengers granted temporary admission	*Passengers who absconded*[1]
1988	8,692	401
1989	13,744	475
1990	15,357	561
1991	13,220	601
[2]1992	13,786	445

[1] These figures include passengers who abscond from the control area or from detention as well as those who abscond from temporary admission. Data on the latter are not separately available.
[2] January to October.

Mr. Peter Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of *(a)* immigrants and *(b)* refugees that have entered the United Kingdom and other EC member states in each year since 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on persons accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom in the years 1979-91 is given in tables 18 and 9 respectively of the 1987 and 1991 volumes of the annual Home Office Command Paper "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom"—Cm 415 and Cm 2063. These figures are of persons subject to immigration control who are granted indefinite leave to remain here. Comparable information for other EC countries is not available.

Information on the number of applications received for asylum in the United Kingdom in the years 1979-91 is given in tables 1 and 1.2 respectively of Home Office Statistical Bulletins "Refugee Statistics, United Kingdom 1989" and "Asylum Statistics, United Kingdom 1990-91"—issues 22/90 and 12/92. Available information on asylum applications to other EC member states is given in the table.

Copies of these publications are in the Library.

Number[1] of applications for asylum in certain member states of the European Community, by year of application, 1980 to 1991

Thousands

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*[2]
Belgium	2·7	2·4	3·1	2·9	3·7	5·3	7·7	6·0	5·1	8·1	13·0	15·2
Denmark	0·2	0·3	0·3	0·3	4·3	8·7	9·3	2·1	4·7	4·6	5·3	4·6
France	18·8	19·8	22·5	22·3	15·9	25·8	23·4	24·8	31·0	60·0	56·0	46·3

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*[2]
Germany	107·8	49·4	37·2	19·7	35·3	73·9	99·7	57·4	103·0	121·0	193·0	256·1
Greece	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	0·5	0·8	1·4	4·3	6·3	9·3	6·5	4·1	[4]—
Italy	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	3·1	4·5	5·4	6·5	11·0	1·3	2·2	4·7	27·0
Netherlands	1·3	0·8	1·2	2·0	2·6	5·7	5·9	14·0	7·5	14·0	21·2	21·6
Portugal	1·6	0·6	0·4	0·6	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·2	0·3	0·1	0·1	[4]—
Spain	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	1·4	1·1	2·3	2·8	3·7	4·5	4·0	8·6	8·0
United Kingdom[3]	2·4	2·4	4·2	4·3	4·2	6·2	5·7	5·9	5·7	16·8	30·3	44·8

[1] Figures include dependants except for the United Kingdom 1991 figure which excludes.
[2] Figures are provisional.
[3] The 1990 figure for the United Kingdom is likely to understate.
[4] Not available.

Juvenile Remand Prisoners

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juveniles were held on remand in prisons and remand centres at the end of September, October and November and on the most recent available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest readily available information is given in the table.

Population of unsentenced juveniles[1] in prison and remand centres June, July and August 1992

Month/dates	*Number of persons* *Untried*	*Convicted unsentenced*	*Total*
30 June	54	19	73
31 July	44	22	66
31 August	51	22	73

[1] Persons aged under 17.

Wolds Prison

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken at the Wolds remand prison to establish a bail information scheme on the lines laid down in the operating contract.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The post of bail information officer is expected to be filled early in 1993, and the scheme will be operational shortly afterwards.

Police Supernumerary Posts

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated cost of the supernumerary posts approved for the Thames Valley police for 1993-94; and how this cost will be met.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The cost of supernumerary police posts in the Thames Valley police is estimated by the force at £1·7 million for 1993-94. These posts will be funded in the usual way from specific grant paid by the Home Office and through the local authority funding mechanism.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the number of supernumerary posts allocated to each police force in England and Wales in each of the last five years, for the current year and for 1993-94 and the period for which they were allocated in each case;

(2) if he will list *(a)* the established number of posts of police officers and *(b)* the supernumerary posts he intends to permit in respect of each police force in England and Wales for (i) 1992 and (ii) 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I shall arrange for a written reply to be sent to the hon. Member.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the criteria on which he bases his judgment as to whether any police force should be allowed to carry any supernumerary posts.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Applications for sumpernumerary police posts are considered, with the advice of Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary, against the following criteria:—

(i) whether the posts are affordable within the Department's provision for Police Grant for the financial year in question;
(ii) whether they reflect Home Office policy objectives and initiatives:
(iii) whether they meet a temporary need.

All such posts are subject to review at regular intervals.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what costs will be met directly by his Department in respect of supernumerary posts for each police authority in England and Wales for 1993-94; and what percentage of the total costs this represents.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Specific grant at the usual rate of 51 per cent. is payable on these posts.

Police Numbers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names of all the police forces which have had an increase in police numbers for the coming year, giving the reasons in each case.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In light of the need to impose constraints on public expenditure, my right hon. and learned Friend has concluded that the costs of further increases in police numbers cannot be justified. He has therefore not approved an increase in establishment for any provincial force in 1993-94.

The establishment of the Metropolitan police will increase by 50 officers with effect from 1 April 1993. This increase was agreed to as part of the 1991 public expenditure settlement.

Rave Parties

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure the full recovery of policing costs for rave parties.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* I will write to the hon. Member.

Vehicle-related Projects

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 24 November, *Official Report*, column *548*, what was the total cost of each of the vehicle-related projects in each of the last five years and estimated for next year, and the percentage paid, or budgeted by the Home Office in each year and in each case.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* As indicated in my reply to the hon. Member on 26 October, at column *457*, the main programme of funding for motor projects began in 1989-90. The projects currently being funded were listed in my reply on 24 November, at columns *547-48*. The information requested in relation to motor projects in 1991-92 and 1992-93 is as follows:

Vehicle related projects funded under the probation supervision grants scheme in 1991-92 and 1992-93

1991-92

Area	*Title*	*Amount (£)*	*Percentage of total cost of project funded by HO under this scheme*
West Glamorgan	Guiding Hands Association	20,787	68
North Yorkshire	Croft Motor Trust	2,000	50
West Sussex	Car Offender Project Sussex Association for the Rehabilitation of offenders	20,830	100
South Glamorgan	Dragon Wheels	1,597	2
Shropshire	Telford Drive	21,679	50
Somerset[1]	Mendip Motor Project	5,650	50
West Yorkshire[1]	NACRO Focus	54,826	70
West Yorkshire[1]	Bradford Motor Education Project (Probation Supervision element)	4,158	100
Oxfordshire[1]	Trax-Oxfordshire Motor Project	3,293	53
Northumbria[1]	YMCA North Shields	9,422	65

[1]These projects received part of their grants in this financial year.

1992-93

Area	*Title*	*Amount (£)*	*Percentage of total cost of project funded by HO under this scheme*
West Glamorgan	Guiding Hands Association	20,492	68
North Yorkshire	Croft Motor Trust	2,100	50
West Sussex	Car Offender Project. Sussex Association for the Rehabilitation of offenders	28,973	100
South Glamorgan	Dragon Wheels	9,372	17
Shropshire	Telford Drive	21,679	50
Somerset	Mendip Motor Project	13,075	49
West Yorkshire	Bradford Motor Education Project (Probation Supervision element)	45,742	100
West Yorkshire[1]	Birstall Urban Motorcycle Project for Youth (BUMPY)	24,717	73
West Yorkshire	NACRO Focus	50,702	70
Avon	Bristol Wheels Project. Youth and Community Help Trust (YACHT)	66,555	41
Northumbria	Motorvatin Youth Project Axwell Park School Foundation	31,840	100
Northumbria	Motoring MACPI (Multi-agency Crime Prevention Initiative) Prudhoe Community Workshop Trust	8,500	65
Northumbria	YMCA North Shields	16,650	65
West Midlands[1]	Shard End Driver Training Project Shard End Community Project	13,737	52
Oxfordshire	Trax-Oxfordshire Motor Project	36,220	53
Essex[1]	Motor Project	36,200	100

[1]These projects received part of their grants in this financial year.

Vehicle related projects funded under the safer cities programme in 1991-92

Project	*Scheme*	*Amount (£)*	*Percentage of total cost of project funded by HO and this programme*
Bradford	Bradford Motor Education Project[1] (Crime Prevention Element)	16,500	50
Bradford	Keighley Motor Project	5,500	35
Bradford	Canterbury Motor Project	5,500	100
Bristol	Southmead Racing Bangers Project	12,000	100
Coventry	Henley Green Motorcycle Project	4,625	90
Hartlepool	Motor Cycle Project	2,000	60
Hull	Orchard Park Wheels Project—Summer 1991	750	100
Nottingham	Wheelbase	22,500	20
Salford	Swinton Karting Project	2,005	27
Salford	General Education in Automobile Responsibility in Salford	12,000	50
Sunderland	Town End Motor Project	8,950	43

Project	Scheme	Amount (£)	Percentage of total cost of project funded by HO and this programme
Sunderland	Warden Law Motor Sports Park	5,000	24
Wandsworth	Wandsworth Motor Project	20,000	20

Vehicle related projects funded under the safer cities programme in 1992-93[1]

Project	Scheme	Amount (£)	Percentage of total cost of project funded by HO and this programme
Bradford	*Bradford Motor Education Project*[2] *(Crime Prevention Element)*	*16,500*	*50*
Bradford	*Keighley Motor Project*	*16,500*	*100*
Bradford	*Canterbury Motor Project*	*16,500*	*100*
Coventry	*Henley Green Motorcycle Project*	*15,837*	*90*
Nottingham	*Wheelbase*	*7,500*	*12*

[1] On the basis of figures provided on the grant application form.
[2] Bradford Motor Education Project has two distinct elements; Probation Supervision element for which Home Office meets 100 per cent. of the cost; Crime Prevention element for which Home Office meets 50 per cent. of the cost. Each element is funded through different grant schemes.

Information on more general "vehicle-related" projects, or for previous years, could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Immigration (Local Government Grants)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reconsider his intention to reduce his contribution to the existing commitments under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 and to invite no new bids for 1993-94 and 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* The Government remain firmly committed to the reduction of racial disadvantage, and the section 11 grant continues to play a central role in our programme. But we regret that in the present difficult economic circumstances it is not possible to maintain the planned levels of section 11 grant or to consider bids for new projects in 1993-94 or 1994-95.

EDUCATION

Drugs Prevention Week

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what sums were expended by his Department in respect of European Drugs Prevention Week; and for what specific purposes.

Mr. Forth: The information is as follows:

	£000s
i. Printing and publication of revised and updated version of the booklet "Drug Misuse and the Young"	[1]17·1
ii. Regional conferences for 14 to 19 year olds on drug misuse	[1]33·0
iii. Contribution to cost of TACADE/Local Government Drugs Forum National Conference on "Drugs Prevention: The Contribution of Local Government"	0·8
Total	50·9

[1] Estimates.

Grants (Diploma Courses)

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether his Department will provide mandatory grants to assist students in Wales who have been accepted to study for diplomas in mechanical and electrical engineering, such as the higher national diploma.

Mr. Boswell: Under the Education Act 1962, mandatory awards are already available to eligible students on designated full-time or sandwich courses for the HND or DipHE at publicly-funded insitutions. Other full-time or sandwich diploma courses may be designated for mandatory awards if they are comparable to first degree courses. For diploma courses which are not designated, local education authorities have power to make discretionary awards.

Apostrophe (Correct Use)

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education at what age according to the provisions of the national curriculum children are expected to have attained the skill of the correct use of the apostrophe.

Mr. Forth: The curriculum order for English requires that pupils should learn about the use of the apostrophe between the ages of seven and 11. The order is currently under review, and one of the issues being addressed is how to define more clearly the grammatical knowledge which pupils must demonstrate in order to meet different levels of attainment.

Technology Schools Initiative

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will announce the results of the technology schools initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: We aim to announce the allocations to be made under the technology schools initiative very shortly, and will place this information in the Library. This

initiative has attracted great interest from schools and local authorities, and we have received many bids of high quality.

School Records

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the requirement arising from the Data Protection Act 1984 on the headteacher and governing body of a school to be separately registered with regard to the holding of personal information on computer records when only one registration was previously required for the county as a whole on behalf of all maintained schools; and what proposals he has to lessen the consequent expense.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* Data users for the purposes of the Data Protection Act are individuals or groups of people who control the contents and use of a set of personal data. Any such data controlled by school governing bodies and headteachers for the purposes of their respective statutory responsibilities, should be registered accordingly with the Data Protection Registrar. The cost of registration was one of a broad range of pressures on local education authorities that the Government took into account in fixing education standard spending for 1992-93.

PRIME MINISTER

Green Issues

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Prime Minister who in his Office has been appointed to oversee and develop green issues; how many civil servants have been allocated new or additional responsibilities to deal with the management and development of green issues; and what additional allocation of resources has been made to support programmes related to green issues in his Office.

The Prime Minister: Responsibility for overseeing and developing green issues in 10 Downing street rests with the Cabinet Office. The Green Minister for the Cabinet Office is the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science. Within the Cabinet Office three civil servants are currently involved with the management and development of green issues. Various officials in 10 Downing street also deal with green issues among others. Any expenditure is likely to be met from existing funding.

Ministers (Legal Costs)

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what guidance he will now give to all Ministers of the Crown as to how bills will be met on their behalf for legal services to forestall or correct misleading and inaccurate press stories which might do damage to a Minister's reputation and would therefore have a bearing on the performance of his public duties.

The Prime Minister: Guidance for Ministers already exists in relation to libel proceedings and I have no plans to issue further guidance at present.

Antarctica (Whale Sanctuary)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with his European Community partners about the establishment of a sanctuary for whales in the Antarctic; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The forum for discussion on this matter is the International Whaling Commission—IWC—of which the United Kingdom and six other Community countries—Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain—are members.

The French proposal for a whale sanctuary in the Antarctic, put to the IWC at its 44th meeting in Glasgow last June, is due for detailed consideration when the Commission next meets in Kyoto in May 1993. The United Kingdom was one of those countries which encouraged the IWC to undertake further work on this idea. We shall play a full part in its further consideration in liaison with those of our Community partners which are party to the IWC.

Gifts to Ministers

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister what is the current financial limit for gifts to Ministers.

The Prime Minister: The guidance covering gifts to Ministers is set out in "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he has taken to ensure that northern Somalia, Republic of Somaliland, is given help appropriate to its current situation in the light of the United Nations decision to support military intervention in Somalia.

The Prime Minister: We have stressed the need to take appropriate account of the north in discussions in the United Nations Security Council; in meetings with the United Nations Secretary General and the under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs; in discussions at the United Nations donors conference which took place last week in Addis Ababa; and in recent meetings my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker, the Minister for Overseas Development, has had with British non-governmental organisations working in Somalia.

Scott Inquiry

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Prime Minister which Government Department will publish the Scott inquiry report; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As I explained on 16 November at columns *74-75,* Lord Justice Scott will be entirely free to decide on the publication of his report and of the evidence he takes. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will be responsible for arranging publication of the report.

Civil List

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report,* columns *469-70,* on the civil list, whether the charges to the

Government Departments cover accommodation and support for security personnel; and how much is paid to the household's royal collection department and in respect of which building.

The Prime Minister: No charges are made to Government Departments in respect of accommodation and support for security personnel. The royal collection department pays charges for administration services but not for accommodation.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, columns *469-70*, on the civil list, what was the increase in charges paid by the Government in real terms in the period 1987-90; which Departments make the payments; and how much each pays.

The Prime Minister: There was no real-terms increase between 1988—first full year—and 1990 in charges to the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Transport, the Scottish Office and the Treasury. As was implied in my answer of 7 December, the proportion of the royal household's expenditure so recovered is marginal—about 3 per cent. Detailed numbers could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Disabled Employees

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage they are of the total work-force.

Mr. Key: The Department of National Heritage is still in the process of setting-up its personnel and other central management information systems and the information to answer this question is not yet centrally available.

Green Issues

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who in his Department has been appointed to oversee and develop green issues; how many civil servants have been allocated new or additional responsibilities to deal with the management and development of green issues; and what additional allocation of resources has been made to support programmes related to green issues in his Department.

Mr. Key: I am the Minister responsible for overseeing and developing green issues in the Department of National Heritage. The management and development of green issues is undertaken by the implementation and review division of the Department. A departmental energy efficiency officer and a departmental green contact have been appointed in this division. Although the Department has not specifically allocated additional resources to support programmes related to green issues, these officers will ensure that proper consideration is given to environmental and green issues in all aspects of the Department's policies.

National Lottery

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what estimate he has made of the effect of the receipt by charities of proceeds from the national lottery on the level of receipts by charities from other sources.

Mr. Brooke: The Government intend that proceeds from the national lottery should represent an additional source of money for charities and other beneficiaries: receipt of lottery moneys will not preclude charities from applying to other sources for funding. Indeed, it would be desirable for charities receiving money from the lottery to have a broad funding base.

Indian Subcontinent

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many people have *(a)* arrived in the United Kingdom on flights originating in the Indian subcontinent and *(b)* departed from the United Kingdom on flights whose terminal destination is the Indian subcontinent in each of the last 10 years and for each month of this year to date.

Mr. Key: I am informed by the Civil Aviation Authority that the latest available information is as shown in the table. Figures for the years before 1986 are not readily available.

Terminal passengers[1] on flights with origin or destination to and from the Indian sub-continent[2]

Year	*Arrivals*	*Departures*
1986	357,587	342,146
1987	379,946	373,690
1988	408,452	382,935
1989	432,313	431,286
1990	476,700	449,993
1991	386,083	353,119
1992:		
January	38,315	33,723
February	31,581	29,446
March	35,253	25,544
April	37,711	28,359
May	36,918	21,859
June	29,510	28,038
July	32,699	37,648
August	39,873	34,181
September	36,389	29,876

Source: CAA Airport Statistics.

[1] Passengers on scheduled and charter services, on both United Kingdom and foreign airlines, including non-revenue passengers. Includes all passengers on services with an origin or destination point in the Indian sub-continent irrespective of where they actually joined or left the aircraft.

[2] Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sir Lanka.

BBC Licence Fee

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what account he is taking in his consideration of the future of the BBC and the licence fee, of the position of pensioners in and out of sheltered accommodation with shared facilities and common boundaries paying for television licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: As I indicated in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) on

9 December, *Official Report*, column *683*, the Government have repeatedly made it clear that they have no plans to amend or extend the regulations governing the concessionary TV licence scheme, which were thoroughly overhauled in 1988 after long and careful consideration. The long-term future of the licence fee and the arrangements for paying it are issues to be considered in the debate about the renewal of the BBC's charter.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Disabled Employees

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage they are of the total work force.

Mr. Mates: As at 1 January 1992 there were 1,262 staff in the Northern Ireland civil service—4·3 per cent. of the service—who were registered or who self-reported a disability. A total of 1,232—4·2 per cent. of the service—were physically disabled and 290—0·1 per cent. of the service—were sensorily disabled. Each of these figures includes those who are both physically and sensorily disabled.

A survey carried out in 1990 showed that, in the small home civil service group in the Northern Ireland Office, nine staff—4·3 per cent. of the group—considered that they had a disability, all of whom were physically disabled.

Potatoes

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received about the present state of the ware and seed potato industry; what is the present state of the potato industry; how exceptional relevant weather conditions have been during the year; and if he will make a statement about proposals to support the potato industry in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: Representations have been received from two public representatives. Potato prices in Northern Ireland and throughout the European Community have been depressed as a result of increases in the area planted and yield of potatoes. While rainfall in the three months September to November has been below average there were no sustained dry spells. This resulted in difficult harvesting conditions. There are no plans to provide financial support for the potato industry in Northern Ireland.

NHS Surplus Properties

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what surplus properties were disposed of within the past 12 months by the Southern health and social services board; how much money was realised by the sales of these properties; and how much of this money was retained by the Department of Health and Social Services management executive.

Mr. Hanley: The following surplus properties in the Southern health and social services board have been disposed of during the current financial year:

Ballyards Castle Hospital, Armagh
Site at John Street, Rathfriland (3·75 acres)
Site at Armagh Road, Newry (2 acres)
40 Thornleigh, Shankill, Lurgan
Tandragee Health Clinic

The total realised is £343,112. This amount has been reallocated by the management executive to meet a number of high-priority pressures within the health and personal social services.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who have been empowered to issue public interest immunity certificates in Northern Ireland in relation to Court cases and coroners' inquests in each year since 1972.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Where public interest immunity has been claimed by the Crown in legal proceedings in Northern Ireland by way of a certificate, the certificate has been signed by a Minister in a position to assess the public interest asserted.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Citizens Charter

29. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to introduce an independent audit of the Government's citizens charter promises and of its performance against the targets set.

Mr. Waldegrave: The citizens charter calls for all public services to publish targets and performance against them. Overall progress is monitored by the Prime Minister at regular seminars, and published in reports such as the recent White Paper.

35. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received following the publication of the first annual report on the citizens charter.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have had a very encouraging response to the citizens charter report.

Market Testing

34. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the impact of recent European Court decisions on the future of market testing and compulsory competitive tendering, within the civil service.

Mr. Robert Jackson: There is nothing new in this. The fact is that both the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, and the Acquired Rights Directive which they implement in United Kingdom law, can already apply to transfers from the public to the private sector; and this has always been the case.

We are continuing with our programme to open services to competition across the public sector and advice will be taken on individual cases as necessary.

Charters (Sanctions)

36. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what general sanctions will apply when charters are broken; if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Jackson: All charters include information about what to do if things go wrong. Compensation may be payable in some cases, but in others alternative forms of redress may be more appropriate.

EC Officials

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 13 November, *Official Report*, column *1012*, how many officials are employed by the European Commission; and how many and what percentage in each grade are nationals of each EC member state.

Mr. Robert Jackson: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer of 1 December, at column *316*. The provision of detailed breakdowns of staffing figures is a matter for the European Community institutions.

Research

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what major international collaborative science programmes the United Kingdom research councils participate in.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom research councils participate in a wide range of internationally collaborative research, including laboratory twinnings, access to overseas facilities, and formal collaborative partnerships. The following list identifies internationally collaborative programmes or facilities with an annual subscription or other cost to councils of over £0·1 million.

Medical Research Council
European Molecular Biology Laboratory.
European Molecular Biology Conference.
International Agency for Research on Cancer.
Human Frontier Science Programme.

Natural Environment Research Council
World Ocean Circulation Experiment.
Earth Observation Satellite Programmes.
Ocean Drilling Program.

Science and Engineering Research Council
European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN).
Institut Laue-Langevin.
European Synchrotron Radiation Facility.
European Incoherent Scatter Facility.
European Space Agency (Space Science Programme).
Individual space projects eg Roentgen Satellite (ROSAT) Along Track Scanning Radiometer Infra-red Space Observatory.
Anglo-Australian Telescope.
Isaac Newton Group of Telescopes (La Palma).
James Clark Maxwell Telescope (Hawaii). EUROGAM (detector for nuclear physics experiments).
Hadron Electron Ring Accelerator (HERA).

All Research Councils
EC Framework Programmes.
European Science Foundation.
European Co-operation in Scientific and Technical Research Programme (COST).
NATO Science Programme (subscription paid by FCO).

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made on the fourth framework research and development programme.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The Commission submitted its working paper on the EC fourth research and development framework programme—FP4—to the Council of Ministers on 9 October, and Vice-President Pandolfi presented his ideas at the meeting of the Research Council on 12 October. EC Research Ministers had a wide ranging discussion on the subject at the meeting of the Research Council on 9 December. I expect the EC to make good progress on FP4 during 1993 as a result of these exchanges. A copy of the United Kingdom Government policy document setting out our views on the shape and content of FP4 has been placed in the Library.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Sarajevo

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on what action he is recommending be taken to assist non-governmental organisations to disburse to the citizens of Sarajevo medical and other humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Responsibility for co-ordinating the international community's response to the humanitarian crisis in Sarajevo and elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia rests with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Non-governmental organisations—NGOs—both international and indigenous, play an important part in that co-ordinated relief effort. We have provided significant resources to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees both directly, and via the European Community, in the form of cash, medical supplies, equipment and personnel, as well as providing grants to NGOs.

Bosnia

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government will now assign an aircraft for aid flights to Bosnia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The RAF has been flying into Bosnia since 3 July. When hostilities permit two or three sorties a day are flown to Sarajevo by RAF Hercules. A total of 3,400 tonnes have been delivered in this way by the United Kingdom so far.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when it is planned that the next UN aid convoy will reach the besieged enclave of Srebenica; and if it will be carrying medicines.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Decisions on where and when to operate UN aid convoys in Bosnia are taken in the field by the staff of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the UN protection force. In doing so, they have to take into account the local needs, security situation, weather conditions and the availability of suitable vehicles. Now that the UNHCR staff have gained access to Srebenica they are better able to take account of local needs, including medical supplies, in planning future convoys.

Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress he has made since September in providing a telephone link and other communications facilities in Hargeisa, Berbera and the north of Somalia generally, Republic of Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Earlier this year the BBC world service in Somalia increased its output to broadcast

missing persons letters for an hour over each week to the whole of Somalia including the north. On 12 December in recognition of the crisis in Somalia it began a new dawn service bringing local and international news including news of Somali matters at the UN to the whole country.

We have provided an expert to investigage how we may assist with the improvement of communications in the area and to advise Save the Children Fund (UK) on the development of its communications links throughout the country. We are considering his recommendations.

EC Overseas Development Assistance

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what EC overseas development assistance funds are used for military expenditure.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Under OECD rules, military expenditure does not qualify as overseas development assistance. EC Foreign Ministers agreed exceptionally in October, in view of the urgent need for a secure environment in Somalia for delivery of aid, to offer up to 20 million ecu from European development fund resources to support the Belgian contingent then being considered as part of United Nations Operations in Somalia.

Tropical Rain Forests

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress made on the protection and designation of tropical rain forests and the role of the European Community during the United Kingdom's presidency of the European Commission.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 9 December 1992]:* Under our presidency we have been working with member states for the Sustainable Development Commission to have a role in taking forward the forests principles agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. We have also worked closely with our European Community colleagues on the continuing reform of the tropical forestry action programme and the renegotiation of the International Tropical Timber Agreement.

Kenya

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Kenya concerning the treatment of Somalian refugees.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development discussed the plight of Somali refugees in Kenya, when she met President Moi in September. This year Britain has provided assistance worth £1 million to help the refugees.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bangladesh

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Bangladesh concerning its treatment of Burmese refugees.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have repeatedly urged the Bangladeshi authorities to co-operate with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other non-governmental organisations in looking after the refugees until they genuinely and voluntarily wish to return home.

Turkey

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Turkish authorities concerning the killing of Kurdish journalists in south-east Turkey.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have made no representations to the Turkish Government on this issue.

We welcome Prime Minister Demirel's recognition of a Kurdish identity and his Government's intentions to make human rights improvement a top priority as well as the introduction of a programme of democratic and human rights reform.

Hong Kong

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he first informed the Chinese Government of his wish to see an increase in the number of seats in the Legislative Council of Hong Kong beyond that envisaged in the Basic Law.

Mr. Goodlad: The point was made repeatedly to the Chinese Government during the drafting of the Basic Law as the exchanges with the Chinese during 1990—recently made public—show. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told the House on 16 February 1990 that we would continue to press the case for a faster pace of democracy.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he was first informed by the Chinese Government of their view that the Basic Law cannot be changed; and what was his response.

Mr. Goodlad: The Chinese Government made a public statement at the end of May this year that, in their view, the Basic Law, including provisions for the first special administrative region legislature, cannot be changed before 1997. Our position on the pace of democracy for Hong Kong was made clear once again to the Chinese side during my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's meeting with the Chinese Foreign Minister in New York on 25 September this year. While we would still wish to see more directly elected seats in the Legislative Council, the Governor of Hong Kong has made alternative proposals which are entirely within the terms of the joint declaration and Basic Law.

Cambodia

Mr. Mullins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made following the recent Thai ban on United Nations flights from Cambodia to the Government of Thailand regarding the need for Thailand to co-operate with United Nations sanctions against the Khmer Rouge.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Nations Security Council on 30 November adopted resolution 792, which calls, inter alia, on all parties to prevent the supply of petroleum

products to any Cambodian party not complying with the military provisions of the Paris agreements and to respect the moratorium on the export of logs from Cambodia agreed by the Supreme National Council of Cambodia on 22 September. The United Nations Secretariat in New York and the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia—UNTAC—are discussing implementation of this resolution as it affects Thailand. This is being reinfored in bilateral contacts.

Korea

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government support the peaceful and democratic reunification of Korea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We have consistently supported efforts to bring about a peaceful solution on the Korean peninsula. It is encouraging that talks have been taking place on a number of levels this year between South and North Korea. Much remains to be done, but we hope that the next round of prime ministerial talks scheduled for 21 to 24 December will go ahead and lead to further progress.

We also hope that bilateral nuclear inspections can get underway without further delay. That would be an important confidence-building measure.

China

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in the People's Republic of China concerning human rights.

Mr. Goodlad: We remain very concerned by reports of human rights abuses in China, and Ministers have made our concerns clear to the Chinese at a high level both in public and private on many occasions. My right hon., noble and learned Friend Lord Howe, who has just returned from China, will in due course submit a formal report on his visit to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. That report will be placed in the Library of this House.

Bosnia

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column *452*, when he expects to be able to supply the information on visa applications from Bosnian citizens offered in his answer.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: For the period 9 November to 4 December, the first month's operation of the visa requirement for nationals of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 663 visa applications for the United Kingdom, for both visits and settlement, were received at our posts at Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Rome, Milan, Dusseldorf, Paris and Sofia. A total of 182 applications were refused. This figure includes the 166 visa applicants in the convoy arranged by the ALERT group whose applications were refused by the Home Office.

I regret it is not possible to identify the number of visa applications that have been refused from applicants with relatives in the United Kingdom. The method of recording statistics at post worldwide does not allow us to give the precise detail which the hon. Member has requested without disproportionate expense.

Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list every visit made *(a)* to Hargeisa, *(b)* to any other part of northern Somalia (Republic of Somaliland), *(c)* Mogadishu and *(d)* any other part of Somalia outside the Republic of Somaliland by (i) Ministers and (ii) official representatives of the British Government in each of the last 24 months.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The following is the information requested:

Visits to North-West Somalia: Ministers
No Ministers have visited in the last 24 months.

Visits to North-West Somalia: Officials
February 1992
Head of East African Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and a member of the British Embassy, Addis Ababa to Hargeisa, Boroma and Berbera.
November 1992
HM Ambassador, Addis Ababa to Hargeisa, Berbera, Sheikh and Burao.
Assistant Head of African Department (Equatorial) Foreign and Commonwealth Office and a member of the British Embassy, Addis Ababa to Hargeisa and Berbera.

Visits to rest of Somalia: Ministers
September 1992
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to Mogadishu.
Baroness Chalker to Mogadishu and Hoddur.

Visits to rest of Somalia: Officials
August 1992
Member of the British High Commission, Nairobi Mogadishu and Hoddur.
September 1992
Officials accompanying Secretary of State to Mogadishu.
Officials accompanying Baroness Chalker to Mogadishu and Hoddur.
October 1992
Member of the British High Commission, Nairobi, to Mogadishu.

Kenya

Mr. Duncan-Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the prospects for free and fair elections in Kenya.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We warmly welcome the Kenyan Government's expressed commitment to free and fair elections, to which end we have given considerable practical assistance. We have provided all the ballot boxes, trained key electoral officials, supplied some office equipment to the electoral commission, and have made a significant financial contribution through the Commonwealth Secretariat to the Commonwealth observer team. We are also supporting local projects to educate the electorate and monitor election media coverage. The total cost of our assistance is now over £800,000.

While there have been improvements in recent weeks, we remain concerned about the evenness of the playing field. We continue to urge the Kenyan Government to be more open, establish a better dialogue with the opposition, allow all parties unhindered campaigning in all parts of the

country, ensure freedom of the press and reasonable access by opposition parties to the broadcast media. We are making the same points about openness and transparency to the electoral commission. Electoral observers will base their assessment not just on the events of polling day but on the conduct of the whole electoral process.

Above all, it is essential that all concerned should avoid the use or encouragement of violence or intimidation before, during and after the elections.

Tibet

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has received from the Chinese authorities to the draft resolution on the situation in Tibet put forward at the UN Commission on Human Rights.

Mr. Goodlad: We, together with our EC partners, took the lead in promoting the draft of a resolution on the human rights situation in China including Tibet at the UN Commission on Human Rights earlier this year. The draft resolution referred to a resolution on Tibet adopted in the UN sub-commission in August 1991. The Chinese authorities opposed the draft resolution, which was subsequently defeated by a procedural motion.

Radiation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the benefits to the United Kingdom of the resources committed to the joint research centres and European Atomic Energy Community for research into radiation risk and protection since 1973.

Mr. Robert Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

EC programmes on radiation protection research, in particular those funded by shared cost actions, have been of great scientific value to the United Kingdom. Research undertaken by the EC is helping to provide the scientific base for an objective assessment of the effects and risks of radiation from natural, medical and industrial sources, and has led to the development of methods to optimise radiation protection. Research within the United Kingdom has also benefited: work has been completed through EC programmes that would not have been possible for any one member state to conduct alone. The United Kingdom has consistently gained more in contracts than its share of the programmes' costs.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the contribution made to the Iraq nuclear weapons programme of the technical aid provided by the United Kingdom to Iraq via the Baghdad pact nuclear training centre since 1962.

Mr. Heseltine: It is my understanding from the limited information available that Iraq ceased to participate in the activities of the training centre when it was transferred to Tehran following the revolution in Iraq in 1959.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make available to Lord Justice Scott's inquiry all papers, records and evidence assembled by his inspectors in the course of their inquiries into Astra Holdings plc.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: All relevant Government papers will be made available to Lord Justice Scott on request.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent, *Official Report*, 9 November, column *589*, for what reasons confidentiality was requested by Her Majesty's Government to the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq in the provision of information of possible involvement of United Kingdom companies in the Iraq nuclear programme.

Mr. Needham: Lack of confidentialilty would hamper and could prejudice investigations into any evidence of wrong-doing or breaches of export controls.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what information his Department's export control organisation has in regard to the compliance by United Kingdom-based or registered companies with the Export of Goods (Control) (Iraq and Kuwait Sanctions) Order 1990, date 8 August 1990;

(2) what investigations his Department has made to verify the compliance of United Kingdom exporters with European Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2340/90 banning trade with Iraq.

Mr. Needham: United Nations Security Council resolution 661 was adopted on 6 August 1990 and imposed a total economic embargo against Iraq following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The Government have no evidence of any major breaches of the Iraq sanctions by British exporters or businesses. Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have successfully prosecuted two businesses for minor breaches of sanctions involving the export to Iraq of office furniture and goods to an Iraqi canning factory.

If the hon. Member has any evidence of a contravention of sanctions it shall be urgently investigated, and if appropriate would be a matter for the courts.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he possesses on the role of *(a)* Apremont S.A. Company of Panama, *(b)* Muiden Chemie Company of the Netherlands, *(c)* GEA Company, Remie Ltd. and Erber Ltd. of Italy, *(d)* SPEL Company of Portugal and *(e)* Banco Nazionale Del Lavoro in facilitating the export of United Kingdom origin military equipment to Iraq since 1985.

Mr. Needham: Matters relating to the export of defence equipment from the United Kingdom to Iraq are for Lord Justice Scott's inquiry to consider.

Export Licences

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will now make it his policy to permit public disclosure of information contained in section C6 of the export licence application form, where the prospective export is deemed to be a dual-use military-sensitive technology.

Mr. Needham: No. I see no reason to change the policy followed by successive Administrations that details of individual export licence applications should not be made public.

Arms Embargos

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which countries have been subject to United Kingdom's arms embargos over the last 20 years; and for which exact periods.

Mr. Needham: I will write to the hon. Gentleman with the details.

Japan (Energy Talks)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the matters discussed in the bilateral meeting between the European Community and Japan on energy matters held at the end of October.

Mr. Eggar: The meeting on 30 October was between directorate general XVII (energy) of the European Commission and the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry. I understand that they discussed a broad range of energy issues.

Coal Industry

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will await the publication of the Trade and Industry Select Committee's report into the future of the coal industry before publishing the results of his departmental inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The results of the Government's coal review will be published in a White Paper early in the new year. The timing of publication of the Trade and Industry Select Committee's report is a matter for the Committee, but I believe that it will be helpful to the House if it is available when the House debates the White Paper.

Nuclear Electric

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures he has taken and plans to take as part of the energy review to assess accurately Nuclear Electric's economic case for extending the life of the seven Magnox stations; which outside consultants are being used by his Department for this purpose; how many civil service personnel-hours will be required to assess Nuclear Electric's submission to his Department's inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The coal review is considering the implications of the statutory obligation on electricity suppliers to purchase non-fossil power, including that from nuclear sources. Ernst and Young has been appointed to assist the coal review team in

(i) the assessment and analysis of information provided by Nuclear Electric plc and verified by Nuclear Electric's auditors, BDO Binder Hamlyn, on the costs of the company's Magnox stations with particular emphasis on the avoidable costs of premature closure, and on the cash flow and accounting implications;

(ii) the examination of information provided by Nuclear Electric, to the DTI and the Select Committee in respect of its actual and projected receipts of the fossil fuel levy.

The coal review team will be considering carefully the evidence provided by Nuclear Electric and the results of this work.

Nuclear Levy

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the purpose of the nuclear levy.

Mr. Eggar: The purpose of the fossil fuel levy is to finance the above-market element of the price paid by the regional electricity companies for electricity purchased under qualifying arrangements within the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will estimate the average avoidable costs for each kilowatt hour of generating electricity by Magnox, ACR, Sizewell B, United Kingdom coal, imported coal and CCGT.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is assessing the relative costs of coal-fired and other sources of generation as part of the Government's coal review.

Overseas Contracts

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the estimated value of contracts between United Kingdom industry and *(a)* Iraq, *(b)* Iran and *(c)* Indonesia since the installation of the current regimes in each country.

Mr. Needham: Figures for contract values are unobtainable. The value of United Kingdom exports of goods to the countries in question was as follows. Iraq from 1979 to October 1992 £5,092·2 million, Iran from 1989 to October 1992 £1,563·1 million, Indonesia from 1966 to October 1992 £4,374·1 million. Figures for 1965 are not available.

Economic Trends

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what forecast he has made of trends in the economy in the south-east region between 1993 and 1998.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department does not forecast future trends in regional economic performance.

Power Station, Wirral

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the applications currently before his Department or the Office of Electricity Regulation to build a gas power station on the Wirral; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Micro-wave Transceiver

Mr. Purchase: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what research he has commissioned into the biological effect on people from micro-wave transceivers of the type currently being positioned on the top of high-rise council flats in Wolverhampton; and what assessment he has made of whether the equipment which his Department has licensed companies to install meets the appropriate British and international standards necessary to safeguard residents from any harmful effects.

Mr. Leigh: The Radiocommunications Agency of the Department of Trade and Industry monitors work undertaken, in the United Kingdom and abroad, on the biological effects of electromagnetic radiation. The agency's memorandum entitled "Safety Precautions Relating to Intense Radio Frequency Radiation"—RA 119—refers to the exposure levels recommended by the Medical Research Council and is available to manufacturers, owners, employers and operators who have a responsibility in relation to the safe use of radio.

Vietnam

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to review the ban on ECGD cover for trade with Vietnam; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: There is no ban on ECGD cover for Vietnam. The availability of such cover for any market is dependent upon the ECGD's assessment of the risks and payment performance.

In the case of Vietnam, the ECGD will consider United Kingdom investments. However, cover for medium and long term trade credits was withdrawn following defaults on payment. Unfortunately these remain unremedied, but the ECGD will continue to watch developments closely with a view to resuming cover when conditions are sufficiently improved.

Rural Post Offices

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes are envisaged in the provision of Government services over the counters of post offices in Wales in the light of the recent statement by the Post Office; and what representations have been made about the needs of rural Wales in this regard.

Mr. Leigh: It is not envisaged that any changes in the provision of Government services over the counters of post offices in Wales will result from the restructuring of Post Office Counters Ltd. which was announced on 3 December. No representations have been received about the needs of rural Wales in the specific context of this restructuring which will have no effect on the number on staffing of individual post offices.

Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Hague: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of the small firms loan guarantee scheme.

Mr. Heseltine: I am today announcing a number of changes to the small firms loan guarantee scheme which will focus lending more closely on those businesses which will most benefit from this type of support.

First, in order to give greater assistance to businesses in our inner cities I will be extending and further enhancing the scheme's inner city variant which already provides additional benefits over the main scheme. From April next year the special terms will be available to eligible small firms in successful city challenge areas as well as those in inner city task force areas. I can announce further help for firms in such areas. The premium paid by firms to the Government for the guarantee will be halved from the current level of 2 per cent. of the guaranteed portion of the loan to 1 per cent.

These changes will extend the special terms to many more potential borrowers and will enable them to borrow more cheaply.

Two further changes will be made to the scheme overall, also to take effect from April next year. These are:

(i) the introduction of a minimum lending level of £5,000 for support under the scheme, except within those areas eligible for the special inner city terms;

(ii) the exclusion of a number of local services where the support for firms has previously been largely at the expense of displacement of business from other firms in the locality. The sectors affected are retaling, hairdressing, taxi and cab hire and motor vehicle repair.

In the longer term, I will be exploring how the scheme could further be improved by linking loans with appropriate help, advice and training in business skills.

These changes will help ensure that Government support under the scheme which amounts to £177 million since it began in 1981 and enabled £980 million to be lent to over 32,000 small firms, remains focused on those areas where the maximum benefit can be obtained for businesses and the taxpayer.

Machine Tools Exports

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total amount of machine tools exported to *(a)* Iraq and *(b)* Iran in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 8 December 1992]:* The figures for 1991 were as follows:

Iraq—nil.
Iran—£9·5 million.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list in percentage change order the 50 classifications of manufactured goods which have shown greatest imports growth since 1979, and the balance of trade deficit or surplus on each in 1979 and currently.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* The standard international trade classification was revised in 1988. It is, therefore, not possible to compare current data with data prior to 1988 at a sufficiently detailed level.

Tropical Timber

Mr. Morley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what quantity of mahogany was imported into the United Kingdom in 1992 to date from Brazil.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* The information is not available for 1992 because the United Kingdom trade classification no longer separately indentifies mahogany from other non-coniferous woods. Until 1991 mahogany was identified as code 440723901 of the standard international trade classification, revision 3. The latest available figures are for 1991, when the United Kingdom imported 45,762 cu m of mahogany from Brazil.

Bogus Business Directories

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he is taking to prevent or discourage the promotion of bogus business directories.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* The Unsolicited Goods and Services Act 1971 makes it an

offence to demand payment in respect of a directory entry which has not been ordered by the person concerned. This is effective in preventing any such requests originating in the United Kingdom. My Department publishes warnings and an information sheet to alert businesses to offences by foreign companies.

Financial Reporting Review Panel

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what legislation governs appeals by shareholders against the decisions of the Financial Reporting Review Panel.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Section 245B of the Companies Act 1985 provides that a person authorised by the Secretary of State may make an application to the courts for a declaration that annual accounts of a company do not comply with the requirements of the Act and for an order requiring the preparation of revised accounts. The Financial Reporting Review Panel—FRRP—has been so authorised. It is for the courts to decide the merits of any case brought by the FRRP. Since the FRRP exercises public law functions under section 245B it is thought that the courts would decide that it is a body subject to judicial review, although this issue has not been before the courts. It is for the courts to decide who could bring applications for judicial review.

TRANSPORT

Nuclear Material

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what number of shipments of plutonium nitrate have taken place from Dounreay to Sellafield since April 1988; what routes have been taken; and what safety assessment his Department has made.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There have been eight shipments using the route from Thurso by road to Scrabster then by sea to Workington and by road to Sellafield, in flasks approved by the Department in 1979: this approval has been renewed every three years since then.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what internal reviews his Department has conducted or commissioned into the criteria developed to assess the standards of integrity of transport containers developed to carry plutonium to and from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No such internal reviews have been carried out. Staff from the Department's radioactive materials transport division have represented the United Kingdom in the International Atomic Energy Agency's review of the transport of plutonium by air.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what immersion tests have been conducted by his Department on the casks designed to transport plutonium by sea;

(2) if he will place in the Library details of validity tests undertaken by his Department's laboratories on the standards recommended by the International Atomic Energy Agency for type A and type B packages, respectively for the carriage of nuclear materials.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department does not undertake regulatory test work on packages; this is the responsibility of the consignors. The Department's role is to assess test results for compliance with the appropriate regulations.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department receives routinely on the transport into, within and from the United Kingdom of unsafeguarded military plutonium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is responsible for matters concerning the transport of radioactive materials for military purposes. I have therefore been asked to reply. My Department is kept fully informed of movements of all such materials, including military plutonium into, within and from the United Kingdom. Transport is carried out using containers which are designed, manufactured and tested in complete conformity with the appropriate International Atomic Energy Agency regulations.

Staff Statistics

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list by grade and location, the number of staff employed in the marine office;

(2) if he will list by grade and location, the number of staff employed in his Department's headquarters buildings in London;

(3) if he will list by grade, the number of staff employed by his Department;

(4) if he will list by grade and location, the number of staff employed in traffic area offices.

Mr. Norris: I am placing copies of the information requested in the Library.

Rail Investment

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the total spent on rail investment in 1991 was provided through direct Government subsidies.

Mr. Freeman: Some 59 per cent. of rail investment—British Rail, London Underground, Docklands light railway and new light railways—in Great Britain in the financial year 1991-92 was financed by direct subsidy from central Government. Additional support was provided indirectly through revenue support grant to metropolitan districts, which fund a part of British Rail's investment in regional railways and aid light projects.

Welsh Rail Services

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money has been invested in Welsh railway services in each year since 1979, *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Roger Freeman: My Department does not hold the information requested. Details of investment by British Rail are not broken down by country.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people used railway services in Wales in each year since 1980.

Mr. Freeman: My Department does not hold the information requested. Statistics of rail usage are not broken down by country.

British Rail

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the required rate of return from British Rail for *(a)* existing Trainload Freight assets, *(b)* existing Railfreight Distribution assets, *(c)* new investment by Trainload Freight and *(d)* new investment by Railfreight Distribution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail's current financial objectives were set by the then Secretary of State for Transport in 1989. The objectives set an overall target for Railfreight of earning a profit of £50 million in 1992-93. This was broadly equivalent to a 4·5 per cent. return on the then estimated net asset values. The objectives also said that a return of 8 per cent. should be the basis for decisions on new investment.

Red Star Service

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to introduce safeguards preventing any new owner of the present Red Star service from switching traffic to the roads.

Mr. Freeman: Rail transport offers considerable competitive advantages over road for the rapid delivery of parcels. Effective exploitation of these advantages by the private sector will best ensure maximum use of rail for the delivery of parcels, not the artificial restriction of Red Star to one mode of transport in all circumstances.

Surveyor General's Organisation

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now issue the consultation paper on the scope for increased private sector participation in the survey and certification work currently done by the Surveyor General's Organisation.

Mr. Norris: The consultation paper was issued today. It is being sent to organisations representating a wide range of shipping and related interests. I hope that they will consider very carefully the proposals it contains and let me have their views. In particular, I hope that bodies which are interested in taking on ship survey and certification work will come forward. Copies of the consultation paper have been placed in the Library.

Level Crossing Grant

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport under what legislative authority, and for what purposes, level crossing grant is paid to British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: Under EC regulation 1192/69 railway undertakings are eligible for compensation to eliminate financial disparities which other transport modes do not have to bear, including the provision of level crossing facilities. British Rail receives from central Government a grant covering 50 per cent. of the costs of providing such facilities. The Railways Act 1974 provides the Secretary of State with the relevant statutory powers.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive Union Railways' report on the channel tunnel rail link; and if it will be made publicly available.

Mr. Freeman: By the end of the month. Union Railways plans in due course to publish a version of the report which excludes some sensitive material that is, for example, commercially confidential.

Rail Freight

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much freight was carried by rail in Britain in each year since 1987.

Mr. Freeman: This information is contained in table 5.14 of "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1992".

Rail Privatisation

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish his proposed guidance on fare control referred to in paragraph 2.3 of "The Franchising of Passenger Rail Services" before introducing legislation to privatise British Rail.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* We intend to make the draft guidance to be given to the franchising authority on fares available in draft in time for hon. Members to consider it during the passage of the privatisation legislation.

Network SouthEast

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the routes on Network SouthEast that he will treat as providing socially necessary rail services attracting continuing payment of Government subsidy after such services are franchised.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* It will be for the new franchising authority to decide on the appropriate level of passenger services to procure through franchises in line with the overall guidance provided for him by the Secretary of State. Any subsidy required and its level will be determined by competitive bidding.

Driving Licence Fees

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will reduce the licence fee for applicants for a driving licence at the age of 70 years or above.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The present £6 fee for the three-yearly renewal of driving licences from age 70 is less than the average cost of issuing these licences. No reduction is therefore possible.

Euroroutes

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions have taken place between his Department and the appropriate department in the European Community regarding the provision of Euroroutes in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Department of Transport officials, along with officials of other member states and international organisations concerned with road transport, have been taking part in the motorway working group set up by the European Commission to consider trans-European road networks.

Road Deaths

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the number of deaths caused by *(a)* drivers under the influence of drink and *(b)* drivers falling asleep in each of the last three years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Estimates of fatal casualties in accidents in which at least one driver, or motor-cyclist, has a blood alcohol level in excess of the local limit are as follows:

	Number
1989	870
1990	800
1991	700

No reliable estimate is available of the number of deaths in accidents caused by drivers falling asleep at the wheel. The problem is likely to be greatest on motorways; the total number of motorway fatalities from any cause in the years 1989 to 1991 was: 233, 229 and 234.

Bridges

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make third party quality certification mandatory for firms designing and erecting bridges.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department's officials will shortly be discussing the possible recognition of an independent quality assurance—QA—certification scheme with the British Constructional Steelwork Association. The scheme may encompass also those aspects of the detailed design of steelwork which are carried out by steelwork fabricators.

Such recognition could lead to QA certification being made a mandatory requirement of the Department's specification for highway works for a specified steelwork range. In accordance with EC directives, the Department would have to recognise corresponding accredited schemes in other EC member countries, provided that they were equivalent to the scheme recognised in the United Kingdom.

In the meantime, the quality of steelwork for departmental construction schemes is ensured by checking that the materials and workmanship, and the erection of the finished steelwork, comply with the Department's specification for highway works and with the relevant British standards. This checking is carried out by the Department's agent, usually the engineer to the contract, and, where necessary, involves inspection and testing in works located in other countries.

EC Speed Limits

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement outlining the response of his Department to proposed EC directives on harmonising goods vehicles and coach speed limits in the EC.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We consider that speed limits are better set at the level of member states, as they have to take account of road geometry, road user behaviour and levels of enforcement, which differ across the Community.

Pedestrian Injuries

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many pedestrians were killed or injured by *(a)* reversing and *(b)* vehicles left at a junction controlled by traffic lights in the last 12 months for which figures are available; and if he will divide these figures by age.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The information requested is given in the table.

Pedestrians killed and injured: by vehicle manoeuvre: 1991

Age of casualty	*Vehicles reversing*	*Vehicles turning left at traffic lights*
0 to 4 years	143	5
5 to 7 years	75	9
8 to 11 years	66	14
12 to 15 years	61	22
16 to 19 years	89	28
20 to 29 years	296	44
30 to 39 years	231	26
40 to 49 years	185	27
50 to 59 years	222	26
60 to 69 years	370	21
70 to 79 years	458	34
80 years and over	329	20
All ages[1]	2,600	287

[1] Includes ages unknown.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has made of the amount of carbon dioxide which will be emitted from the existing heavy goods vehicles fleet during its remaining lifetime.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have made no estimate of this amount and the figure would depend on assumptions about the rate of replacement of vehicles in the existing heavy goods vehicles fleet. For last year it has been estimated that heavy goods vehicles in the United Kingdom emitted about 6·2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, measured as carbon.

Strategic Plan

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to develop a cross-sectoral long-term transport strategic plan for the United Kingdom including set targets and individual strategic initiatives to achieve the long-term goal.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government's aims and objectives for transport are set out in the Department's most recently published expenditure plans for transport, Cm. 1907.

Winchester College

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions or correspondence he or any officials in his Department have had with representatives of Winchester college within the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Officials of my Department have had contact with Winchester college on a number of occasions in the last 12 months in relation to the

acquisition of their land for the M3 motorway and other related matters. They have also attended meetings of the St. Catherine's hill/Twyford Down Forum, of which Winchester college is a member.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will request the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors to carry out an independent assessment of the market value of the land compulsorily purchased by his Department from Winchester college; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. Independent advice on the market value of land acquired under compulsory purchase powers is given to my Department by the district valuer.

Road Schemes

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what standard planning horizon is used when assessing the economic benefits of road schemes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The appraisal of trunk road schemes takes account of costs and benefits over a 30-year period.

Mrs. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research he has commissioned into the indirect economic benefits resulting from road building in the last 10 years; and what plans he has to commission further research on this subject.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: During the past 10 years, the only research my Department has conducted into these matters was an internal review into whether there were benefits to tourism from road improvements additonal to those included in the usual appraisal of the economic benefits. The review concluded that in a country with well-developed transport links, there were unlikely to be benefits additional to those usually considered. The review was published by the Department as, "Tourism, Leisure —and Roads" in October 1987. My Department has no plans to undertake further research on this subject.

Job Creation

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate how many jobs, per pound sterling invested, result from *(a)* road building and *(b)* rail investment.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Government have made no such estimate, nor do they believe that the comparison would be either meaningful or useful.

Speed Traps

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to check the sale and use of radar speed-trap detectors.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The use of such devices is already an offence under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949. Companies that supplied or advertised devices which could not be used legally have been successfully prosecuted for inciting members of the public to commit criminal offences.

Maritime Safety

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many maritime incidents occurred involving the misuse of emergency maritime channels in 1991 and 1992; what proposals he has to detect and prosecute repeat offenders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

No such incidents were reported by the Department of Transport to my Department's Radiocommunications Agency in 1991 and 1992. The detection and prosecution of offenders is an operational matter for the Radiocommunications Agency. The chief executive has been asked to write to the hon. and learned Member.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to combat the misuse of emergency maritime radio channels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

This is an operational matter for the Radiocommunications Agency. The chief executive has been asked to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from B. A. Maxwell to Mr. Alex Carlile, dated 14 December 1992:

Your question number 80 on the Order Paper for 7 December asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many maritime incidents occurred involving the misuse of emergency maritime channels in 1991 and 1992; what proposals he has to detect and prosecute repeat offenders; and if he will make a statement. Your question number 81 asked the Secretary of State for Transport, what proposals he has to combat the misuse of emergency maritime radio channels; and if he will make a statement.

As you know, the Chief Executive of the Agency has been asked to write to you in answer to the second part of Question 80 and to Question 81 as these raise operational matters within this Agency's responsibility for the regulation of radio in the UK. I am replying in the absence of the Chief Executive.

The Agency is responsible for ensuring that radio users enjoy the highest possible standard of communications. In particular, our Ministers have asked us to give top priority to dealing with interference that affects the emergency or safety of life radio services.

The Agency's enforcement work extends over the entire radio spectrum but we do devote substantial effort to marine radio use. This is largely done through advice and education. Individual contact is an excellent way in which to emphasise the importance of responsible radio operation and educate users about this. In the last financial year my staff made direct contact with over 8,000 marine radio users. We also undertake initiatives to publicise the requirements for marine radio operation and Agency staff attend major boat shows and events such as Cowes Week.

All these efforts have resulted in a large increase in recent years in the number of marine radio users who have attained the necessary level of competence to operate marine radio and who should be well aware of the importance of correct operating practice, especially where channels designated for distress calls are concerned.

However, in cases in which advice and education is not enough, the Agency stands ready to take direct enforcement action. The maritime emergency channels arre monitored by HM Coastguards, who have a procedure for reporting to the Agency users who persistently fail to comply with the regulations so that the Agency can take appropriate follow-up action, including prosecution.

There were no such reports from the Coastguards to the Agency in the years you questioned but nevertheless the Agency has successfully prosecuted for various marine radio offences on three occasions in the present financial year and further prosecutions are pending. In the last two financial years there were a total of 12 prosecutions for marine radio offences and in all cases convictions were obtained.

I hope this is helpful.

WALES

Local Government Reform

10. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** *To ask the Secretary of State* for Wales if he will make a further statement on the reform of local government in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I have had extensive consultations with the local authority associations and others. I shall announce my decisions as soon as possible.

Tourism

11. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the latest statistics on tourism within Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Despite world-wide economic difficulties the tourism industry in Wales has held up well in 1991. There was an increase of nearly 6 per cent. in the number of tourism trips taken in Wales by United Kingdom residents in 1991 compared with 1990, while expenditure by overnight and overseas visitors remained constant.

Inward Investment

12. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on inward investment to Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Wales continues to attract high levels of inward investment. Last year was a record year with 208 projects announced promising more than 16,000 new and safeguarded jobs and involving capital investment of £1,155 million. Since then (to the end of November 1992) a further 120 projects have been recorded promising nearly 10,000 jobs.

Local Government Reorganisation

14. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will publish his White Paper on the reorganisation of local government in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall announce my decisions as soon as possible.

Primary Schools (Expenditure)

15. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent per pupil in primary schools in Wales in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure for 1978-79 at constant prices.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In 1990-91 current expenditure per pupil in primary schools in Wales was £1,412. The equivalent figure for 1978-79 was £1,038 in real terms.

Welsh Economy

16. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the prospects for the Welsh economy during 1993.

Mr. David Hunt: The prospects for the Welsh economy next year are encouraging. The essential ingredients for recovery are in place and I am confident that the sustained effort we have put into restructuring the economy of Wales will pay dividends during 1993.

Mineral Water

17. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the Welsh mineral water industry.

Mr. David Hunt: The bottled and mineral water industry in Wales continues to make encouraging progress.

Economic Development Strategy

18. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement detailing the new moneys made available for the implementation of the economic development strategy prepared by the west Wales task force.

Mr. David Hunt: I received the report of the west Wales task force last week. I have asked the members of the west Wales strategy group to join me for detailed discussions of how to take forward the strategy set out in the report. We are to meet in January and I hope that the next few weeks will give all concerned sufficient opportunity to consider carefully their response to the report.

Manufacturing Industry

19. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the prospects for manufacturing industry in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Manufacturing output has risen by more than 25 per cent. since 1985, and more than 800 manufacturing plants have opened since 1980, employing more than 50,000. The industry in Wales is well placed to take full advantage of economic recovery.

Unemployment

13. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the current percentage levels of male unemployment in *(a)* Merthyr Tydfil, *(b)* the Rhymney Valley, *(c)* Mid Glamorgan and *(d)* Wales; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: In October 1992, 17·9 per cent., 17 per cent. and 13·3 per cent. respectively.

20. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has of the number of unemployed in *(a)* Ogmore, *(b)* Mid Glamorgan and *(c)* the Principality securing employment since 9 April.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is not available.

21. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of current unemployment levels on young people and the community in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of people aged under 25 years, and registered as unemployed in October of this year, has fallen by more than 35 per cent. compared with the number of those registered in the same month in 1986. This compares with a United Kingdom decrease of just under 28 per cent. for the same period.

The training and enterprise councils and the careers service are working closely together to ensure that suitable youth training provision is made available for 16 and 17-year-old school leavers. Measures recently announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment (including the new training for work programme) will further extend the range of assistance available.

Trust Hospitals (Board Membership)

22. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how he ensures that the membership of the boards of opt-out trust hospitals is representative of the community served by the trust.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend makes all appointments to national health service trusts on the basis of aptitude and merit.

Examinations

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to extend the system of publishing the results of academic examinations to examinations for vocational qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In the main, vocational qualifications are gained through studies at further education colleges. We are not planning to publish Welsh Office statistics about examination achievements in colleges in Wales.

However, further education colleges have been asked to publish details of examination and assessment results and student destinations on a voluntary basis for the academic year 1991-92. We intend making regulations requiring the colleges to publish this information for the academic year 1992-93.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many acres of land in Wales are managed by the Forestry Commission.

Sir Wyn Roberts: At 31 March 1992, the Forestry Commission managed 138,671 hectares (some 342,700 acres) of land in Wales, of which 127,843 hectares (some 315,900 acres) were woodland.

River Dee Crossing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the daily average rate of vehicles crossing the River Dee at Queensferry A494 at peak periods.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The daily average rate of vehicles crossing the River Dee at Queensferry on the A494 during the peak month of August is 61,600.

Independent Schools

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all of the independent schools in Wales and the number of pupils registered at each one.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A list of all independent schools in Wales together with the number of both full and part-time pupils on roll at each school as at January 1992 is given in the following tables:

School Name	*Number on roll*
Clwyd	
Fairhome School	136
Lyndon School	107
Penhros College	391
Rydal School	341
St. Brigis's School	124
Howell's School	353
Lindisfarne College	232
St. Mary's College	133
Arden School	72
Ruthin School	213
Rydal Preparatory School	240
Blackley School	52
Northgate Preparatory School	25
Dyfed	
Llandovery College	205
St. Michael's School	294
Netherwood School	179
Haylett Grange School	129
Nant-y-Cwm Steiner School	85
St. Tygwydd's School	43
Gwent	
Rougemont School	535
Monmouth School	626
Monmouth School for Girls	632
Agincourt School	78
Seddon House School	43
Emmanuel Christian School	7
Mayflower Christian School	8
Gwynedd	
Hillgrove School	162
St. Gerards Convent School	332
St. Davids College	210
Tower House School	112
Aran Hall School	18
Indefatigable Nautical School	139
Treffos School	96
The Snowdonia Steiner School	86
Hyfrudle Christian School	14
Mid Glamorgan	
St. Clare's Convent SNR School	274
St. John's School	185
Craig-Y-Parc School	49
Wyclif Christian School	28
Kings School	9
Frontline Christian School	8
St. Clare's Convent Preparatory School	211
Powys	
Christ College	369
St. David's Urseline Convent	180
Powis College	17
Pentwyn School	15
McIntyre Womaston House School	20
Tregynon Hall	21
South Glamorgan	
Cardiff Grammar School	322
St. John's College	429
Elm Tree House School	143
Our Lady's Convent School	238
St. Joseph's Convent School	116
The Cathedral School	421
King's School	188
Lamorna School	95
Westbourne Schools	208
Balfour House School	77
Reformed Presbyterian Church School	60
Howell's School	671
Headlands School	24

School Name	Number on roll
New College School	352
West Glamorgan	
Emmanuel School	175
Oakleigh House School	184
Craig-Y-Nos Preparatory School	114
Dumbarton House School	154
Ffynone House School	163
Saviours School	35

Severn Bridge

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the daily average rate of vehicles crossing the River Severn by means of the Severn bridge, M4.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The average daily flow crossing the Severn bridge between May and October this year (the six-month period after the increase in toll charges) was 54,200 vehicles.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of confirmed cases of BSE, by county, for November 1992.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is as follows. These cases will have a date of report and date of clinical onset of disease before 1 November.

	Number
Clwyd	46
Dyfed	123
Glamorgan Mid	6
Glamorgan South	11
Glamorgan West	2
Gwent	27
Gwynedd	17
Powys	45

Euroroutes

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions have taken place between the Welsh Office and the appropriate Department in the European Community regarding the provision of Euroroutes in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The lead in discussions with the European Commission has been taken by the Department of Transport. Arrangements are being made for me to meet the EC Transport Commissioner to discuss the trans-European road network.

Agricultural Training Board

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many responses he has received on the consultation document, "The Future Status and Operation of the Agricultural Training Board in Wales"; and how many favour Agricultural Training Board Cymru being funded in future through the Welsh Office.

Mr. David Hunt: There were 80 responses of which 20 favoured funding by my Department.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what targets he has set for the Welsh Development Agency for the generation of gross income from the sales of industrial land and factory buildings *(a)* in the present financial year and *(b)* in 1993-94; what assessment he has made of the impact of the recession on the projected gross income from the sale of such land and buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have announced that the agency's gross expenditure for 1993-94 will be £171·4 million. In determining the allocation of resources for the agency, I take account of a wide range of factors. Further details of the agency's programmes, including income, will be published in due course in the normal way.

For the current year, receipts are expected to amount to £91 million in total.

HEALTH

London Hospitals

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each London district health authority the number of *(a)* attendances at hospital accident and emergency departments and *(b)* admissions to hospital of babies in the first six months of life for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Yeo: The available information is shown in the tables.

Table 1
Attendance at London accident and emergency departments for the latest available year

1990-91	Number
Barnet	113,180
Harrow	41,417
Hillingdon	87,513
Hounslow and Spelthorne	112,534
Ealing	57,823
Riverside	105,760
Parkside	144,459
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	112,038
Hampstead	47,961
Bloomsbury[1]	73,805
Islington[1]	63,750
City and Hackney	101,249
Newham	67,084
Tower Hamlets	76,133
Enfield	57,558
Haringey	73,224
Redbridge	54,448
Waltham Forest	85,927
Bexley	70,213
Greenwich	104,069
Bromley	64,844
West Lambeth	74,129
Camberwell	71,535
Lewisham and North Southwark	159,048
Croydon	83,777
Kingston and Esher	61,617
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	33,724
Wandsworth	73,658
Merton and Sutton	79,297
The Hospitals for Sick Children	25,018
National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery	0
Moorfields Eye Hospital	51,228
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	8,971
Royal Brompton National Heart and Lung Hospital	0

1990-91	Number
The Royal Marsden Hospital	0
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	27,588
The Eastman Dental Hospital	9,634

Source: SD1A; KH09 return.
[1] These districts were merged in 1990-91

Table 2
Estimated number of hospital episodes for babies of six months and under for the latest available year (1989-90):

	Ordinary Admissions	Day Cases	Total
Barnet	506	84	590
Harrow	378	63	441
Hillingdon	417	69	487
Hounslow and Spelthorne	527	88	615
Ealing	357	59	417
Riverside	534	89	623
Parkside	580	96	676
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	962	160	1,122
Hampstead	339	56	396
Bloomsbury	492	82	573
Islington	435	72	507
City and Hackney	548	91	639
Newham	707	118	825
Tower Hamlets	902	150	1,052
Enfield	523	87	610
Haringey	594	99	693
Redbridge	421	70	491
Waltham Forest	725	121	846
Bexley	237	39	276
Greenwich	591	98	689
Bromley	516	86	602
West Lambeth	364	61	425
Camberwell	743	124	866
Lewisham and North Southwark	1,149	191	1,341
Croydon	552	92	643
Kingston and Esher	484	81	565
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	311	52	363
Wandsworth	615	102	718
Merton and Sutton	736	122	858
Totals	16,246	2,702	18,948

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics 1989-90.

Leukaemia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent studies have been conducted by her Department into the incidences of leukaemia and other blood cancers by medical districts in *(a)* Cumbria, *(b)* Lancashire and *(c)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville: The Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) has so far produced three reports to the Government on the incidence of leukaemia and cancer in young people. Its first report (1986)[1] dealt with new information about discharges from Sellafield, Cumbria, which had not been available to an ad hoc advisory group which reported in 1984[2]. Its second report (1987)[3] considered reports of an increased incidence of childhood leukaemia in the vicinity of the Dounreay nuclear establishment in Caithness, Scotland. COMARE's third report (1989)[4] considered the incidence of childhood cancer in the vicinity of the atomic weapons establishment at Aldermaston in West Berkshire, and the Royal Ordnance factory at Burghfield, North Hampshire. COMARE has made a number of recommendations for further reseach which has either been completed, or is currently under way or planned. An important issue identified by COMARE in their third report was the need to establish the national pattern of leukaemia incidence to enable local findings to be placed in context. This has been addressed by a study published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in 1991[5]. The incidence of childhood cancer in Cumbria and around Sellafield has now been reviewed and the results are due to be published in the new year. This study was recommended by COMARE and will be considered alongside other evidence as part of the committee's current review of childhood cancer around Sellafield.

References:

[1] 'The implications of the new data on the releases from Sellafield in the 1950s for the conclusions of the Report on the Investigation of the possible increased Incidence of Cancer in West Cumbria'—COMARE 1st Report. HMSO 1986.

[2] 'Investigation of the possible increased incidence of cancer in West Cumbria'—Report of the Independent Advisory Group. Chairman: Sir Douglas Black. HMSO 1984.

[3] 'Investigation of the possible increased incidence of leukaemia in young people, near the Dounreay Nuclear Establishment, Caithness, Scotland'—COMARE 2nd Report. HMSO 1988.

[4] 'Report on the incidence of childhood cancer in the West Berkshire and North Hampshire area, in which are situated the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Aldermaston, and the Royal Ordnance Factory, Burghfield'—COMARE 3rd Report. HMSO 1989.

[5] 'The Geographical epidemiology of childhood leukaemia and non-Hodgkin lymphomas in Great Britain, 1966-83'—OPCS—Studies on Medical and Population Subjects No. 53. HMSO 1991.

Hypothermia

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have died of hypothermia in the Tooting constituency in each year since 1987.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not available in the form requested. Deaths with a mention of hypothermia on the death certificate for the London Borough of Wandsworth for the years requested are shown in the table.

Number of deaths with mention of hypothermia on the death certificate for usual residents of the London Borough of Wandsworth by sex for the years 1987 to 1991

Year	Males	Females
1987	0	2
1988	0	0
1989	2	0
1990	0	0
1991	1	0

Trent regional health authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be her Department's criteria for selecting a successor to the present chairman of Trent regional health authority; when she expects to announce the name of the next chairman of Trent regional health authority; and when the new appointee will commence his or her duties.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no plans to replace Sir Michael Carlisle as chairman of the Trent regional health authority.

Contraceptives

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish in tabular form the annual total cost of contraceptive provision in England between 1979 and 1989-90 in both cash and constant prices terms excluding fees to general practitioners but including the cost of drugs and appliances prescribed by them and dispensed by retail pharmacy and appliance contractors and by family planning clinics.

Mr. Sackville: The table shows an estimate of the annual total costs of national health service contraceptive provision. The figures are an aggregate of health authorities' expenditure on family planning services (including drugs and appliances prescribed by family planning clinics) and the estimated net ingredient cost of contraceptive drugs prescribed by GPs and dispensed by retail pharmacy and appliance contractors.

Between 1979-80 and 1989-90, the Department also made section 64 grants totalling £2·2 million to voluntary organisations involved in the provision of family planning advice.

Estimated total expenditure on contraceptive provision in England

Year	*£ million*[1]	*£ million*[2]
1979-80	27·1	65·7
1980-81	32·4	66·4
1981-82	37·9	70·8
1982-83	39·9	69·6
1983-84	45·0	75·0
1984-85	47·3	75·1
1985-86	50·3	75·7
1986-87	54·5	79·4
1987-88	60·6	83·7
1988-89	61·8	79·6
1989-90	68·7	83·1

[1] £ million cash.
[2] £ million at 1992-93 prices.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many press releases her Department has issued since 9 April.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has issued 301 press releases since 9 April.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many press and public relations officers currently work for her Department; and what information she has on the number working for *(a)* regional health authorities, *(b)* district health authorities and *(c)* national health service trusts.

Mr. Sackville: Functions which are commonly associated with press and public relations are carried out by the Department's information division; 39 staff are currently employed as information officers.

The number of press and public relations officers working in the national health service is not collected centrally.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the list of *(a)* journalists, *(b)* departmental officials, *(c)* NHS personnel and *(d)* other people who regularly receive copies of her Department's press releases.

Mr. Sackville: No.

The Department regularly issues press releases through the Central Office of Information to enable journalists to report on departmental and ministerial announcements. Distributions are also made to all national health service general managers and a limited number of non-journalists and organisations.

The names of recipients vary depending on the subject.

Wessex Regional Health Authority

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice her Department gave Wessex regional health authority on the inclusion of penalty clauses and performance guarantees in contracts negotiated between the health authority and Wessex Integrated Systems Ltd./CFM Health Systems; what steps were taken to ensure that this advice was followed; and what assessment she has made of the results.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Health issued guidance on good practice in the field of national health service computer procurement in 1987. This guidance is currently being reviewed by a joint working party of the Department and the NHS Supplies Authority and new guidance is expected to be issued soon.

The Department also gave advice on various contractual matters to Wessex at its request.

I understand that the contract between Wessex Regional Health Authority and WIS/CFM is now the subject of legal action.

London Health Services

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what account she will take of differing results of independent assessments in considering the cost of closing hospitals, including the Royal Marsden, as proposed in the Tomlinson report.

Dr. Mawhinney: When the Tomlinson report was published, we invited the organisations concerned to submit comments on its recommendations. A number have done so, including the Royal Marsden, and we shall take their views into account when putting forward our proposals.

National Vocational Qualifications

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a study of the work done by the Suffolk county consortium in national vocational qualifications in health and social care and make the findings available to all training agencies and responsible bodies that are starting to implement national vocational qualifications; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We welcome the introduction of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) for health and social care. Joint initiatives where practical and relevant, such as the Suffolk County Consortium, are also welcome. The implementation of NVQs is a matter for employers, who are also responsible for providing opportunities for training.

Deputising Services

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to give financial assistance to medical deputising services run by general practice co-operatives; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None at this stage, but I have agreed to discuss with the representatives of the profession the out of hours arrangements made by general practitioners.

Well House NHS Trust

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients called for operations since 1 June by the Well House NHS trust have been sent home after arriving at Barnet general hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Anthony Orton, chairman of the Wellhouse Trust, for details.

Dr. Kypros Loucas

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her oral answer of 8 December, *Official Report*, column *681*, (1) if she will give details of the investigations of the circumstances in which Dr. Kypros Loucas left Broadmoor hospital in 1989; and if she will make a statement.

(2) what plans she has to investigate the activities of Dr. Kypros Loucas; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him and the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) on 10 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *781-82*.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals she has to increase retraining programmes for unemployed adults over 21 years of age; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* Training for work, which will replace employment training, high technology national training and employment action from April 1993, will allow training and enterprise councils scope to provide opportunities for 320,000 unemployed adults aged 18 and over to train or retrain to meet their assessed needs. This is part of the package of employment and training measures which we are increasing by nearly 500,000 opportunities in 1993-94.

Food Service Industry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will estimate how many students work *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time in the food service industry; what were the comparable figures for 1988, 1989 and 1990; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* Estimates from the labour force survey (LFS) of the numbers of students (those still at school or in other full-time education) employed part-time in the hotels and catering industry (class 66 of the standard industrial classification) are given in the following table. The numbers of students working full-time in the industry are too small for reliable estimates to be produced from the LFS.

Students working part-time in hotels and catering industry Great Britain

Spring each year	*Thousands*
1988	99
1989	102
1990	126
1992	144

Unemployment Statistics

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give the latest actual and percentage figures for the number of adult males *(a)* registered unemployed, *(b)* receiving income support and *(c)* economically inactive for the United Kingdom, Scotland, Wales and the South Wales valley initiative area.

Mr. McLoughlin: *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* The latest available information is given in the tables.

Table 1
Male claimant unemployed aged 16 and over (not seasonally adjusted) in October 1992

	Number	*per cent. Rate*[1]
United Kingdom	2,151,882	13·3
England	1,785,323	13·2
Wales	100,534	13·3
Scotland	184,744	12·8
Valleys Initiative Programme area[2]	25,954	18·5

[1] Percentage of male workforce (the sum of unemployed claimants, employees in employment, self-employed, HM forces and participants on work-related Government training schemes).

[2] Figures obtained from the Welsh Office.

Source: Employment Department. Monthly unadjusted claimant unemployment data.

Table 2
Males aged 16 and over in receipt of income support in May 1991

	Number	*Percentage*
Great Britain[2]	1,965,000	9·1
England	1,645,000	8·9
Wales	111,000	10·4
Scotland	209,000	10·8
Valleys Initiative Programme area	No data available	

[1] Males in receipt of Income Support as a percentage of the male population aged 16 and over. Population figures were obtained from the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) and apply to mid 1991.

[2] No data is available for Northern Ireland.

Source: Department of Social Security (DSS). Income support Statistics Annual Enquiry May 1991.

Table 3
Males aged 16 and over economically inactive in Spring 1992

	Number	*Percentage*
United Kingdom	5,733,000	26·3
England	4,746,000	26·0
Wales	489,000	25·7

	Number	*Percentage*
Scotland	345,000	31·4
Valleys Initiative Programme area	No data available	

[1] Males economically inactive as a percentage of the male population aged 16 and over.
Source: Labour Force Survey Spring 1992.

ENVIRONMENT

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to providing funding to enable non-governmental organisation involvement in consultations on United Kingdom implementation of its Rio obligations undertaken of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Maclean: The Government involved the non-governmental community throughout in preparations for the Earth summit, and provided funding for UNEP-UK's "NGO Earth Summit Report". The Department of the Environment is providing funding of £150,000 over three years until 1994-95 to the International Institute for Environment and Development to continue to take an active role in the United Kingdom's follow-up to the Earth summit. We are also sponsoring an international meeting of non-governmental organisations to be held in Manchester next September.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken, and what further steps he proposes to take, to promote the dialogue with the British academic community on United Nations Conference on Environment and Development follow-up.

Mr. Maclean: The Government consulted the academic community throughout the preparations for the Earth summit. We intend to continue this policy during the follow-up process and in the preparation of national reports. We also hope members of the British academic community will join in our "Partnerships for Change '93" conference in Manchester next September.

Newham Council

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the cumulative total of the capital expenditure of the London borough of Newham, for which repayment and interest is still required, for which Her Majesty's Government have given permission and the provisional sum he has allocated to the borough in respect of standard spending assessment for 1993-94 for expenditure under this heading.

Mr. Robin Squire: The debt charges element of Newham's provisional 1993-94 SSA is £20·374 million. This is the revenue which the Government consider appropriate for Newham to spend in 1993-94 on interest and debt repayment on borrowing required to provide a standard level of service. It is based on a notional outstanding debt figure at 1 April 1993 of £129·859 million.

It is not possible to calculate the cumulative total of capital expenditure for which permission was given by the Government. Past and present decisions on the financing of capital expenditure are a matter for the London borough of Newham subject to the availability of credit approvals.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking to prevent CFC stockpiling in advance of production phase-out dates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The supply of new CFCs to the European market was cut to 50 per cent. of 1986 levels at the beginning of this year. We expect to agree further interim cuts in the revision of the European Regulation which should take place at the Council of Environment Ministers on 15 and 16 December.

Sellafield

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what procedural arrangements need to be completed before his Department can give clearance to the start-up of operations at the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield in Cumbria; and what further reasons there are for the delay.

Mr. Maclean: No discharges of radioactive waste from the thermal oxide reprocessing plant (THORP) can be made unless they are authorised by the chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF). Statutory consultation on their proposed draft authorisations for the Sellarfield site, including THORP has already begun and will end on 11 January. HMIP and MAFF will then consider whether there is a need to make changes to the draft authorisations in the light of comments received. Once they have decided whether, and if so how, the authorisations should be amended, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Minister MAFF, in accordance with statutory provisions, will offer British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) the opportunity of a hearing and will consider whether to offer a hearing to such local authorities or other persons whom they consider appropriate. BNFL also requires a licence to operate THORP from the nuclear installations inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive.

Vehicle Noise

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to extend the noise nuisance abatement powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to cover jet-skis and boats.

Mr. Maclean: Part III of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 controls all statutory nuisance emanating from premises, which includes land and vessels. Noise nuisance from jet-skis and boats can therefore already be controlled under these provisions.

Euratom Treaty

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions he has had with the European Commission in regard to the implementation of article 35 of the Euratom treaty.

Mr. Maclean: My officials have recently confirmed formally with the Commission our agreement on the conduct of Commission verifications of monitoring facilities for radioactivity in the United Kingdom environment under article 35 of the Euratom treaty.

Fire Precautions

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the paper "Fires Involving Sprinklers" published by the Home Office in July 1990; and what account was taken of the conclusions of this paper in framing current building regulations covering fire precautions in very large low-rise buildings.

Mr. Baldry: Although the report was not available until after the technical review of the regulations was substantially complete, officials were in close contact with their Home Office and fire research station colleagues throughout the review. The report showed which type of sprinklers could be most beneficial in large shops of different configurations. Changes made to the building regulations which came into effect in June this year give greater recognition to the beneficial role of sprinklers.

Birkenhead to Seacombe Development Proposals

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what planning applications are currently before his Department for development of the land between Birkenhead and Seacombe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: No planning application is currently before my Department in the area mentioned.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the financing of the secretariat of the convention to control toxic waste.

Mr. Maclean: Non-parties to the Basel convention will be invited to make voluntary contributions to meet the costs of administration. In order to demonstrate its support for the convention, the United Kingdom has made voluntary contributions of $50,000 for each of the last three financial years. A similar amount will be paid in the first quarter of 1993.

Ozone Layer

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his present estimate of the size of and coverage of the ozone layer; and what estimates were made in 1990 and 1985.

Mr. Maclean: The ozone layer covers the entire globe but a progressive depletion in its thickness has been observed since the mid-1980s, with strong evidence that this is due to man-made ozone-depleting chemicals. Assessments of depletion published in 1992 by the WMO/UNEP Scientific Assessment Panel indicated a total ozone loss rate of 8 per cent. per decade in the early spring over northern mid latitudes (30–60°N), a peak downward trend at high southern latitudes in October-December of greater than 35 per cent. per decade and an average global depletion of 3 per cent. per decade.

Assessments by the International Ozone Trends Panel have been published by the World Meteorological Organisation in 1985, 1988, 1989 and 1992 and by the Department's stratospheric ozone review group in 1987, 1988, 1990 and 1991. Copies of these reports have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the results of the conference on the ozone layer in Copenhagen.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 27 November 1992 to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), *Official Report*, column *85*.

Council House Sales, East Anglia

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by authorities the number and value of council house sales in East Anglia in each year since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Information on sales of council houses reported by local authorities in East Anglia in the period April 1983 to March 1992 is given in the table. The figures exclude dwellings transferred to housing associations in large scale voluntary transfers. Such transfers took place in Broadland in April 1990 and in Suffolk Coastal in May 1991. The transfers involved some 9,000 dwellings valued at about £50 million.

Local authority	*1983-84* *Number of sales*	*Undiscounted value of sales*
Cambridgeshire		
Cambridge	323	7,062
East Cambridgeshire	151	2,590
Fenland	136	1,836
Huntingdonshire	366	6,671
Peterborough	270	2,422
South Cambridgeshire	263	5,115
Norfolk		
Breckland	275	4,092
Broadland	97	1,889
Great Yarmouth	157	2,861
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	249	3,692
North Norfolk	167	3,031
Norwich	609	11,342
South Norfolk	212	3,754
Suffolk		
Babergh	n/a	n/a
Forest Heath	218	4,003
Ipswich	245	4,562
Mid Suffolk	229	4,114
St. Edmundsbury	284	5,200
Suffolk Coastal	176	3,551
Waveney	171	2,768

Local authority	*1984-85* *Number of sales*	*Undiscounted value of sales*
Cambridgeshire		
Cambridge	285	7,229
East Cambridgeshire	184	3,395
Fenland	187	2,598
Huntingdonshire	342	6,850
Peterborough	n.a.	n.a.
South Cambridgeshire	238	5,235
Norfolk		

Local authority	1984-85 Number of sales	1984-85 Undiscounted value of sales
Breckland	294	4,693
Broadland	102	2,023
Great Yarmouth	112	2,247
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	243	3,760
North Norfolk	110	2,124
Norwich	339	7,256
South Norfolk	209	3,965
Suffolk		
Babergh	158	2,985
Forest Heath	214	4,504
Ipswich	408	8,432
Mid Suffolk	135	2,553
St. Edmundsbury	292	5,690
Suffolk Coastal	165	3,974
Waveney	157	2,761

Local authority	1985-86 Number of sales	1985-86 Undiscounted value of sales
Cambridgeshire		
Cambridge	302	8,543
East Cambridgeshire	191	3,999
Fenland	118	1,798
Huntingdonshire	320	7,010
Peterborough	277	4,513
South Cambridgeshire	210	5,506
Norfolk		
Breckland	204	3,739
Broadland	81	1,842
Great Yarmouth	91	2,007
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	223	3,663
North Norfolk	76	1,613
Norwich	289	6,687
South Norfolk	134	2,783
Suffolk		
Babergh	145	3,044
Forest Heath	188	4,338
Ipswich	288	6,841
Mid Suffolk	108	2,229
St. Edmundsbury	241	5,275
Suffolk Coastal	178	4,390
Waveney	132	2,484

Local authority	1986-87 Number of sales	1986-87 Undiscounted value of sales
Cambridgeshire		
Cambridge	325	11,108
East Cambridgeshire	161	4,089
Fenland	165	2,866
Huntingdonshire	373	9,776
Peterborough	309	6,150
South Cambridgeshire	258	8,207
Norfolk		
Breckland	281	5,983
Broadland	88	1,502
Great Yarmouth	104	2,316
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	238	4,371
North Norfolk	114	2,657
Norwich	366	8,015
South Norfolk	179	4,243
Suffolk		
Babergh	171	4,348
Forest Heath	165	4,161
Ipswich	288	3,436
Mid Suffolk	113	3,039
St. Edmundsbury	242	6,141
Suffolk Coastal	146	3,984
Waveney	139	2,868

Local authority	1987-88 Number of sales	1987-88 Undiscounted value of sales
Cambridgeshire		
Cambridge	318	13,359
East Cambridgeshire	168	5,349
Fenland	225	4,720
Huntingdonshire	430	14,854
Peterborough	258	7,116
South Cambridgeshire	227	9,056
Norfolk		
Breckland	282	7,731
Broadland	n/a	n/a
Great Yarmouth	125	3,326
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	250	6,190
North Norfolk	140	3,733
Norwich	762	n/a
South Norfolk	199	5,378
Suffolk		
Babergh	147	4,929
Forest Heath	216	4,919
Ipswich	401	12,176
Mid Suffolk	142	4,372
St. Edmundsbury	322	9,914
Suffolk Coastal	217	7,140
Waveney	203	5,113

Local authority	1988-89 Number of sales	1988-89 Undiscounted value of sales
Cambridgeshire		
Cambridge	381	18,988
East Cambridgeshire	161	6,580
Fenland	262	7,851
Huntingdonshire	416	18,458
Peterborough	354	12,016
South Cambridgeshire	234	12,084
Norfolk		
Breckland	326	12,247
Broadland	n/a	n/a
Great Yarmouth	176	5,651
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	307	12,485
North Norfolk	235	8,094
Norwich	889	34,876
South Norfolk	232	8,912
Suffolk		
Babergh	193	8,444
Forest Heath	189	7,384
Ipswich	532	24,097
Mid Suffolk	176	7,171
St. Edmundsbury	333	13,234
Suffolk Coastal	232	10,280
Waveney	233	8,308

n/a = Not available.

Local authority	1989-90 Number of sales	1989-90 Undiscounted value of sales
Cambridgeshire		
Cambridge	n/a	n/a
East Cambridgeshire	58	3,083
Fenland	82	3,212
Huntingdonshire	216	10,966
Peterborough	n/a	n/a
South Cambridgeshire	124	7,429
Norfolk		
Breckland	167	6,635
Broadland	n/a	n/a
Great Yarmouth	123	5,287
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	102	4,617
North Norfolk	145	6,507
Norwich	486	23,527
South Norfolk	112	4,911
Suffolk		
Babergh	73	4,192
Forest Heath	106	5,306
Ipswich	244	13,088
Mid Suffolk	141	6,522
St. Edmundsbury	173	9,734
Suffolk Coastal	105	5,780
Waveney	87	3,702

n/a = not available.

Local authority	1990-91 Number of sales	1990-91 Undiscounted value of sales
Cambridgeshire		
Cambridge	158	7,817
East Cambridgeshire	42	2,201
Fenland	26	1006
Huntingdonshire	156	7,535
Peterborough	123	4,491
South Cambridgeshire	129	6,818
Norfolk		
Breckland	96	3,776
Broadland	0	0
Great Yarmouth	60	2,601
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	64	2,612
North Norfolk	51	2,353
Norwich	225	10,246
South Norfolk	104	2,552
Suffolk		
Babergh	67	3,357
Forest Heath	78	3,513
Ipswich	106	5,155
Mid Suffolk	39	2,025
St. Edmundsbury	67	3,442
Suffolk Coastal	111	5,546
Waveney	78	3,231

Local authority	1991-92 Number of sales	1991-92 Undiscounted value of sales
Cambridgeshire		
Cambridge	146	7,966
East Cambridgeshire	60	2,670
Fenland	37	1,318
Huntingdonshire	121	5,419
Peterborough	137	4,482
South Cambridgeshire	148	7,137
Norfolk		
Breckland	93	3,493
Broadland	0	0
Great Yarmouth	49	1,948
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	70	2,713
North Norfolk	51	2,250
Norwich	204	8,757
South Norfolk	55	2,541
Suffolk		
Babergh	107	4,870
Forest Heath	71	2,837
Ipswich	80	3,521
Mid Suffolk	72	2,909
St. Edmundsbury	98	4,501
Suffolk Coastal	4	n/a
Waveney	73	2,810

Homelessness

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* families and *(b)* single people were accepted by local authorities as homeless in each local authority area in the United Kingdom and each standard planning region in the United Kingdom in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities in England report the number of households they accept as homeless in their annual housing investment programme (HIP1) returns. Total acceptances cover households which include dependent children or a pregnant woman, single people, childless couples and other adult households but only the first of these groups is separately identified.

The available information for individual authorities for 1991-92 are in columns C11 (total acceptances) and C2b1 (those including children or a pregnant woman) of the "HIP1 All Items Print". Regional totals are in the "HIP1 Regional Grossing". Both documents are in the Library.

For information about Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the discussion document on Britain's carbon dioxide programme promised in "This Common Inheritance: The Second Year" report.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish a discussion paper on the strategy to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Howard: I am publishing today a discussion document: "Climate Change—Our National Programme for CO_2 Emissions". Copies have been placed in the Library.

This is the first step in implementing in the United Kingdom the climate change convention agreed at UNCED in June this year.

The convention has been signed by over 150 nations. As part of the process of ensuring that the convention is translated into effective action we in Britain must now begin drawing up our own programmes of measures to limit emissions of greenhouse gases. Carbon dioxide is the first priority.

I do not believe it would be right for the Government alone to determine the content of our programme. The programme needs contributions from all sectors of the economy. The discussion document describes:

the main principles of the Climate Change Convention, the sources of CO_2 emissions in the United Kingdom and the prospects for emissions in the year 2000,

the opportunities for individuals, business, and public sector bodies to reduce CO_2 emissions,

options for Government measures to supplement and support voluntary action.

Through the discussion document I am inviting business to commmit itself to taking action as part of our national programme, and I am seeking views on the scope for individuals to take further action and on the options for Government measures. I look forward to a full debate on these issues over the next three months.

Housing Action Trusts

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made with the further housing action trust proposals announced in his statement of 16 December 1991, at columns *59-62*.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to announce that I have decided, after careful consideration of tenants' views and of the detailed feasibility studies for the estates, that there should be ballots of tenants on the proposals to establish Housing Action Trusts for the Castle Vale estate in Birmingham, and for the Lefevre Walk, Tredegar Road and Monteith estates in the Bow neighbourhood of Tower Hamlets.

I hope to announce ballot dates shortly. I shall do so as soon as I am satisfied that the consultations with tenants, which have been continuing for some time, have enabled them fully to explore and understand the implications for them of the establishment of HATs.

Meanwhile I have decided to appoint Mr. Richard Temple-Cox and Dr. Michael Barraclough respectively as prospective HAT chairs for the trusts. They will carry forward the necessary consultation with tenants, and help prepare for the major tasks to be undertaken by the trusts, if established.

While I am encouraged by the progress on the proposal for a HAT for Stonebridge Park in Brent, I have decided that it would not be appropriate to make a decision at this stage. I hope to be able to do so shortly.

Housing Finance

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a table showing capital spending on housing by region for each year since 1981 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1981 prices.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The available data on regional gross capital expenditure on housing by local authorities, which relate to financial years, are given in the tables. Corresponding figures for 1981-82 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Local authority housing capital expenditure by region 1982-83 to 1991-92

Cash Figures — *£ million*

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
North (excluding Cumbria)	197	197	174	145	153	174	166	186	142	148
Yorkshire and Humberside	287	302	251	234	222	265	289	361	271	244
East Midlands	242	254	219	180	197	201	212	292	185	177
Eastern	282	314	343	309	302	327	428	572	347	318
Greater London	848	913	983	780	838	890	909	1,504	791	625
South East	338	406	418	354	364	430	533	663	416	314
South West	214	250	227	194	197	213	258	412	250	220
West Midlands	300	355	314	275	275	286	309	423	313	269
North West	452	500	441	407	383	432	434	532	386	354
Unallocated[1]	75	80	131	145	86	52	66	181	63	51
England	3,235	3,571	3,501	3,023	3,017	3,272	3,604	5,126	3,164	2,720

[1]The regional figures do not sum to the overall England totals which include some expenditure (eg. the housing element of the Urban Programme, leasing) for which regional estimates are not available and because the England totals have been reconciled with other sources of data.

Local authority housing capital expenditure in real terms[1] by region, 1982-83 to 1991-92

Real term figures[1] — *£ million*

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
North (excluding Cumbria)	180	172	145	115	117	126	112	118	83	81
Yorkshire and Humberside	262	265	209	185	170	192	195	229	159	134
East Midlands	222	223	183	142	151	146	144	185	109	97
Eastern	258	274	286	244	231	237	289	363	204	175
Greater London	776	799	818	616	641	646	614	954	464	343
South East	310	355	348	280	278	312	360	420	244	172
South West	196	219	189	153	151	155	174	261	147	121
West Midlands	275	310	261	217	210	208	209	268	184	148
North West	414	437	368	321	293	313	294	337	227	194
Unallocated[2]	69	70	109	115	66	38	44	115	37	28
England	2,960	3,124	2,915	2,386	2,308	2,372	2,436	3,250	1,858	1,494

[1] Cash figures have been converted to real terms (1981 prices) by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP market prices deflator.

[2] The regional figures do not sum to the overall England totals which include some expenditure (eg the housing element of the Urban Programme, leasing) for which regional estimates are not available and because the England totals have been reconciled with other sources of data.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a table showing housing turnover by region in each year since 1987.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 9 December 1992]:* The available information is tabulated in table 14.2 of the MHSO publication *Inland Revenue Statistics* which is held in the Library. The years 1988-1991 are covered in the 1992 edition, and the year 1987 in the 1991 edition.

Wild Geese

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what have been the numbers of wild geese exports to Italy for the period from 1 September 1991 to 31 January 1992, inclusive; and if he will provide a breakdown by type of goose;

(2) how many licences for the export of wild geese have been issued since 31 January 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* According to our records, three licences to export wild geese have been issued since 31 January 1991. Only one of these licences was issued in the peirod from 1 September 1991 to 31 January 1992. This licence allowed the export of 177 dead Greylag geese (Anser anser) to Italy.

Zoos

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many zoos are currently licensed in the United Kingdom; and what are their locations.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* Zoo licences are issued by local authorities. The information they have supplied to my Department indicates that 219 zoos are currently licensed in England under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981. In addition, 54 premises have been granted dispensation from the provisions of the Act because of their size. The corresponding information for zoos in Scotland and Wales is held by the Scottish Office and the Welsh Ofice respectively. I have placed a list of zoos, together with a list of those premises which have been granted dispensation, in the Library of the House.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many United Kingdom zoos do not currently meet the terms of the proposed EC zoo directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* The proposed directive would require member states to introduce measures to license all zoos. it is difficult to be precise about its effect on individual zoos since it does not contain detailed standards. We would expect most zoos in Great Britain to meet its terms since they already comply with the strict standards set under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce a bonding scheme to all zoos to ensure the proper relocation of zoo animals should British zoos be forced to close.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* I have no plans to do so.

Ostrich Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications have been made under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 to set up ostrich farms; and if he will list their location.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* This information is not held centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Diesel Engine Trains

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines British Rail is required to follow, as regards limiting levels of pollution produced by diesel-engine trains.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

British Rail is required to meet the provisions of the Clean Air Act 1956, the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the low-level radioactive waste stockpiled at the Drigg disposal site originates from the reprocessing of imported foreign nuclear fuel.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

I understand from British Nuclear Fuels plc that, at the end of March 1992, some 5 per cent. by volume of the low-level radioactive waste disposed of at Drigg had arisen from the reprocessing of spent fuel from overseas.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Bank Notes

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Bank of England will continue to have the authority to authorise the issue of bank notes by domestic clearing banks in Scotland under the provisions of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Nelson: The Scottish note-issuing banks currently have statutory authority to issue their own bank notes, subject to certain requirements to hold Bank of England notes. Scottish notes are not formally legal tender but they may nevertheless be used in ordinary transactions.

Under article 105a of the Maastricht treaty, the European central bank—ECB—would have the exclusive right to authorise the issue of bank notes in member states participating in stage 3 of economic and monetary union —EMU. Article 16 of the protocol on the statute of the ECB, requires the ECB to respect as far as possible existing practices regarding the issue and design of banknotes. If the United Kingdom were to participate in stage 3 of EMU these articles would permit the ECB to authorise the

Scottish banks to continue to issue their own notes. In stage 2 of EMU, and in stage 3 were the United Kingdom not to participate, the United Kingdom could continue to maintain its existing arrangements.

Racehorse Training

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest number of reported closures of racehorse training establishments since 1989; and what analysis he has made of the effects of lower rates of VAT in other EC countries, on the competitiveness of the United Kingdom racehorse training industry.

Sir John Cope: There is no information available on how many racehorse training yards have closed since 1989. The present difference in the VAT rates for training fees between EC member states has existed for many years and will not be affected by the introduction of the single market. Racehorse owners choose to put their horses for training to particular trainers for many reasons. The United Kingdom continues to retain a large number of highly respected and successful trainers.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reviews he is currently carrying out in respect of the privatisation of the premium bond scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: None.

Tobacco

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his forecast revenue from tobacco taxes in 1992-93; and what the comparable figure was for 1986.

Sir John Cope: Revenue from tobacco excise duties is forecast to be £6,044 million in 1992-93. This figure is consistent with the Chancellor's recent autumn statement. Revenue from tobacco excise duties in 1986 was £4,640 million.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much the total tax levied on the United Kingdom's most popular price category cigarette brands has changed since May 1979.

Sir John Cope: In May 1979 a package of 20 king size cigarettes typically sold for 55p and the total tax was 39p. The corresponding price in 1992 is 221p per packet and the total tax is 168p. Over this period the tax percentage of the retail price has increased from 70 to 76 per cent.

European Banking System

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what dicussions he has had with his European Council counterparts on the conditions set out at article 34·2 of the protocol on the statute of the European system of central banks and the European central bank in the draft treaty on European union, during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council.

Mr. Nelson: Article 34.2 of the protocol on the statute of the European system of central banks and the European central bank contains nothing requiring a Council discussion. No discussion of this article has taken place in the Finance Ministers' Council.

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current annual cost to the Exchequer of tax relief on mortgages; and what would be the cost to the Exchequer if tax relief on mortgages were limited to the 20 per cent. band.

Mr. Dorrell: The cost of mortgage interest tax relief in 1992-93 is provisionally estimated to be £5·2 billion based on the conventional assumption of no further changes in interest rates.

If relief for existing amounts of allowable interest were restricted to a rate of 20 per cent., the cost would be about £4·2 billion, a reduction of £1 billion.

Custom House, Dundee

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total cost of the refurbishment recently carried out to that part of the Custom House building in Dundee occupied by Customs and Excise staff; which Government Department paid for the refurbishment; and how long the refurbishment programme took from start to finish.

Sir John Cope: The total cost of restoration work to Dundee Custom House was some £1·4 million including fees and VAT. The scheme was initiated by the Property Services Agency which spent £0·4 million up to March 1990. Changes in the arrangements for managing Government property projects were introduced in April 1990. The remaining costs were shared between Customs and Excise—£0·5 million—and the Department of the Environment's directorate of property holdings—£0·5 million—although PSA continued to run the project as an agent. Following preliminary planning and consultation with the historic buildings and monument division of the Scottish Office, work started on site in October 1988 and took three and a half years.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which Government Department fixed the selling price of the refurbished part of Custom House in Dundee; what that selling price is; and which Government Departments will have to incur any financial loss resulting from sale at a price below the cost of the recent refurbishment.

Sir John Cope: Dundee Custom House is currently for sale, together with the adjoining property owned by the port authority. In accordance with normal practice, the selling price has not been fixed. Offers will be invited by a closing date once a reasonable level of interest has been generated. The selling price will depend on market interest and potential alternative uses.

Disposal is the responsibility of the Department of the Environment's directorate of property holdings. Together with the port authority, they have instructed James Barr and Son as selling agents.

Work to restore the stonework was necessary to make the building safe and, as a matter of Government stewardship of historic, buildings, to preserve its fabric. The effects of the work on the prospects of sale were a secondary consideration. It was never intended to recoup the cost of accumulated maintenance responsibilities through sale proceeds.

Pensions

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures the Government propose to take in respect of the pensions of those who retire during the period covered by the staging of the 1992 Top Salaries Review Body pay award.

Mr. Portillo: Earlier this year the Top Salaries Review Body recommended new salaries for judges, senior officers of the armed forces, and members of the higher civil service. The Government, taking into account wider implications, including the level of pay settlements in the private sector, decided to moderate the proposed increases and stage them over three years, bringing the total increase down to about half of the recommended level.

The pensions of those who retire normally during the period covered by the staging of the award will be based on the salary payable at or in the period before the date of retirement, in line with the policy applied for public service pensions since the announcement made by the then Prime Minister following the staging of the 1983-84 award.

Those who are retired early in the public interest during the staging period are in a different position from those who retire at the normal end of their career, since they could reasonably have expected to work until the deferred elements of the award had been fully or partially implemented. Arrangements are therefore being made so that senior military officers and civil servants who retired early in the public interest during the period over which the award will be staged need not suffer any pensions loss as a result of the staging.

Company Headquarters

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was *(a)* the number and percentage of the United Kingdom total and *(b)* the market value and percentage of the United Kingdom total of quoted companies with headquarters in each region in (i) 1979, (ii) 1983, (iii) 1987, (iv) 1991 and (v) currently.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* This information is not available centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

World Bank and IMF

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has to make the World bank and International Monetary Fund more conscious of the need to promote sustainable development.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* The IMF helps countries to lay foundations for sustainable development through its work in support of stabilisation measures and medium-term structural reform. The World bank pays full regard to the need for sustainable development, in particular with regard to the impact their programmes have on the environment and the poorest members of society. The current measures taken by the two institutions to achieve objectives in connection with sustainable development are described in detail in the 1992 annual reports, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the achievement of the structural adjustment programmes applied to countries by the World bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* The Government welcome the support given by the IMF and the World bank to countries pursuing adjustment programmes and the recent evidence of the improved economic performance that results from these programmes. The IMF's and World bank's 1992 annual reports, copies of which are available in the Library of the House, describe both the recent evidence and the institutions' policies.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans exist for the EC nations having a shared policy at the World bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* European Community member states are all individual members of the IMF and the World bank and instruct their representatives accordingly. There are no plans to change this practice. Furthermore, while the United Kingdom is in a single member constituency at the executive board, most EC member states are in constituencies with a wide range of non-EC countries.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what new proposals he has to take to the World bank and the International Monetary Fund to lower the debt burden of developing countries.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* The Government continue to encourage the IMF and World bank to support commercial debt and debt service reduction deals. As noted by the IMF-World bank development committee on 21 September, 12 countries, which account for more than 90 per cent. of the commercial bank debt of the major debtor nations, have now reached agreement on such arrangements. Furthermore, as a direct result of the Prime Minister's initiative to relieve the official debts of the poorest and most indebted countries, the Paris club of creditor Governments began implementing Trinidad terms last December. These provide for a reduction of up to 50 per cent. of certain official bilateral payments, and give a commitment on the part of creditors to address the question of the country's stock of debt after a period of three to four years of proven financial and economic responsibility. So far, 12 countries have benefited, and I am sure that many more will follow. The United Kingdom will continue to press our creditor colleagues to agree improvements in the terms on offer.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Lime

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will reintroduce grant aid for the application of lime to agricultural land to encourage agricultural output and reduce acid rain leaching.

Mr. Curry: Grant is payable under an improvement plan in the farm and conservation grant scheme for the application of lime as part of a programme of grassland improvement and, in the less favoured areas only, when

lime is applied as a separate operation without reseeding or other chemical treatment of the grass. Grant is not payable on work to convert heath or moorland to grass. I do not intend to extend these grants to subsidise the application of lime to arable land which would risk encouraging the further output of crops already in surplus.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the total payments made to farmers for each year encompassing existing and new entrants as a whole within each designated environmentally sensitive area and for England in total.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is set out in the table. The payment figures relate to the cost of agreements in the years in which the applications were made, even though a minority of payments were actually made early in the following year. The 1992 figures include estimates of the costs of agreements not yet finalised.

ESA Payments to Farmers

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	[1] *1992*
Pennine Dales	813,100	916,500	953,300	961,600	998,800	1,555,000
Broads	937,825	1,720,000	1,784,050	1,813,825	1,821,300	2,406,000
Somerset Levels and Moors	679,562	778,986	826,112	843,030	889,734	1,815,000
South Downs	180,640	374,795	580,290	634,745	747,620	1,280,000
West Penwith	333,120	345,360	348,960	351,840	354,780	360,000
Breckland		387,950	453,275	485,250	496,325	540,000
Suffolk River Valleys		740,850	902,120	990,360	1,058,890	1,100,000
Shropshire Borders		534,660	584,450	608,240	627,540	638,000
North Peak		673,080	728,890	730,780	734,810	735,000
Test Valley		21,840	25,520	28,080	31,120	32,000
Totals	2,944,247	6,494,021	7,186,967	7,447,750	7,760,919	10,461,000

[1] Provisional.

Turkeys

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the amount of turkey meat imported into the United Kingdom in each of the last five years; what measures Her Majesty's Government takes to ensure that imported turkeys have been reared and transported humanely; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The amount of turkey meat imported into the United Kingdom over the last five years is as follows:

	Turkeymeat (tonnes)
1987	8,154
1988	12,743
1989	14,652
1990	26,434
1991	28,430

Any live turkeys imported into the United Kingdom would be safeguarded by the provisions of the European directives protecting the welfare of animals during transport. However, the Government have no control over welfare conditions for rearing turkeys in other member states and no Community rules exist for them. Turkeys reared in the United Kingdom benefit from our national animal welfare legislation and a specific welfare code for turkeys.

The Government have made it clear that we wish to see the highest possible Community welfare standards set for the husbandry and transport of all farm livestock.

Dietary Supplements

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration he has given to the response of the Society for the Promotion of Nutritional Therapy to the conclusions of the Denner report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I recently met the Director of the Society for the Promotion of Nutritional Therapy to discuss the views of the society. There are differences of detail on some technical issues, but there is a wide measure of agreement that whatever legislation emerges as part of the European Commission's harmonisation programme the consumer should have continued access to safe products.

Sheep Grazing

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to monitor erosion caused by excessive sheep grazing in less-favoured areas.

Mr. Curry: I do not believe that sheep grazing is a widespread cause of erosion. Measures to discourage overgrazing in less favoured areas are however included in the hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme. Also a number of current or proposed environmentally sensitive area schemes include the regeneration of moorland vegetation by offering payments to farmers to reduce sheep stocking levels and to carry out other beneficial management practices.

Water Damage

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what plans he has to make funds available to local authorities to pay for the damage caused to roads and ditches by silt-laden water from farmers' fields;

(2) what plans he has to make farmers pay for the damage caused to roads and ditches by silt-laden water from farmers' fields.

Mr. Curry: None. Farmers who allow soil to leave fields and create a nuisance may be prosecuted under section 151 of the Highways Act 1980. This authorises the highway authority to serve a notice requiring appropriate preventive measures to be undertaken.

Erosion

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what plans he has for the future monitoring of water erosion on arable land;

(2) what plans he has to assess the impact of wind erosion on arable land.

Mr. Curry: Government-funded research into soil erosion by both wind and water includes work on estimating the risk of erosion for different soils in England and Wales and is expected to result in the publication in 1993 of a map of erosion risk. In addition ADAS is engaged in a project monitoring the effects of water erosion on arable land.

A range of measures are available to farmers to tackle erosion problems, and the Government have recently issued for public consultation a draft Code of Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Soil, which is designed to help farmers on this and other matters. A copy of the consultation document is in the Library of the House.

Badgers

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will specify the circumstances in which he is prepared to grant licences to fox hunters to attack occupied badger setts with spades and dogs.

Mr. Soames: There are no circumstances in which I would be prepared to grant a licence allowing fox hunters to attack an occupied badger sett with spades and dogs. However, the legislation provides that licences may be issued for interference with a badger sett for the purpose of controlling foxes in order to protect livestock, game or wildlife. I announced on 14 October that, in exceptional circumstances, a licence may be issued which would permit a dog to be entered into a badger sett to flush out a fox.

Potatoes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which organisations were asked to make comments on the proposals for a Council regulation regarding the common organisation of the market in potatoes; and what were the specific dates when the formal requests for those comments were communicated to them.

Mr. Gummer: Following is the list of organisations:

Association of County Councils
British Retail Consortium
Association of Consumer Research
Co-operative Union
Federation of Agricultural Co-operatives (UK) Ltd.
Food from Britain
National Farmers Union (England)
British Potato Trades Consortium
British Society of Plant Breeders Ltd.
Consumers Committee for Great Britain
Country Landowners Association
British Society of Plant Breeders Ltd.
Consumers Committee for Great Britain
Country Landowners Association
Food and Drink Federation
Fruit Importers Association
National Association of Seed Potato Merchants
National Consumers Council
National Federation of Fruit and Potato Trades Ltd.
Potato Chip Manufacturers Association
Potato Marketing Board
Processed Vegetable Growers Association
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
National Federation of Fish Friers
National Joint Council of British Potato and Vegetable Merchants Association
Potato Growers Action Group
Potato Processors Association
Produce Packaging and Marketing Association
Retail Fruit Trade Federation Ltd.
The Henry Doubleday Research Organisation
Tenant Farmers Associations
Womens Farming Union
London Fox
British Independent Grocers Association
Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd.
UK Association of Frozen Food Producers
Consumers in the EC Group
Centre for European Agricultural Studies

The Commission's proposal was received on 25 November and the consultation letter was sent on 26 November 1992.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the organisations which have replied to the request for comments on the proposals for a Council regulation regarding the common organisation of the market in potatoes; and when those replies were received.

Mr. Gummer: Following is the list of organisations

Name of organisation	*Date of reply*
British Retail Consortium	7 December 1992
Consumers in the EC Group	9 December 1992
Consumers Committee for Great Britain	7 December 1992
Federation of Agricultural Co-operatives (UK) Ltd.	4 December 1992
London FOX	7 December 1992
National Association of Seed Potato Merchants	4 December 1992
National Farmers Union (England)	4 December 1992
National Federation of Fish Friers	4 December 1992
National Federation of Fruit and Potato Trades Ltd.	4 December 1992
Potato Marketing Board	4 December 1992
Potato Processors Association	30 November 1992
Produce Packaging and Marketing Association	4 December 1992
Retail Fruit Trade Federation Ltd.	7 December 1992

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which organisations had not replied by 7 December, in response to the request for comments on the proposals for a Council regulation regarding the common organisation of the market in potatoes.

Mr. Gummer: The following organisations had not replied by 7 December:

Association of County Councils
Association of Consumer Research
British Independent Grocers Association
British Potato Trades Consortium
British Society of Plant Breeders Ltd.
Centre for European Agricultural Studies

Co-operative Union
Country Landowners Association
Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd.
Food and Drink Federation
Food from Britain
Fruit Importers Association
National Consumers Council
National Joint Council of British Potato and Vegetable Merchants Association
Potato Chip Manufacturers Association
Potato Growers Action Group
Processed Vegetable Growers Association
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Henry Doubleday Research Organisation
Tenant Farmers Association
UK Association of Frozen Food Producers
Womens Farming Union

Wool Guarantee

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost of maintaining the wool guarantee in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Curry: The wool guarantee is designed to operate as a price stabilisation mechanism on the basis of advances to, or receipts from, the British Wool Marketing Board. Net expenditure (or net receipts) over the past nine financial years was as follows. The information for earlier years could be obtained in the form requested only at disproportionate cost.

	£
1983-84	602,882
1984-85	[1]7,838,406
1985-86	1,458,753
1986-87	8,082,047
1987-88	[1]1,942,751
1988-89	[1]3,267,593
1989-90	2,180,700
1990-91	18,191,215
1991-92	40,841,371

[1] = receipts.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to retain the wool guarantee after 1 May 1993.

Mr. Curry: No.

Set-aside Proposals

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arable acreage he expects to be set aside in each EC country arising from the MacSharry proposals; what proportion this will be of existing arable acreage in each case, assuming constant yields and current prices; what will be the loss in production and value in each country; and, in each case, if he will set out the figures as an absolute figure and as a proportion of the EC total, assuming no change in the balance between cereal types, seasonal planting and cereals and oilseeds.

Mr. Curry: The information in the following table is derived from budgetary estimates of expenditure on the CAP reform package prepared earlier this year by the Commission. These estimates do not contain figures for the value of lost production, which will depend on market prices in the next marketing year.

	Total arable area (thousand ha)	*Total estimated SA (thousand ha)*	*Total estimated SA converted to thousand acres*	*As a percentage of national arable area*	*As a percentage of total EC SA area*
Belgium	326	27	67	8	1
Denmark	1,909	226	558	12	5
Germany	8,218	915	2,260	11	21
Greece	1,523	27	67	2	1
Spain	8,978	764	1,887	9	17
France	11,859	1,463	3,614	12	33
Ireland	359	33	82	9	1
Italy	5,429	236	583	4	5
Luxembourg	33	1	2	3	—
Netherlands	226	22	54	10	1
Portugal	833	34	84	4	1
United Kingdom	4,396	634	1,566	14	14
Total	44,087	4,381	10,821	10	100

Note: Minor discrepancies in totals are due to rounding.
Source: Commission statistics.

Estimated reduction in production

	Cereals (million tonnes)	*As percentage of total reduction*	*Protein (million tonnes)*	*As percentage of total reduction*	*Oilseed (million tonnes)*	*As percentage of total reduction*
Belgium	0·1	1	—	—	—	—
Denmark	0·8	5	—	—	0·1	8
Germany	3·8	24	—	—	0·2	17
Greece	0·1	1	—	—	—	—
Spain	1·3	8	—	—	0·1	8
France	5·9	38	0·4	80	0·5	44
Ireland	0·2	1	—	—	—	—
Italy	0·7	4	—	—	0·1	8
Luxembourg	—	—	—	—	—	—
Netherlands	0·1	1	—	—	—	—
Portugal	—	—	—	—	—	—
United Kingdom	2·7	17	0·1	20	0·2	17

	Cereals (million tonnes)	As percentage of total reduction	Protein (million tonnes)	As percentage of total reduction	Oilseed (million tonnes)	As percentage of total reduction
Total	15·7		0·5		1·1	

Source: Commission statistics.
Note: Minor discrepancies in totals are due to rounding.

Metrication

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set out the chronology of the change from acres to hectares as it has affected returns and claims required by his Department; and the reasons for the change.

Mr. Curry: The Government have been committed to the introduction of metric units for many years and the change from acres to hectares in relation to returns and claims required by this Department is entirely consistent with this policy. The dates when specific changes to hectares were made are as follows:

Agricultural census and survey forms—1976.
Hill livestock compensatory allowances—1976.
Scheme forms and literature for capital grants phasing-in of hectares completed by 1976.
Sheep annual premium scheme—land information required for first time in 1990 when hectares specified.

Sand Dredging

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the studies undertaken by the working party in his Department on the effects of sand dredging.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

My Department has undertaken one specific study on the effects of marine dredging in the Hilbre Swash area of Liverpool bay. This was completed in 1990. Any application to dredge for aggregates which comes before my Department is carefully examined for potential environmental effects including the potential effect on the coastline.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Water (Direct Payments)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications under paragraph 7 of schedule 9 of the Claims and Payments Regulations 1987, for direct payments to water companies have been made to each regional DSS office; how many have been turned down; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Regions were replaced by territories in April 1990. The information requested in respect of each of the Benefits Agency's three territories for the year ending October 1992 is given in the table.

	Scotland and North Territory	Wales and Central England Territory	Southern Territory
Number of applications made	31,500	75,000	47,000
Number of applications rejected	5,000	12,000	9,500

[1] Figures refer to North Territory only as different arrangements for payment of water charges apply in Scotland.
Note: The figures used are based on Management Information Statistics collected by the Benefits Agency in the 12 months period ending October 1992. These figures, which have been rounded to the nearest 500, are provisional and may be subject to amendment.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *70*, what plans he has to extend the system of direct payments to water companies by DSS offices for claimants.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to extend the current arrangements by which direct payments of income support are made to water companies.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report* column 70, if he will list those DSS offices which currently *(a)* make and *(b)* do not make direct payments for benefit claimants to water companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: All of the Benefit Agency's district offices in England and Wales are currently making direct payment to water companies on behalf of those meeting the criteria in paragraph 7 of schedule 9 of the Claims and Payments Regulations 1987.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *70*, if he will list for each DSS regional office the number of people meeting the criteria in paragraph 7 of schedule 9 of the Claims and Payments Regulations 1987, who have direct payments made to the water companies by the DSS.

Mr. Burt: The latest information showing the total number of income support recipients with a deduction for water charges in each of the Benefits Agency's three territories at the end of August 1992 is as follows:

	Number
Scotland and North Territory	28,000
Wales and Central England Territory	80,500
Southern Territory	38,000

Note: The figures used are based on Management Information Statistics collected by the Benefits Agency for the quarter ended August 1992. These figures, which have been rounded to the nearest 500, are provisional and may be subject to amendment.

Disability Payments

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to extend the disability premium to means-tested benefits to people who are registered as partially sighted.

Mr. Scott: We have no such plans. The disability premium in income support, housing benefit and

community charge benefit is available to partially sighted people on the same basis as other long-term sick and disabled people.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what definition his Department uses of bodily functions for the purpose of the award of disability living allowance and attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: Bodily functions are defined in a decision of the Court of Appeal published as an appendix to a reported decision of a national insurance commissioner (decision R(A)2/80).

The Chief Adjudication Officer has advised that the list is not exhaustive and that adjudication officers, who decide individual claims to benefit, should use their own judgment in each case.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will reconsider the proposed change in the arrangements for claims in respect of service-related disability allowance so that claims involving disablement of below 20 per cent. will not be rejected.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 12 November proposals to introduce a threshold for claims for war pension in respect of noise-induced hearing loss so that no award would be made where disablement was less than 20 per cent. It is proposed also to use savings from that change to remove rank differentials in war disablement pensions by moving everyone up to the rate for officers; this would benefit nearly 200,000 war disablement pensioners who would gain up to £5 a week.

These proposals have been discussed with the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions chaired by my noble Friend Lord Henley. We have been considering the proposals following that consultation and will make an announcement shortly.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his target for reducing the time that disability living allowance and attendance allowance claims are taking from the date of initial application to the date the claimant is notified of a successful award.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance and attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Ron Leighton, dated 11 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what is the target for reducing the time that Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) claims are taking from the date of initial application to the date the claimant is notified of a successful award.

The Benefits Agency introduced a standard performance measure across benefits some time ago. This is expressed in terms of clearance targets rather than average clearance times as was previously the case. The term "clearance" refers to the number of decisions made.

As I explained in my letter of 19 October to all MPs the success of the advertising campaign and the policy initiatives surrounding the launch of the benefits attracted a much larger number of applications in the early stages than was expected. The resulting backlog of new DLA and AA claims was successfully tackled following implementation of the remedial measures described in my letter and Disability Benefit Centres are now well within sight of achieving their targets.

I should explain that the primary target set for the clearance of new DLA claims is 60 per cent. of claims to be cleared in 30 days and for AA, 60 per cent. to be cleared in 35 days. At the end of November 1992 55 per cent. of new DLA claims were being cleared in 30 days and 53 per cent. of new AA claims cleared in 35 days. Progress towards fully achieving these targets continues and we expect to meet them shortly.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy is also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what grade of official replies to hon. Members regarding the disability living allowance; once a decision is reached on a case, how soon a written response is made to hon. Members; and what guidance is given to officials dealing with cases referred by hon. Members over replying to hon. Members.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. David Winnick, dated 11 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security concerning the grade of officials replying to honourable Members regarding Disability Living Allowance (DLA) once a decision has been given; how soon a written response is made and what guidance is given to officials replying to honourable Members.

Letters from Members of Parliament (MPs) about DLA addressed to the DLA Unit at Fylde are answered by officials not below the grade of Executive Officer and a number of replies are subject to a check at the level of Higher Executive Officer. Senior managers are consulted on any case which involves an uncommon or sensitive issue.

Once a decision is given on a claim involved in such an enquiry from an MP, the DLA Unit aims to provide a written reply within 48 hours.

Officials involved in written replies are given training in drafting skills and there are written guidelines on drafting technique. Detailed information to be included in the reply is obtained from the relevant operational area.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

National Insurance Benefit

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the numbers and percentages of *(a)* men and *(b)* women above state pension age, who do not receive any national insurance benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: It is estimated that at March 1991 about 110,000 men (3·0 per cent.) and 580,000 women (8·5 per cent.) over state pension age did not receive a national insurance benefit. These numbers include those who received only the graduated benefit element of the retirement pension, but do not show receipt of non-contributory retirement pensions nor income-related benefits (available to those with insufficient resources).

Note: These estimates are subject to a considerable degree of uncertainty (rounding is to the nearest 10,000).

Housing Benefit

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households are receiving housing benefit *(a)* with income support and *(b)* without income support; how many households are having their mortgage interest paid with income support; and what is the average weekly payment in each case, and the total annual costs.

Mr. Burt: The latest available information for 1991-92 for housing benefit is in the table. I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) on 26 October at columns *737-38* concerning mortgage interest paid with income support.

	Expenditure £ million	*Number of households (thousands)*	*Average weekly payment £*
With income support	3,450	2,370	27·80
Without income support	2,128	1,830	22·20
Total	5,578	4,200	25·35

Income Statistics

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what, for the latest date available, are the average weekly incomes excluding mean-tested benefits of *(a)* men aged 65 years and over and *(b)* women aged 60 years and over, distinguishing between husbands, wives, single men and single women respectively.

Miss Widdecombe: Information is not available in the form requested. The latest data available from the 1988 family expenditure survey shows that the average gross income (excluding housing benefit) of a single woman aged 60 and over is £74·90; for a single man aged 65 and over it is £89·80 and for a couple where the husband is over state pension age it is £168·00.

The nature of the survey techniques used in the family expenditure survey means that reliable information about pensioner income from income support is not available, nor can the separate incomes of husbands and wives within a couple be identified reliably.

Chief Adjudication Officer's Report

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will publish the eighth report of the Chief Adjudication Officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The report is being published today. Its findings point to encouraging improvements in some areas of adjudication in Benefits Agency districts, particularly in review action in income support cases. The CAO has also reported good standards of adjudication within the Newcastle and Fylde benefits directorates.

The CAO acknowledges the commitment of the Benefits Agency and Employment Service to better standards of adjudication and the increased emphasis in quality in agency business plans for 1992-93. Both he and I look forward to progress in coming years, particularly in those areas where the CAO found some room for improvement.

The CAO also welcomes the positive responses made to the majority of the recommendations he made in his 1990-91 report and makes further recommendations to build upon the progress made so far.

These recommendations are being considered and we will respond in due course.

Household Incomes

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households there are with incomes below 50 per cent. of the national average in each standard planning region in the United Kingdom; what is this figure expressed as a proportion of the number of households in the region; and what were the equivalent figures for 1979.

Mr. Burt: A reliable regional breakdown of the numbers and proportions living below half average income could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Statistics for the United Kingdom as a whole are available in "Households Below Average Income", a copy of which is in the Library.

Industrial Diseases

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has now given to the recommendations of the report on chronic bronchitis and emphysema, submitted to him by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council on 25 August; and if he will make a statement on the Government's response to the report.

Mr. Scott: The Government published the report on 25 November and is now considering a number of administrative, medical and financial issues raised by the report. We will announce our response as soon as possible.

Council Tax

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the effect of the introduction of the council tax on the standard of living of those of retirement age who are receiving income support or who are just above income support level.

Mr. Burt: With the introduction of the council tax the standard of living for most people on income support will improve, as will that of those on slightly higher incomes. Around 5 million claimants receiving income support, including 1·7 million over-60s, will benefit from the decision not to withdraw the current element added to the income-related benefits to help meet the community charge. The total additional help effectively made available will be around £750 million in 1993-94, £260 million of which relates to people over 60.

Benefit Entitlement

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to publicise benefit entitlement to older people as part of the European Year of Older People 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: The provision of information on benefit entitlement is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Barry Sheerman, dated 11 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your

recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security regarding the publicising of benefit entitlement to older poeple as part of the European Year of Older People 1993.

Analysis of research into the needs of our customers has identified the elderly as a priority group for information on benefits. As part of the European Year of Older People a new leaflet, with an associated poster, is planned for issue in May.

The leaflet will focus on elderly people who have been retired for several years and the Social Security benefits for which they may qualify but are unaware of. It will cover areas such as help on a low income—including help for people to continue living in the community rather than in care—looking after health, sickness and disability benefits, residential care, death of a partner and payment direct to an account. Council Tax Benefit and the new community care arrangements are included. Mention is also made of some services provided within the local community such as low-cost travel and help within the home.

The leaflet will be researched with the target audience to ensure that the language and style are appropriate. It will be distributed through various outlets but particularly to those in contact with elderly people such as day care centres and will be included in post office displays.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will be placed in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Disabled People (Transport)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives for the disabled to discuss their transport needs; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has not met formally with any representatives of disabled people recently to discuss their transport needs, although Scottish Office officials are in regular contact with many of the organisations concerned with the transport needs of people with disabilities.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he gives to the needs of the disabled when deciding transport policy for Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend continues to give full consideration of the needs of disabled people when deciding transport policy for Scotland. The Scottish Office works closely with the Department of Transport's disability unit to ensure that public transport is easier to use and that personal mobility is increased for disabled people.

A Scottish Office official acts as an observer on the Disabled Persons' Transport Advisory Committee, the statutory committee set up to advise the Government on transport and mobility matters relating to disabled people. Two of the 20 members of this Committee are Scottish. The Scottish Office also has an observer on the Access and Mobility Committee of Disability Scotland.

Council Houses

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new council houses were built in each district council area in each year since 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the number of local authority dwellings completed in each district and islands council area is contained in the quarterly Statistical Bulletins published by the Scottish Office entitled "Housing Trends in Scotland", copies of which are in the Library.

Food Group

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made with the Scottish Food Group; and if he will give details of its membership, its terms of reference and its programme of work.

Sir Hector Monro: I expect a full announcement at the beginning of January.

Wool Guarantee

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will delay the removal of the wool price guarantee until 1995.

Sir Hector Monro: No. Our decision to terminate the wool guarantee was taken in 1988, following consultation with the industry. We concluded that such direct involvement in the wool market was no longer appropriate in the face of European Community support measures under the common agricultural policy. The wool industry has had several years in which to prepare for the termination of the wool guarantee and should now be ready to accept financial responsibility for is own affairs.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of maintaining the wool price guarantee *(a)* in Scotland as a whole and *(b)* in the less favoured areas of Scotland in each of the past five years.

Sir Hector Monro: The information is not available in the form requested. The wool guarantee is designed to operate as a price stabilisation mechanism on the basis of advances to, or receipts from, the British Wool Marketing Board. For the United Kingdom as a whole, nett expenditure (or nett receipts) in each of the past five years was as shown.

	£ million
1987-88	(1·9)
1988-89	(3·3)
1989-90	2·2
1990-91	18·2
1991-92	40·8

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to retain the wool price guarantee after 1 May 1993.

Sir Hector Monro: No. Our decision to terminate the wool guarantee was taken in 1988, following consultation with the industry. We concluded that such direct involvement in the wool market was no longer appropriate in the face of European Community support measures under the common agricultural policy. The wool industry has had several years in which to prepare for the termination of the wool guarantee and should now be ready to accept financial responsibility for its own affairs.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the importance of the wool price guarantee to Scottish producers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: I have received representations about the ending of the wool guarantee from several hon. Members.

The effect of ending the guarantee will vary between producers but, on average the return from wool amounts to only about 5 per cent. of total producer returns. Sheep farmers will continue to receive very substantial Government support through ewe premium and hill livestock compensatory allowances. Scottish producers currently benefit by over £90 million in direct subsidies from these sources.

Water and Sewerage Services

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if it remains his policy not to introduce legislation to allow mains water disconnections for non-payment of water bills.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* Scottish water authorities may disconnect non-domestic consumers for non-payment of water bills. They have no powers to disconnect domestic consumers under these circumstances.

My right hon. Friend announced the publication of a consultation paper about the future structure of the Scottish water and sewerage industry on 17 November. He said that once the appropriate option for the industry's future structure had been decided all other factors relevant to that option will also be decided. The consultation period does not expire until 29 January 1993.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many households currently rely on septic tanks for each regional and island authority;

(2) how many households have been connected to mains drainage for each island and regional authority area for the last five years for which figures are available.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* This information is not available.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many households have been connected to mains water supplies for each of the island and regional authorities for the last five years for which figures are available.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many households rely on private water supplies for each of the regions and island authorities areas.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* From information supplied by local authorities we estimate that there are around 30,000 private supplies in Scotland. The available breakdown by regional and island authority areas is given in the table. No information is available on household numbers.

Authority	*Estimated number of private supplies*
Borders	2,415
Central	479
Dumfries and Galloway[1]	815+
Fife	358
Grampian	11,638
Highland[2]	5,294+
Lothian	262
Strathclyde	3,602
Tayside	2,265
Orkney	1,100
Shetland	286
Western Isles	49

[1] Numbers in Nithsdale and Stewartry District Council not known.

[2] Numbers in Skye and Lochalsh District Council not known.

DEFENCE

Polaris

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what decisions have been taken on the methods of disposal for United Kingdom Polaris missiles and their components.

Mr. Aitken: Final decisions have still to be taken on the disposal of Polaris missiles. The methods adopted will take account of all relevant factors, including safety considerations, and advice from appropriate United Kingdom and US authorities.

Reactor Cores

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those sites that are licensed to hold used or unused nuclear submarine reactor cores, listing for each site how many it is licensed to hold and how many it currently holds.

Mr. Aitken: The information the hon. Member requests is as follows:

Site	*Licensed capacity*	*Current holding*[1]
VSEL, Barrow-in-Furness	1 new core	
Naval Reactor Test Establishment, Dounreay	1 used core	1 used core
DML, Devonport	1 new core 2 used cores	1 used core
BTL, Rosyth	1 new core 1 used core	1 used core
BNFL, Sellafield	Not limited by site licence	37 used cores
Rolls-Royce and Associates Ltd., Derby	Not limited by site licence	

[1] These figures exclude cores in submarine reactors.

For security reasons, it is not our policy to comment on the location of new reactor cores.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the last used reactor core was transported to Sellafield; and from where it was moved.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 27 November, *Official Report*, column *895*. The core to which I referred is regarded as used because it had been fitted to a submarine reactor plant, although it remained unirradiated.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he first knew that the used core transportation package flasks used by his Department would have to be replaced.

Mr. Aitken: The current applicable standards are the 1985 International Atomic Energy Agency regulations which came into effect in the United Kingdom in 1991. The first formal indication that the used core transport packages would not, in their existing form, meet those requirements came during 1991 when a case was prepared to license the packages against those regulations. However, the likely need eventually to replace the packages was foreseen some time earlier and work had started on the provision of a new design of container.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the transportation of nuclear submarine reactor cores within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Aitken: The Government attach great importance to nuclear safety and no movement of Royal Navy nuclear submarine fuel has taken place without the relevant Department of Transport licence. Transportation of irradiated used fuel ceased on expiry of the latest licence for the MoD used core transport package in October 1991 and will not recommence until licensed containers are available. A programme is under way to procure replacement containers but this is a complex and technically demanding task and the first new container is not expected to be available before 1995. Other possibilities, including modification of the existing packages, are being explored with the aim of providing a licensed mode of transport for irradiated used cores in the meantime.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many unirradiated nuclear submarine reactor cores are held by his Department; and what are their locations.

Mr. Aitken: For security reasons, it is not our policy to comment on the location of new reactor cores. Two used but unirradiated cores are held by BNFL Sellafield.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expected date of the removal of the reactor cores from HMS Sovereign and HMS Revenge.

Mr. Aitken: The reactor cores in HMS Sovereign and HMS Revenge are currently planned to be removed during 1993 and 1994 respectively.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expected timetable for the introduction into service of the replacements for used core transportation package flasks.

Mr. Aitken: Industry has been invited to tender for a replacement used core transportation package and subject to the outcome we expect to place a contract in 1993. Allowing for the detailed design and proving work that will then be necessary and the demanding engineering standards that apply, we do not expect the first replacement package to be available before 1995.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when used core transportation package flasks were last licensed for use in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Aitken: The last used core transportation package transport licence expired in October 1991.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current locations of the reactor cores from (i) HMS Conqueror, (ii) HMS Warspite, (iii) HMS Courageous, (iv) HMS Churchill, (v) HMS Spartan, (vi) HMS Splendid and (vii) HMS Valiant.

Mr. Aitken: The information the hon. Member requests is as follows:

Submarine	*Location of reactor core*
HMS Conqueror	DML Devonport
HMS Warspite	BNFL Sellafield
HMS Courageous	Aboard submarine at Devonport
HMS Churchill	BNFL Sellafield
HMS Spartan	Aboard submarine at Devonport
HMS Splendid	BNFL Sellafield
HMS Vailant	Aboard submarine at Rosyth

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the cooling pond for used nuclear submarine fuel cores at Rosyth to become operational; and what will be its maximum capacity.

Mr. Aitken: The Rosyth core pond is expected to become operational, for the storage of up to two complete fuel cores, during the latter half of 1993.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the invitation to tender for a new Ministry of Defence used core transport package was issued; what companies have entered bids; and what will be the estimated cost of the new UCTPs.

Mr. Aitken: An invitation to tender for a replacement used core transportation package was issued to Rolls-Royce and Associates in December 1991 and a response is due early next year. An estimated cost cannot be made available before a contract has been placed for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement of 27 November, *Official Report*, column *895*, why an unirradiated unused nuclear submarine fuel core was moved to BNFL Sellafield for safe storage and why it was not reused in another nuclear powered submarine refit at Rosyth or returned to Rolls-Royce and Associates, Derby for recycling.

Mr. Aitken: The core referred to in my answer of 27 November was originally intended to be used in a submarine refit which was subsequently cancelled prior to completion as a consequence of the "Options for Change" review. The core was built to an older design for which there are no opportunities for use in a further refit. The fact that the core has been fitted to a submarine reactor prevented recycling.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what interim measures are being taken to alleviate the problems arising from the halting of transportation of used nuclear submarine fuel cores in used core transport packages from Rosyth and Devonport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Possible interim measures for restoring a licensed mode of transportation for nuclear submarine

used cores, including the use of commercial containers and modification of the existing packages, are being explored. Used cores can remain safely contined within submarine reactors until licensed storage or transport arrangements are available for them. A limited number of used cores may temporarily be stored at Rosyth and Devonport dockyards in accordance with their nuclear installations inspectorate site licences. The relicensing of the core storage ponds at the dockyards to permit additional cores temporarily to be stored there is being pursued.

A91 Building, Aldermaston

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, column *294*, what previous project definition studies have been carried out in relation to the A91 building at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: A definition study for the building that is now designated as A91 was commissioned by the Property Services Agency in July 1980.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 25 June, *Official Report*, columns *298-99*, what is the average level of plutonium contamination in grassed areas inside AWE Aldermaston; and how much of AWE Aldermaston is estimated to be affected.

Mr. Aitken: AWE Aldermaston undertakes routinely an extensive programme of on-site monitoring, involving hundreds of surveys and thousands of measurements each year, for alpha, beta and uranium radioactivity in soil and grass. The average level of plutonium specifically is not measured in most of these surveys, but its activity is included as total alpha. In addition local soil surveys are always undertaken prior to any engineering work in order to confirm that disturbed material will not contain significant levels of radioactivity. Almost all results are very low and show no levels of radioactivity greater than that which occurs naturally or due to worldwide fallout from the atmospheric testing that took place mainly in the 1950s and 1960s. Slightly elevated levels are occasionally measured in some localised areas where certain operations have been conducted. The specific compound referred to in my previous answer on 25 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *298-99*, occupied an extremely small area, less than one thousandth of the total area of the site. The average levels of alpha, beta and uranium radioactivity in soil and grass are indistinguishable from those measured off-site in the general locality of Aldermaston. They do not present radiological dangers to the workers, the general public or to the natural environment.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the design and construction of a solid waste treatment plant as part of the new waste management complex at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: This project has been deferred pending the decision about the requirements of a United Kingdom repository for intermediate-level waste.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the new design and construction of a size reduction facility as part of the new waste management complex at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: This project has been deferred pending the decision about the requirements of a United Kingdom repository for intermediate level waste.

Atomic Weapons Establishments

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will name the three tenders for the contract to operate the atomic weapons establishments.

Mr. Aitken: The three tenderers for the contract to operate the atomic weapons establishments are Babcock NNC Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Babcock International Group plc; Hunting-BRAE Limited and RRO Limited, a joint venture company owned by Rolls-Royce plc and Royal Ordnance plc.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage they are of the total work force.

Mr. Aitken: As at 1 July 1992, the total number of registered disabled persons employed by the Ministry of Defence was some 1,103 representing approximately 0·8 per cent. of the total non industrial and industrial work force. We are not able to break these figures down further, into the two categories requested. The MOD is, however, at present engaged in a Department-wide disability survey, covering both registered and non-registered disability. This will, in due course, provide more detailed and accurate information about our disabled staff to help us improve our performance as an employer of people with disabilities.

Submarine Exports

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to explore the possibility of defence exports of submarines to the western Gulf states and Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Aitken: My Department takes the opportunity to discuss defence exports, including sales of submarines, wherever and whenever it is appropriate. We are always willing to consider responsible defence exports to our friends in that region.

Services Home Saving Scheme

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which financial institutions were chosen to provide the services home saving scheme accounts; and on what criteria the selections were based.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Coombs) on 19 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *296*. The criteria used in selection of the four institutions included the investor protection provided, the institutions' commitment to developing, implementing and marketing the scheme, and the interest rates on offer to service personnel.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the projected cost to his Department of the services home saving scheme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cost of the special savings scheme will depend upon how many service personnel take advantage of the scheme, and the period for which they save. When fully operational, it might cost up to £50 million a year. This will represent a new commitment for which additional provision will be made.

Army Lottery

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual projected saving to the central Army funds expected to be following the introduction of the Army lottery.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There will be no savings to public funds. The planned Army sports lottery is intended to supplement existing sources of non public support for Army sport and welfare activities.

Defence Estate (Public Access)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which projects on improving access by the public on the defence estate have been initiated since July 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department is constantly seeking to improve public access. Since July 1991 improvements have included the following projects:

Coquet Valley—Refurbishment of Barrowdown Old School as an outdoor camping barn, (agreed November 1991.)

Coquet Valley—Development of car parking and picnicking facilities at Windyhaugh School (agreed November 1991.

Praker Wood—Footpath and signposting.

Willsworthy—Public access agreement with Dartmoor National Park, March, 1991.

The publication "Walks on MOD Land" was published in August 1991. A copy is in the Library of the House.

Forces' Clothing

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *546*, what was the expenditure on clothing which was imported for each of the armed forces for each of the last five years.

Mr. Aitken: The information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. I will write to the hon. Member.

Service Personnel

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many personnel in *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Royal Navy and *(c)* the Royal Air Force have been based in England, Scotland or Wales since 1986; what are his estimates for 1993 and 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The figures requested for 1986 to 1992 are given in the table. Estimates for 1993 and 1994 are not available in the form requested.

All figures are for 1 July:

	Royal Navy and Royal Marines	*Army*	*RAF*
1986			
England	50,328	78,781	62,563
Wales	43	793	5,454
Scotland	9,370	3,154	7,177
1987			
England	50,679	78,192	62,035
Wales	41	385	5,650
Scotland	9,217	2,676	7,734
1988			
England	48,774	79,454	61,617
Wales	38	406	5,354
Scotland	9,022	2,550	7,716
1989			
England	47,705	75,602	60,007
Wales	44	415	4,931
Scotland	9,443	3,142	7,450
1990			
England	45,591	74,683	59,368
Wales	45	406	4,805
Scotland	9,092	3,079	7,082
1991			
England	44,187	69,889	59,209
Wales	47	418	4,781
Scotland	9,045	2,318	6,883
1992			
England	44,975	70,722	57,817
Wales	47	418	4,750
Scotland	8,665	2,925	7,170

Cnewr Estate

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the decision was taken to pursue a formal agreement to use the Cnewr estate in the Brecon Beacons national park for military training purposes; what consideration was given when making this decision to the proposed agreement between the Brecon Beacons national park authority and the trustees of the Cnewr estate concerning improved access; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In September this year the MOD responded to an approach from the trustees of the estate. In making that response, MOD was aware of the proposed agreement with the Brecon Beacons national park.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *544*, how his Ministry became aware in May that discussions between the trustees of the Cnewr estate and the Brecon Beacons national park authority were taking place.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The MOD initially became aware of the discussions during an informal meeting between the local defence land agent and the trustees of the estate.

Military Training Land

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the locations of all land where he has published notices of proposed development for military training purposes as required by the Department of the Environment circular 18/84 since 1984, giving the date of issue and whether the development went ahead in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is not held in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 15 December 1992

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Defence Equipment, Iran

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what way the guidelines relating to all deliveries of defence equipment to Iran set by his predecessor on 29 October 1985 cover the export of civilian equipment which could be militarily useful.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Dual use goods and technologies which require a licence to be exported to Iran under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1991, as amended, fall to be considered under the guidelines.

Laws of War

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which of the additional protocols to the Geneva convention on the laws of war have been signed and ratified by Her Majesty's Government; which have been signed but not ratified; which have not been signed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Kingdom signed both additional protocols on 8 June 1977. It has not yet ratified them.

United Nations Charter

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which parts of the charter of the United Nations have not yet been ratified by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Kingdom ratified the United Nations charter on 20 October 1945 without any reservations.

Bosnia

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will propose a review of the role of the United Nations protection force to ensure, within its mandate, its maximum effectiveness in support of the relief effort in Bosnia.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Nations keeps the role and effectiveness of UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina under constant review. The Secretary-General reports his findings and recommendations to the Security Council on a monthly basis.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requests he has received from the Bosnian Government for assistance in establishing a diplomatic residency or office in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We have received no request from the Bosnian authorities about the establishment of a diplomatic mission in the United Kingdom.

Sudan

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Sudan in relation to the persecution of *(a)* Roman Catholics and *(b)* other Christians in that country.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have made clear to the Sudanese Government both bilaterally and in international forums our abhorrence of the systematic abuses of human rights throughout Sudan, and the importance we attach to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, freedom of religion among them. We co-sponsored the United Nations General Assembly resolution on the human rights situation in Sudan, adopted in the third committee on 4 December.

Technology Transfers

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list current proscribed destinations under the COCOM rules; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 7 December, at column *463*.

There are currently 24 destinations proscribed under the Co-ordinating Committee on Multilateral Export Controls—COCOM—rules. These are:

> The Republics of the former Soviet Union (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan), the People's Republic of China, the Czech and Slovak Republic, the Mongolian People's Republic, the People's Democratic Republic of North Korea, the Republic of Poland, Romania and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Hungary was removed from the list of proscribed destinations in May this year. COCOM will consider removing other countries from the list as they make progress in establishing effective control procedures for the export or re-export of sensitive goods and technology.

China

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Chinese Government over the abuse of human rights of prisoners in China's gaols; and if he will raise the matter at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Mr. Goodlad: We have taken every opportunity this year as in past years to raise human rights issues with the Chinese authorities. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did so most recently with Vice-Premier Zhu Rongji in November. My noble Friend Lord Howe and his delegation did so in great detail during their visit to China earlier this month. The delegation's discussions included the treatment of prisoners, and the programme included visits to places of detention. We and our EC partners co-sponsored a resolution on the situation in China,

including Tibet, at this year's full session of the UN Commission on Human Rights. A "no action" motion prevented the resolution from coming to a vote.

Overseas Staff

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to alter the number of grade of staff employed in posts overseas in support of the United Kingdom trade and commercial interests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There are at present no plans to alter the number of grades of staff employed in our commercial effort overseas.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards efforts being made at the United Nations to seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legality of use and threat of use of nuclear weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Government see no need for an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legal status of nuclear weapons. There is no treaty which outlaws nuclear weapons. On the contrary, the non-proliferation treaty explicitly recognises the possession of nuclear weapons by "nuclear-weapon States". The use of nuclear weapons would have to be judged as lawful or not in the light of the particular circumstances in which they were used. Since the use of nuclear weapons might according to the circumstances be lawful, the deterrent threat of their use must also be considered lawful.

Parking Fines, Diplomats

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish up-to-date figures recording the number of unpaid parking fines incurred by each diplomatic mission in London in the first six months of the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested by my hon. Friend is given in the table. The table also includes those international organisations which incurred unpaid fines. The figures may be reduced by late payments.

The total of 2,388 for the first six months of 1992 represents a 20 per cent. reduction from the figure of 3,000 for the same period in 1991. It compares with nearly 67,000 in the first six months of 1984 before publication of the 1985 White Paper. We welcome this further reduction in unpaid parking fines that has been achieved during 1992 and appreciate the co-operation of diplomatic missions since the introduction of the parking policy. We shall continue to monitor carefully the level of unpaid fines and bring pressure to bear on diplomatic missions to reduce this still further.

Unpaid parking fines

Diplomatic mission	*January-June 1992*	*January-June 1991*
Turkey	141	73
Saudi Arabia	126	89
Russia	124	167
France	114	69
Greece	82	80
Nigeria	79	47
China	79	74
Zambia	64	38
Cote D'Ivoire	60	41
Cameroon	59	110
Korea	59	71
Oman	48	42
Sudan	45	51
Cyprus	45	30
Thailand	45	77
India	40	24
Tunisia	40	18
Israel	38	92
Egypt	38	44
Libyan Interests Sec., Saudi Arabia	36	105
Poland	36	115
Spain	34	22
Gambia	31	23
Morocco	30	78
Germany	30	41
Uruguay	30	17
Hungary	29	22
Qatar	27	0
Ghana	27	59
Senegal	25	0
Pakistan	25	78
Romania	23	20
Bangladesh	22	18
Algeria	22	15
Bulgaria	21	61
Mauritius	19	5
Portugal	17	33
United States	15	6
Jordan	15	62
Barbados	14	27
Liberia	14	10
Brazil	14	32
Mexico	12	2
Tanzania	12	25
Japan	11	7
Finland	11	13
Italy	11	20
Zaire	11	10
Ethiopia	10	14
Syria	10	3
Venezuela	10	10
Yugoslavia	10	27
Iraqi Interests Sec., Jordan	10	32
Lebanon	10	4
Angola	9	0
Brunei	9	25
Malaysia	9	11
Jamaica	9	15
United Arab Emirates	9	140
Ireland	8	1
Bahrain	8	21
Canada	7	35
Lesotho	7	5
Guyana	7	26
Gabon	6	22
Iran	6	9
Zimbabwe	6	19
Burma	5	5
Malawi	5	10
Nepal	5	1
Philippines	5	2
Kenya	5	0
Honduras	5	12
Afghanistan	5	0
Cuba	5	8
Yemen	5	14
South Africa	4	4
Guatemala	4	22
Peru	3	7

Diplomatic mission	January-June 1992	January-June 1991
Paraguay	3	4
Czechoslovakia	3	7
Belgium	3	4
Malta	3	1
Sweden	3	4
Botswana	3	0
Uganda	3	5
Chile	2	12
Sri Lanka	2	1
Indonesia	2	3
Austria	2	6
Eastern Caribbean States	2	5
Trinidad and Tobago	2	7
Luxembourg	2	3
Panama	2	8
Australia	2	3
Norway	1	3
Iceland	1	2
New Zealand	1	0
Vietnam	1	9
Fiji	1	3
Sierra Leone	1	18
Mozambique	1	2
Bahamas	1	2
Mongolia	1	5
Colombia	1	0
Tonga	1	0
Seychelles	1	4
Kuwait	0	165
Namibia	0	0
Grenada	0	0
Togo	0	8
Benin	0	0
Belize	0	0
Singapore	0	3
Papua New Guinea	0	2
Ecuador	0	1
El Salvador	0	0
Dominica	0	0
Argentina	0	2
Antigua	0	0
Denmark	0	0
Swaziland	0	1
Nicaragua	0	0
Switzerland	0	0
Netherlands	0	2
Costa Rica	0	1
Bolivia	0	7
International Organisations		
Commonwealth Secretariat	21	13
INMARSAT	5	1
EBRD	2	0
WEU	1	1
Coffee	1	0
EC	1	1
IMO	0	1
Cocoa	0	3
UN	0	0
African Development Bank	0	0
Sugar	0	0
	2,388	3,000

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what diplomatic initiatives he proposes, as EC president, to complement and follow on from the military action in Somalia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The European Council on 12 December issued a declaration supporting the Security Council resolution 794 and expressing the hope that its implementation will encourage national reconciliation. The EC has supported the United Nations proposals to seek reconciliation through local and regional consultations designed to build a framework for national reconciliation.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the United Nations about its performance in Somalia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development visited New York last month to discuss with the Secretary-General and senior United Nations officials the progress of the relief effort in Somalia and plans for stepping up activities including the greater involvement of United Nations agencies. We have stressed the need for the United Nations to provide strong and effective co-ordination of relief operations in Somalia. We have participated in co-ordination conferences organised by the United Nations in Geneva in October and in Addis Ababa this month.

ENVIRONMENT

Homelessness

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make an assessment of the extent of homelessness in Stoke-on-Trent; and how many *(a)* families and *(b)* single people will benefit from the additional funding announced in the autumn statement.

Mr. Baldry: An assessment is made on the basis of the local authority's own estimates contained in its housing strategy statement and statistical returns, together with the homeless indicator in the housing general needs index.

This information is used to inform our decisions on the allocation of housing investment programme allocations to local authorities which will be announced later this month.

The autumn statement made considerable additional resources available for the support of capital programmes which will directly benefit families and single people in housing need:

An increase in Housing Corporation spending to £2·3 billion this year, enabling the immediate purchase of about 16,000 new, empty or repossessed homes for those in housing need. And provide sufficient funds to exceed the target of 153,000 new housing association homes in the three years 1992-93 to 1994-95;

The release of additional local authority capital receipts, which are expected to add about £1 billion to housing spending between now and 1995-96;

And, the creation of a new housing partnership fund where £30 million will be available in the form of supplementary credit approvals to be bid for worthwhile housing investment projects.

Churches National Housing Coalition

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from Stoke-on-Trent representatives of the Churches National Housing Coalition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Ministerial colleagues and I received a number of written and oral representations when the Churches National Housing Coalition lobbied Parliament on 1 December.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much expenditure has been incurred on mandatory home improvement grants in the Hyndburn constituency in each of the financial years since the inception of the current scheme; and what is his estimate, based on recent trends, of the demand for expenditure during the financial year 1992-93.

Sir George Young: The total expenditure on mandatory home improvement grants under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 reported by Hyndburn local authority—whose area is identical to the constituency—since the inception of the current renovation grants scheme is:

	£
1990-91	83,300
1991-92	1,333,500

The Department does not prepare forecasts of expenditure on home improvement grants by local authority area, but reported expenditure on mandatory home improvement grants in Hyndburn for the first six months of financial year 1992-93 is £911,300.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the viability and cost of technology to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from coal-fired power stations.

Mr. Maclean: Improvements in the thermal efficiency of coal fired power stations will reduce the use of fuel per unit of energy produced. This also reduces carbon dioxide emissions per unit of energy. Most coal-fired power stations already incorporate many efficiency improvement measures.

The gasification of coal and the burning of the gas in a combined cycle gas turbine plant can improve the thermal efficiency to about 45 per cent. from about 35 per cent. for a conventional power station. This technology is available and may be used in the longer term.

Building and Construction

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what progress he has made towards commencing his proposed inquiry into the construction industry; and which bodies he has invited to take part;

(2) how much of the estimated sum required to be paid by participants taking part in the project to reduce conflict within the building industry has so far been raised; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will give a breakdown of the cost involved in setting up the group to look at ways to reduce conflict within the building industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Negotiations between the Department and the industry and client organisations are continuing. We hope to conclude these discussions shortly. The following organisations have been invited to take part in the proposed joint review: the Construction Industry Council, the Construction Industry Employers Council, the Confederation of Associations of Specialist Engineering Contractors, the Specialist Engineering Contractor's Group, the National Specialist Contractors Council and the British Property Federation. The estimated maximum budget for the review is £250,000, with half the cost to be met by the Government and half by the other sponsors.

Conference on European Business and the Environment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution was made by Ministers and officials of his Department to the conference on European business and the environment held in Brussels at the end of November.

Mr. Howard: The Minister for the Environment and Countryside and I chaired the conference, and the Minister for Trade and I addressed it. This very successful United Kingdom presidency event highlighted the important role of business in improving Europe's environment. It was arranged in partnership with the European Commission, and a number of officials from my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry were involved in organising and participating in the event.

Environmental Damage

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment's report on financial and civil liability; when he expects to respond to the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities' 1990 report on liability and environmental damage; what reports and proposals he expects to receive from the EC and the Council of Europe on liability for environmental damage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We expect to receive the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment's report on civil liability shortly. I understand that the European Commission proposes to issue a consultation document on civil liability for environmental damage in the new year. It is not clear at this stage what effect this will have on the draft directive on civil liability for damage caused by waste, which was presented by the Commission in 1991. The Council of Europe has prepared a convention on civil liability on which the negotiations have recently been completed. I am not aware of any outstanding responses to the House of Lords Select Committee on European Affairs regarding liability for environmental damage.

Foyer Hostel Schemes

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance his Department is giving to the development of Foyer hostel schemes in England.

Mr. Baldry: My Department's assistance for the development of foyer hostel schemes is channelled through the Housing Corporation, in the same way as for other housing association schemes. The corporation is providing revenue support to five pilot projects based around existing YMCA hostels in Nottingham, Norwich, St. Helens, Romford and Wimbledon. It will also be providing capital funding for two new-build foyer schemes in Birmingham and London; and 20 bed spaces at the London scheme will attract revenue support through

special needs management allowance. Agreement in principle has been given to capital funding for a third project in Salford.

In addition, my Department has seconded an official to the Foyer Federation for Youth—FFY—a limited company established to promote the growth of foyers in this country; and the head of the Department's homelessness policy division attends meetings of the FFY board as an observer.

Public Analyst Service

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what guidance he has issued to the Local Government Commission in relation to the public analyst service;

(2) what representations he has received about the future of local authority scientific services or about the public analyst service in regard to the work of the Local Government Commission and future reorganisation of local government; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what guidance he has issued to the Local Government Commission in relation to the provision of local authority scientific services.

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what guidance he has issued to the Local Government Commission in relation to the public analyst service;

(2) what guidance he has issued to the Local Government Commission in relation to the provision of local authority scientific services.

Mr. Robin Squire: In response to the 1991 consultation paper on local government structure, representations were received from the Association of Public Analysts as well as from other organisations such as the Institute of Environmental Health Officers and the Society of County Trading Standards Officers.

The policy guidance issued to the Local Government Commission emphasises the importance of regulatory and enforcement functions of local authorities. We have also issued to the commission a new comprehensive descriptive list of all local government functions, which is publicly available. This contains chapters on environmental protection, environmental health and consumer protection.

The commission must ensure that all functions, particularly those which involve protecting all aspects of the local environment, will be satisfactorily performed by any new authority it recommends.

Environmental Information

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the implication for the appeal mechanisms in force under the public registers provisions within integrated pollution control of the incorporation into United Kingdom law of EC directive 90/3B/EEC on the freedom of access to environmental information in 1993.

Mr. Maclean: None. At present information may be withheld from the integrated pollution control—IPC—public register only on grounds of commercial confidentiality or national security. The EC directive on freedom of access to information on the environment contains similar exemptions. As the existing provisions under IPC and the requirements of the directive are compatible, the appeals mechanism for the exclusion of information from public registers will not be affected by incorporation of the directive into United Kingdom law.

Planning Policy Guidance Notes

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department now proposes to publish the proposed planning policy guidance notes made arising from the revision of his Department circular 8/87.

Mr. Baldry: A draft for consultation will be published in the new year.

Sellafield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent information he has received from Her Majesty's chief inspector of pollution in respect of the application by British Nuclear Fuels for authorisation to operate the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Maclean: The chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution informed me when he and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food proposed to go out to public consultation on their proposed new draft authorisations for British Nuclear Fuels' Sellafield site.

Organic Waste Collection

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will fund a pilot project to enable Stoke-on-Trent city council to introduce organic waste collection; if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have made £15 million in supplementary credit approvals—SCAs—available for local authority recycling investment in England in 1993-94, as part of our environmental partnership scheme. The Department invited applications from Stoke-on-Trent city council and other English local authorities for these SCAs on 17 November 1992. A copy of the letter making the invitation has been placed in the Library. We will consider any application from the city council, along with applications from other authorities, against the criteria set out in that letter.

Derelict Land Grant

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much derelict land grant was paid in each of the last five years with respect to reclamation schemes in the borough of Thamesdown; and which were the schemes.

Mr. Robin Squire: Derelict land grant expenditure in the borough of Thamesdown in the last five years is shown in the table. All the expenditure relates to a scheme to reclaim former quarry land at Queens park, Swindon for public open space.

	Expenditure (£)
1987-88	512,015
1988-89	401,545
1989-90	96,927

	Expenditure (£)
1990-91	444,553
1991-92	6,659
[1]1992-93	20,000
Total	1,481,699

[1] Forecast.

Customs House, Dundee

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the sums spent from Government funds in each of the past five years on the refurbishment of the Customs House building in Dundee, formerly occupied by Customs and Excise.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer about the cost of restoration work given to him by my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General on 14 December *Official Report*, column *62*. All Customs and Excise expenditure was in the financial year 1990-91.

Shrewsbury Castle (Bombing)

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice and assistance from his Department's funds he has been able to extend to Shrewsbury and Atcham borough council, owners of Shrewsbury castle, following bomb damage in August.

Mr. Robin Squire: Neither my Department nor the Department of National Heritage has received any request for advice or assistance from Shrewsbury and Atcham borough council in respect of the bomb damage to Shrewsbury castle in August.

Fish (Pollutants Report)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the report "Chlorinated Organic Pollutants in Fish from the North-East Irish Sea", which his Department has partly funded.

Mr. Maclean: The report "Chlorinated Organic Pollutants in Fish from the North East Irish Sea" was prepared under a sub-contract by the department of the environment and evolutionary biology of the university of Liverpool, as part of a DOE research contract with WRc plc for a study of the sources and fates of synthetic organics. The main contract final report is on sale through the Foundation for Water Research, and is available in the DOE library. The sub-contract report is also available to the public in the DOE library. Copies of both reports have been deposited in the House of Commons Library.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the procedure for local authorities in appealing against their standard spending assessments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. and learned Friend announced his proposals for standard spending assessments for 1993-94 on 26 November 1992. There is now a period of consultation until 31 December 1992 during which local authorities and Members of Parliament may make written representations about any aspects of SSAs. We will also try to satisfy as many requests for meetings as is practical during this period. All representations will be carefully considered before decisions are announced in January 1993.

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the local authority associations on changes to the criteria for standard spending assessments for 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 9 December 1992]*: The proposals which were announced on 26 November as part of the provisional revenue support grant settlement followed extensive discussion with the local authority associations about the methodology for standard spending assessments. We are now in the middle of a period of formal consultation on these proposals which continues until 31 December. So far we have received a letter from the chairman of the London Boroughs Association setting out a number of areas of concern to London boroughs and requesting a meeting. We have also received a letter from the Association of County Councils expressing concern at the provision for spending on the fire service within SSAs for 1993-94. All representations from the associations and individual local authorities will be carefully considered before final decisions are reached in the new year.

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the proposed increases in standard spending assessment and revenue support grant for 1993-94 over 1992-93 for Brighton, Blackpool and Southend-on-Sea; and Dorset, Sussex, Lancashire and Essex;

(2) what is his proposed increase in standard spending assessment and revenue support grant for Bournemouth for 1993-94 over 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 10 December 1992]*: The proposed increase in SSA between 1992-93 and 1993-94 for the authorities requested is shown in the table. The 1992-93 figures used in making the comparisons have been adjusted for major changes in function, mainly the transfer of further education, so that they are comparable with the 1993-94 figures.

Under the community charge system revenue support grant—RSG—is paid into collection funds. In shire areas there is no separate grant towards county and district level services. The distribution of RSG depends, among other factors, on the amount which could be raised from relevant adults in the area and the income from non-domestic rates—NDR—which is distributed in line with relevant adults. Under the council tax, RSG will be paid to all tiers of authorities and will depend, among other factors, on the income which could be raised from the taxbase of equivalent dwellings. The income from the NDR will depend on resident population. It is thus not possible to provide the grant figures requested on a comparable basis.

Increase in provisional 1993-94 SSA over adjusted 1992-93 SSA

Local authority	£ million
Bournemouth	0·080
Brighton	1·880
Blackpool	1·447
Southend-on-Sea	−0·728
Dorset	12·376

Local authority	£ million
East Sussex	27·575
West Sussex	14·503
Lancashire	17·808
Essex	34·806

Housing, Rotherham

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new homes will be provided by Rotherham borough council in 1993-94; what is the total provision from central funds which will be received by the authority in support of capital expenditure on housing; and what capital expenditure he expects the authority to incur next year.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* The level of housing capital expenditure in Rotherham in 1993-94 is a matter for the borough council to decide in the light of the available resources. The authority's proposed programme for housing capital expenditure in 1993-94, included in its housing investment programme—HIP—submission, contains no expenditure on new housebuilding by the council. Details of local authority HIP allocations for 1993-94 will be announced later this week.

Council Tax (Students)

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he will make it his policy to enable local authorities to charge business rates on those properties rented exclusively to students and whose occupants are exempt from council tax;

(2) what estimate he has made of the loss in revenue arising from the exemption of students from council tax liability in respect of *(a)* students residing in accommodation provided by institutions of higher education and *(b)* students residing in privately rented accommodation.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* Halls of residence and student-only dwellings have been exempted from the council tax because most students are not eligible to claim council tax benefit. The imposition of business rates on such properties would result in higher rents for students. The Government do not intend to take such a step.

Local authorities will be compensated for the revenue forgone as a result of this exemption through the revenue support grant system. No local authority will therefore be financially penalised for the presence in its area of students.

Vehicle Noise

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been undertaken to date by his Department in developing a standard method of measuring noise levels from moving vehicles.

Mr. Carlisle: As the matter is within the remit of the Secretary of State for Transport, I have been asked to reply. A new vehicle type-approval test was established in the 1960s, as since then the United Kingdom has applied relevant EC directives which are subject to it. More recently, the Department of Transport has been carrying out research concerning the noise generated by tyre/road interaction and supporting the work of an International Standards Organisation (ISO) working group looking at traffic noise. This group is evolving a Transport Research Laboratory system for assessing road traffic noise into an International standard. When this is completed, we anticipate that the United Kingdom system will be universally acknowledged and will provide a uniform measure for this environmental nuisance.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Chipmunks

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the welfare of caged chipmunks for sale in pet shops; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have received no representations about the welfare of chipmunks sold as pets in pet shops. The welfare of animals sold as pets is protected by the Pet Animals Act 1951, as amended, which requires any person keeping a pet shop to be licensed by the local authority.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish tables, for 1991 and for 1990, showing the number of *(a)* young adults and *(b)* juveniles committing each category of offence and a breakdown showing the percentage under each category who were sentenced to each type of sentence or order;

(2) if he will list for each category of offence the number of offences committed by *(a)* juveniles and *(b)* young adults in each police force area; and what percentages this was of the total number of offences in each category in each of the last five years for which figures are available.4

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* Information on convictions and cautions within police force areas by age and offence group, is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" supplementary tables volume 3.

Figures showing the number of offenders cautioned and convicted by type of sentence given, age and offence group is also published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" supplementary tables volumes 1, 2 and 3. Copies of all the publications referred to above are available in the Libarary.

The 1991 volumes will be published in the new year.

Hazelton UK

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is to be taken on licensing irregularities in the animal procedure carried out in the current year at Hazelton UK in respect of its use of primates.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Two, unrelated, technical irregularities in blood sampling in rats and monkeys, discovered in March and May of 1992, were dealt with at the time by the inspector.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department's inspector

responsible for sanctioning the conditions at Shamrock (GB) Ltd. and Hazelton United Kingdom retain responsibility for implementing improved conditions.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Yes.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *215*, if he will make a statement on the quality of his Department's previous inspections at Shamrock (GB) Ltd. and Hazelton United Kingdom institutions.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Shamrock (GB) Ltd and Hazelton United Kingdom were inspected respectively four and nine times in 1991 and six and fourteen times in the period January to September 1992. It is difficult even for unannounced visits, however frequent, to detect the failures of care, handling and management which were revealed at Shamrock by the detailed investigation which was carried out following receipt of the allegations made by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection. None the less, the incident shows that the system is able to respond quickly to such allegations, and to take tough and effective action where necessary.

I consider that the inspectors responsible for the two establishments acted conscientiously to ensure the well-being of the animals concerned. With hindsight, the programmes of cage replacement agreed at Shamrock and Hazelton seem over-generous and these have now been accelerated in the light of the findings of the investigation. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that the inspectors would have taken steps to require immediate improvements if it had ever become apparent that overt animal suffering was being caused by the caging in use.

Police Supernumerary Posts

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department has taken itself or via the inspectorate of constabulary, to encourage any police force to seek to hold supernumerary posts in the coming year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many supernumerary posts the Thames Valley police asked to be allowed to hold in 1992-93 and 1993-94; and how many have been permitted by his Department in each case.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I shall arrange for a written reply to be sent to the hon. Member.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance was offered *(a)* by his Department and *(b)* by the inspectorate of constabulary on the criteria against which he would consider allowing police authorities to hold supernumerary posts in the coming year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question by him on 14 December 1992, at column 6. Police authorities were informed of these criteria in March 1991.

HIV

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to make it an offence for a person deliberately to infect another with the HIV virus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have considered this matter very carefully in the light of the concern which has been expressed, and have looked at the precedents in other countries. I have concluded, however, that there are difficulties both of principle and of practice in bringing this type of behaviour within the scope of the criminal law and I am not persuaded that these difficulties have been overcome in other jurisdictions. I, therefore, have no plans to introduce legislation to make the deliberate transmission of the HIV virus a criminal offence.

High-Risk Prisoners

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes have been made to the role of the category A committee for high-risk prisoners in the light of the security audit undertaken by Mr. Hadfield and Mr. Lakes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In the light of the security audit undertaken last year by Mr. Hadfield and Mr. Lakes, it has been decided to change the procedures for reviewing the security status of category A prisoners. Security status will continue to be reviewed on conviction and at least annually there after, but referral to the category A committee will be limited to new cases and to those cases where recommendations have been made for a change to the security category either by the holding prison or by prison service headquarters.

The category A committee comprises senior officials of the prison service, including governors and staff of prisons normally holding category A prisoners; a senior medical officer; and a senior police adviser. Its role is:

(i) to consider whether prisoners recently convicted of very serious offences should be retained in security category A, which is reserved for those whose escape from prison custody would be highly dangerous to the public or the police or the security of the State;

(ii) to consider all cases of category A prisoners where recommendations have been made for a change in security status; and to review cases where no such recommendations have been made for five years; and

(iii) to make recommendations to the director general of the prison service.

All other cases will be considered at least annually by officials of the directorate of custody.

The new procedures are designed to improve efficiency in the administration of category A prisoners while ensuring that changes in security status are well founded and that no prisoner remains in category A any longer than is necessary.

Crime Statistics, Dorset

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the percentage change since 1979 in *(a)* police manpower, *(b)* recorded crime and *(c)* population in Dorset; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The requested information is as follows:

	per cent.
(a) police manpower[1]	14·6
(b) recorded crime[2]	121·6
(c) population[3]	12·6

[1] Actual strength for April 1979 and September 1992.
[2] Based on annual figures for notifiable offences recorded by the police in 1979 and 1991.
[3] Based on the population figure for mid-1979 and the estimated figure for mid-1991.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what sums were expended by his Department on European Drug Prevention Week additional to those already expended through other programmes; and for what purposes.

Mr. Jack: The additional Home Office expenditure on European Drug Prevention Week amounted to £393,000. The bulk was used by the 20 local drugs prevention teams set up under the drug prevention initiative, to produce over 220 events and projects across the country during the week, with the aim of further raising awareness of drug and solvent misuse. The remainder included funds spent on publicity and promotional material as well as organisation costs.

Royal Holloway and Bedford New College

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps the Charity Commission took in considering Royal Holloway and Bedford New college's proposal to sell pictures from its collection to *(a)* consider and take advice on surveys of the buildings and *(b)* consider the college's alternative plans for raising the money; if he will list those surveys commissioned or considered; and what information was received from the college on its financial needs;

(2) what steps the Charity Commission took in considering Royal Holloway and Bedford New college's proposal to sell pictures from its collection to *(a)* seek advice on the integrity of the collection from (i) directors of national museums or art collections or (ii) independent experts and *(b)* consider the provisions on the use of paintings in the 1883 deed of foundation; if he will list the experts whose advice was taken into account; and what alternative educational use was considered for the pictures.

Mr. Jack: The foundation deed of 11 October 1883 does not make provision as to any specific use for the pictures. The trusts relating to the pictures are contained in an indenture of 5 August 1881. I understand that the commissioners were asked to make a scheme to change the trusts of the 1881 deed to allow certain pictures to be sold for the purpose of providing a fund without which the main purpose of Thomas Holloway's Foundation could not be maintained.

It was for the college to satisfy the commissioners that it had considered the options before it on the basis of proper advice. It was for the commissioners to satisfy themselves that the case was supported by appropriate evidence, not to seek independent advice.

In reaching their decision the commissioners had before them evidence provided by the college both as to the state of the buildings, the estimated costs of repairs and the financial position of the college including evidence of efforts made to raise the necessary funds. They also had the evidence produced by the objectors to the scheme which was examined with equal care.

The terms of the 1881 deed were considered very carefully on a number of occasions. Specifically the deed did not provide any educational use for the pictures. I understand that the commissioners' view was, therefore, that the integrity of the collection was not central to the consideration of this matter by the commissioners.

Asylum (Children)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many asylum applications made by unaccompanied children under 16 years were determined

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information relates to unaccompanied children applying at the ports since November 1990 and is given in tables A and B. Corresponding information for January to October 1990 is not available. The information in table A, for November 1990 to December 1991, is of children aged 16 or under: separate figures for those under 16 are not available. The information in table B, for January to November 1992, is of those under 16.

Information on in-country application by unaccompanied children is not available in this form.

As I indicated in my reply to the hon. Member for 25 November, columns *647-48*, information on decisions on applications by unaccompanied children is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Table A

Unaccompanied [1]children[2] applying for asylum on their arrival in the United Kingdom, by nationality, November 1990 to December 1991

	1990		1991											
	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Afghanistan	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	3
Angola	1	—	—	—	—	1	3	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Bangladesh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Ethiopia	4	3	—	2	1	1	2	3	1	—	—	—	3	—
Ghana	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
India	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Iran	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Somalia	2	—	2	2	—	—	1	1	1	4	—	4	3	4
Sri Lanka	7	1	8	2	2	6	9	4	4	4	9	9	—	9
Turkey	—	—	1	2	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	—
Uganda	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Yugoslavia	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Zaire	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	2
TOTAL	16	5	12	8	3	10	15	8	8	12	10	15	8	19

[1]Unaccompanied at the point of their arrival, and not known to be joining a close adult relative in the United Kingdom.
[2]Aged 16 or under. The figures involve some estimation since in certain cases the precise date of birth is not available.

Table B

Unaccompanied[1] children[2] applying for asylum on their arrival in the United Kingdom, by nationality, January to November 1992

	January	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*
Afghanistan	—	2	—	—	1	—	—	2	1	—	—
Angola	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ethiopia	—	—	4	1	—	—	2	—	—	1	1
Ghana	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
Lebanon	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	—
Malaysia	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sierra Leone	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Somalia	2	2	1	4	—	2	5	3	2	1	4
Sri Lanka	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	—	—
Sudan	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Turkey	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Uganda	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Yugoslavia	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	5
Zaire	1	1	—	—	5	—	—	—	—	1	—
TOTAL	4	9	7	7	8	7	10	7	5	4	12

[1]Unaccompanied at the point of their arrival, and not known to be joining a close adult relative in the United Kingdom.
[2]Under 16 years of age. The figures involve some estimation since in certain cases the precise date of birth is not available.

Remand

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many persons currently held on remand in gaols in England and Wales have been held for *(a)* up to six months, *(b)* exceeding six months but less than 12 months, *(c)* exceeding six months but less than 18 months, *(d)* exceeding 18 months but less than 24 months, *(e)* exceeding 24 months but less than 36 months and *(f)* more than 36 months;

(2) what assessment he has made of the reasons for the delay in coming to trial for persons held on remand in gaols in England and Wales for periods exceeding 18 months; and to how many cases each reason applies.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* The latest readily available information held currently is given in the table.

Population of untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners in prison service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1992[1]: by length of time since first remand into a prison service establishment.

Length of time since first remanded into a prison service establishment[2]	*Number of Prisoners[3]*
Up to 6 months	8,160
Over 6 up to 12 months	1,190
Over 12 up to 18 months	170
Over 18 months up to 2 years	30
Over 2 up to 3 years	10
Over 3 years	—
All lengths	9,560

[1] Excludes 845 prisoners held in police cells.
[2] Excludes any time spent in non-prison service establishments before reception on remand into a prison service establishment; includes any subsequent time which may have been spent on bail.
[3] Provisional rounded estimates.

I regret that information on the reasons for delay in relation to individual persons who have been held for periods in excess of 18 months is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Wellbury House

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what inspection has been carried out into the fire regulations at Wellbury House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 8 December 1992]:* Wellbury House boarding school, Great Offley, was inspected by Hertfordshire fire and rescue service on 4 February 1992. Conditions were thought to be such that persons using the basement and upper floors would be at serious risk from a fire. A notice under section 10 of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 was duly issued the following day.

The notice prohibited the use of the basement and upper floors pending work to remedy the deficiencies identified by the inspecting officer. I understand, however, that no such work has been done. The premises are therefore inspected each month to ensure that the prohibition notice is being observed.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministerial Travel Expenses

Mr. Hatton: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total expenditure for travel by Ministers on European Community business, divided into fares and subsistence for each parliamentary Session from and including 1987-88 to 1991-92 in *(a)* cash and *(b)* 1991-92 prices.

The Prime Minister: The information can be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Regional Planning Guidance

Ms. Walley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the arrangements for ensuring that regional planning guidance issued by the Department of the Environment and regional briefs produced by the Department of Transport are each drafted with regard to the other.

The Prime Minister: Regional planning guidance and regional briefs giving information on transport issues are

prepared with regard to each other. There is close consultation between the two Departments which have joint regional offices.

Land Sales

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Prime Minister what rules govern the disclosure of information concerning the sale of land owned by Government Departments with regard to the location of the land, sale price and name of purchaser; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government adopt normal commercial practice in relation to the disclosure of the details of land transactions. The terms on which land has been sold and the identity of the purchaser are treated as commercial in confidence. Information should not be disclosed without the agreement of both parties.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 December.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Talking Books

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has as to which local authorities supply a free talking book service to the visually impaired from the local library service; and if he will make a statement about such provision.

Mr. Key: Information about which local authorities supply a free talking book service to the visually impaired is not collected centrally.

Library authorities generally exercise their responsibilities towards visually impaired people by providing as wide a selection as possible of large print books and cassette recordings of books. Large print books are part of the book lending service and must be provided free of charge. Many authorities also loan cassette recordings of books free of charge to the visually impaired. Some library authorities provide reading machines, and in some cases braille transcription services. The Royal National Institute for the Blind—RNIB—talking books service, as such, is not generally regarded as an indispensible element of a library service for blind people, and any charge which might be made for the talking book service does not, of itself, constitute any infringement of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

However, we recognise that more needs to be done to develop public library services for blind people. That is why we have been jointly funding the RNIB's "Share the Vision" project, which is examining various ways of developing the public library as the primary point of access to information services as a whole for visually impaired people.

National Sports Museum

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) if he will give consideration to the establishment of a national sports museum in the region, in conjunction with the north-west bid for the Olympic games;

(2) if he will consider sponsoring the establishment of a national sports museum in Liverpool.

Mr. Key: I have received no proposals from the Manchester bid committee to establish a national sports museum.

Government support for new museums is provided by the Museums and Galleries Commission through its network of area museum councils. Applications for grant assistance from the commission must demonstrate that the project is well conceived, and that the governing body is willing to work towards the standards set out for the registration of a museum by the commission.

Art Treasures

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he will advise to secure national art treasures in view of the Windsor fire; if he will make it his policy for the public to have the right to view such treasures free of charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* I have commissioned an inquiry into fire protection at all royal palaces for which my Department has financial responsibility in the light of the Windsor castle fire and will consider carefully the recommendations of the inquiry. Responsibility for fire protection at national museums and galleries is vested in the trustees who may seek advice from whatever sources they consider to be most appropriate. It is for those responsible for the care and presentation of national art treasures to decide whether or not a charge is made to view them.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the latest information on the epidemic of BSE in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: I am placing in the Library of the House a note summarising the latest evidence about the epidemic. All the evidence continues to point to infected ruminant protein as the origin of the epidemic, and to justify confidence that the ban on feeding such material to ruminants will bring about its end.

WALES

Welsh Language

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his plans to promote the Welsh language.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government will soon be placing before Parliament a Welsh Language Bill. The Bill will

require public bodies serving Wales to prepare schemes covering the use they will make of Welsh in providing services to the public. It will also establish a statutory Welsh Language Board and amend previous legislation in respect of Welsh.

The Bill will be a further step in the Government's unprecedented programme of support for the Welsh language, as part of which we are making available £7·6 million in grants for Welsh language organisations and projects in the current financial year. We are also continuing to implement the introduction of Welsh as a national curriculum subject in all schools in Wales.

Cardiff Bay

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives of Cardiff Bay development corporation; and what was discussed.

Mr. David Hunt: I meet the chairman of Cardiff Bay development corporation regularly to discuss a variety of issues.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the process of consultations between Cardiff Bay development corporation and the Welsh Office.

Mr. David Hunt: Under the terms of its financial memorandum, Cardiff Bay development corporation is required to prepare and submit to the Welsh Office a corporate plan looking three years ahead of the current financial year. There are formal consultations on this plan. In addition, there is informal discussion between officials on a day-to-day basis.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the relationship between Cardiff Bay development corporation and *(a)* Cardiff Bay Management Ltd. and *(b)* Cardiff Bay Investment Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Cardiff Bay (Management) Ltd. and Cardiff Bay (Investment) Ltd. were both incorporated in May 1989 and are wholly owned subsidiary companies of the corporation. In the published accounts of the corporation as at 31 March 1992 they were described as dormant and this status is unchanged. In each case the authorised share capital is £1,000 and the issued share capital is £2 being two shares of £1 each.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the Government funds given to Cardiff Bay development corporation each year since its inception; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is given in figure 6.01 in "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1992-93 to 1994-95: A Report by the Welsh Office", Cm 1916, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) which factors in the environmentally sensitive area programme account for savings to common agriculture policy expenditure, in order of their costs;

(2) if he will collate and tabulate the total savings in common agriculture policy expenditure arising from the environmentally sensitive area scheme since its inception, per year and in total for each scheme and for Wales as a whole.

Mr. David Hunt: The main factor that could account for savings to CAP expenditure is the requirement to reduce stocking densities in order to protect specific wildlife habitats and landscape characteristics of the areas. An assessment of likely savings is contained in the interim report prepared by the University college of Wales, Aberystwyth, on the socio-economic aspects of designation. This report was issued in June 1991 as technical background to the consultation paper relating to the Cambrian mountains (original) ESA, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House. The final report is expected to be published early in the new year.

AIDS

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of reported AIDS cases for Clwyd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: At the end of September 1992 the total number of AIDS cases who were known to live in Clwyd was 14, of whom 12 had died.

Noise Nuisance

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many noise nuisance complaints have been received by each local authority in Wales during each of the last three years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office does not have this information on a local authority basis. Figures for Wales in total for 1988-89 and 1989-90—1990-91 data are not yet available—can be found in table 3.29 of the "Environmental Digest for Wales No. 6 1991", copies of which are held in the Library of the House.

Garden Festival Wales Ltd.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the auditing arrangements he has put in place for Garden Festival Wales Ltd.

Mr. David Hunt: This is not a matter for the Secretary of State for Wales. The two local authority sponsors, Blaenau Gwent borough council and Gwent county council have established a limited company, Garden Festival Wales Ltd. Audit arrangements are covered under the Companies Acts.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what contingency arrangements he has put in place to mitigate the impact on either *(a)* local authority and *(b)* urban programme projects in the event of Garden Festival Wales Ltd. making a loss.

Mr. David Hunt: I have made no contingency arrangements. The two local authority sponsors Blaenau Gwent borough council and Gwent county council agreed in the 1990 revised business plan to accommodate any losses.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to publish *(a)* the management accounts and *(b)* final accounts of Garden Festival Wales Ltd.

Mr. David Hunt: Garden Festival Wales Ltd. expect its final accounts, which will include management accounts, to be available at the end of this financial year.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of Garden Festival Wales Ltd. expenditure and revenue outturn on the approvals he will make regarding local government expenditure in Wales *(a)* in the current financial year and *(b)* 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: The final position of Garden Festival Wales Ltd. has not yet been reported to me.

Commercial Fishing Boats

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many commercial fishing boats are currently registered at each Welsh port; and how many people are directly employed.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are 950 commercial fishing vessels registered in Wales. Comprehensive data on port of registry are not available centrally. In 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 1,165 full-time and 511 part-time employees in the Welsh fishing industry.

Farmers

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of farmers in Wales are currently aged *(a)* between 55 and 65 years and *(b)* over 65 years.

Mr. David Hunt: According to the latest EC farm structure survey, carried out in 1990, some 26 per cent. of farmers in Wales were aged between 55 and 64 years and 23 per cent. were aged 65 years and over.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his proposals for emergency planning consequent upon his proposals for local government reorganisation.

Mr. David Hunt: Emergency planning is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who will announce any proposals in the light of my decisions on local government reorganisation.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will publish the Bill for the reorganisation of local government of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I will be announcing my decisions on local government reorganisation in due course, and will publish my Bill to implement reorganisation at an appropriate time thereafter.

Farmers (Retirement)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received calling for the implementation of a pension scheme to assist early retirement amongst farmers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Hunt: Several.

Fishing Fleet

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total tonnage catch of all species made by the Welsh fishing fleet for each year since 1980.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Data on fish landings in Wales are contained in the annual publication, "Digest of Welsh Statistics", copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Council House Sales

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list *(a)* the number and *(b)* the value of council house sales by district council in each year since 1985 in (i) cash terms and (ii) prices, using 1985 as a constant.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is given in the tables.

Table 1
Sales of council dwellings (number)

District	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*[1]1992-93*
Alyn and Deeside	76	103	137	233	306	125	86	29
Colwyn	66	74	75	118	122	51	26	14
Delyn	65	96	129	114	157	81	55	39
Glyndwr	63	67	63	178	145	51	21	11
Rhuddlan	30	46	85	140	111	58	24	8
Wrexham Maelor	154	199	188	439	932	309	165	82
Carmarthen	59	74	79	126	119	100	80	35
Ceredigion	57	79	74	179	228	114	83	54
Dinefwr	52	74	76	122	108	84	39	15
Llanelli	159	171	206	414	316	164	123	57
Preseli Pembrokeshire	104	100	122	314	365	152	91	66
South Pembrokeshire	45	41	67	132	133	74	47	16
Blaenau Gwent	108	153	171	356	486	174	131	46
Islwyn	175	233	263	379	289	89	99	39
Monmouth	140	129	193	242	244	92	85	32
Newport	341	275	277	515	592	164	110	52
Torfaen	150	334	317	425	524	282	160	103
Aberconwy	82	87	81	235	237	76	42	12
Arfon	65	72	63	191	188	65	46	24
Dwyfor	27	15	13	31	40	44	16	7
Meirionnydd	57	56	52	89	91	39	34	12
Ynys Mon	96	75	65	270	324	131	58	14
Cynon Valley	76	103	124	146	175	119	82	33
Merthyr Tydfil	167	185	216	304	298	122	66	22
Ogwr	318	325	382	590	488	244	156	62
Rhondda	55	81	59	104	111	87	34	25

District	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	[1]1992-93
Rhymney Valley	196	274	260	364	392	247	144	79
Taff-Ely	266	293	377	537	561	234	146	73
Brecknock	90	99	92	172	150	65	50	9
Montgomeryshire	70	89	57	130	141	51	251	27
Radnorshire	28	23	45	52	50	26	19	8
Cardiff	611	775	591	1,038	1,071	281	241	76
Vale of Glamorgan	207	223	195	451	338	111	84	41
Port Talbot	280	281	295	421	442	185	159	62
Lliw Valley	117	129	145	169	254	175	79	25
Neath	124	146	200	299	309	137	78	36
Swansea	207	254	381	876	834	337	250	86

[1] April to September 1992 only.
Source: Welsh Office housing statistics form WHO7, as submitted by the Welsh district authorities.

Table 2
Value of sales of council dwellings at current prices (£000)

District	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	[1]1992-93
Alyn and Deeside	651	840	1,178	2,236	3,868	2,047	1,301	414
Colwyn	544	605	687	1,283	1,491	738	409	270
Delyn	542	795	1,166	1,073	2,124	1,350	907	591
Glyndwr	541	586	589	1,799	1,898	781	336	186
Rhuddlan	230	363	732	1,456	1,475	973	437	151
Wrexham Maelor	1,133	1,613	1,636	3,989	10,906	4,142	2,505	1,309
Carmarthen	553	721	818	1,489	1,790	1,679	1,260	626
Ceredigion	627	916	821	2,206	3,149	1,835	1,444	947
Dinefwr	442	698	676	1,129	1,261	1,186	558	215
Llanelli	1,158	1,287	1,459	3,120	3,244	2,168	1,684	803
Preseli Pembrokeshire	1,050	989	1,160	3,378	4,455	2,280	1,371	1,068
South Pembrokeshire	426	415	718	1,739	2,007	1,126	836	252
Blaenau Gwent	953	1,390	1,476	3,087	5,232	2,165	1,711	598
Islwyn	1,501	2,106	2,327	3,905	3,944	1,323	1,479	597
Monmouth	1,561	1,546	2,425	3,633	4,468	1,817	1,909	645
Newport	3,005	2,807	3,101	6,748	9,413	3,108	1,918	959
Torfaen	1,211	3,523	3,374	4,127	9,102	4,727	2,884	1,481
Aberconwy	683	728	677	2,376	3,034	1,078	722	239
Arfon	539	590	550	1,946	2,483	1,035	741	426
Dwyfor	221	111	115	320	644	560	282	95
Meirionnydd	435	480	463	913	1,174	561	504	170
Ynys Mon	794	626	599	2,744	5,045	1,791	914	226
Cynon Valley	632	857	1,018	1,147	1,446	1,092	830	358
Merthyr Tydfil	1,349	1,519	1,874	2,623	2,903	1,276	722	252
Ogwr	2,602	2,961	3,562	6,203	6,170	3,566	2,339	959
Rhondda	370	546	431	736	884	807	375	286
Rhymney Valley	1,607	2,421	2,359	3,544	4,258	3,285	1,952	836
Taff-Ely	2,246	2,492	3,279	4,852	6,387	3,168	2,095	1,082
Brecknock	860	957	1,021	2,003	2,006	1,008	879	169
Montgomeryshire	716	948	571	1,639	2,286	904	872	410
Radnorshire	309	248	534	704	811	459	354	179
Cardiff	6,079	8,428	6,338	11,850	17,229	5,313	4,406	1,408
Vale of Glamorgan	2,246	2,648	2,381	6,197	5,198	1,993	1,533	869
Port Talbot	1,931	2,129	2,623	4,126	5,124	2,307	2,137	922
Lliw Valley	858	1,000	1,128	1,345	2,872	2,302	1,285	386
Neath	919	1,243	1,748	2,723	3,297	1,873	1,096	530
Swansea	1,741	2,209	3,616	8,828	9,297	4,306	3,113	1,153

[1] April to September 1992 only.
Source: Welsh Office housing statistics form WHO7, as submitted by the Welsh district authorities.

Table 3
Value of sales of council house dwellings at 1985-86 prices[2] (£000)

District	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	[1]1992-93
Alyn and Deeside	651	814	1,082	1,914	3,107	1,523	905	276
Colwyn	544	586	631	1,098	1,198	549	285	180
Delyn	542	770	1,071	919	1,706	1,004	631	394
Glyndwr	541	568	541	1,540	1,525	581	234	124
Rhuddlan	230	352	672	1,246	1,185	724	304	101
Wrexham Maelor	1,133	1,563	1,502	3,415	8,760	3,081	1,743	874
Carmarthen	553	699	751	1,275	1,438	1,249	877	418
Ceredigion	627	887	754	1,888	2,529	1,365	1,005	632
Dinefwr	442	676	621	966	1,013	882	388	143
Llanelli	1,158	1,247	1,340	2,671	2,606	1,613	1,172	536
Preseli Pembrokeshire	1,050	958	1,065	2,892	3,578	1,696	954	713
South Pembrokeshire	426	402	659	1,489	1,612	838	582	168

District	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	[1]1992-93
Blaenau Gwent	953	1,347	1,355	2,643	4,202	1,610	1,190	399
Islwyn	1,501	2,040	2,137	3,343	3,168	984	1,029	398
Monmouth	1,561	1,498	2,227	3,110	3,589	1,352	1,328	430
Newport	3,005	2,719	2,848	5,776	7,561	2,312	1,334	640
Torfaen	1,211	3,413	3,099	3,533	7,311	3,516	2,007	988
Aberconwy	683	705	622	2,034	2,437	802	502	160
Arfon	539	572	505	1,666	1,994	770	516	284
Dwyfor	221	108	106	274	517	417	196	63
Meirionnydd	435	465	425	782	943	417	351	113
Ynys Mon	794	606	550	2,349	4,052	1,332	636	151
Cynon Valley	632	830	935	982	1,161	812	577	239
Merthyr Tydfil	1,349	1,472	1,721	2,245	2,332	949	502	168
Ogwr	2,602	2,869	3,271	5,310	4,956	2,653	1,627	640
Rhondda	370	529	396	630	710	600	261	191
Rhymney Valley	1,607	2,346	2,166	3,034	3,420	2,444	1,358	558
Taff-Ely	2,246	2,414	3,011	4,153	5,130	2,356	1,458	722
Brecknock	860	927	938	1,715	1,611	750	612	113
Montgomeryshire	716	918	524	1,403	1,836	672	607	274
Radnorshire	309	240	490	603	651	341	246	119
Cardiff	6,079	8,165	5,821	10,144	13,839	3,952	3,066	940
Vale of Glamorgan	2,246	2,565	2,187	5,305	4,175	1,482	1,067	567
Port Talbot	1,931	2,063	2,409	3,532	4,116	1,716	1,487	615
Lliw Valley	858	969	1,036	1,151	2,307	1,712	894	258
Neath	919	1,204	1,605	2,331	2,648	1,393	763	354
Swansea	1,741	2,140	3,321	7,557	7,468	3,203	2,166	770

[1] April to September 1992 only.
[2] Calculated using GDP deflator.
Source: Welsh Office housing statistics form WHO7, as submitted by the Welsh district authorities.

Hospital Closures

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the hospitals which have *(a)* partially and *(b)* wholly closed in Wales, during each year since 1989-90.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on partial closures is not available centrally. Information concerning the number of hospitals which closed wholly, and are still closed, is given in the table.

	Hospitals which closed	Hospitals which opened
1989-90	—	—
1990-91	7	1
1991-92	[1]8	1

[1] Includes one hospital closed for refurbishment.

Sheep Scab

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to control sheep scab disease in Wales in the light of its reduction from a full notifiable status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 24 November, at column *628*.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to reinstate sheep scab disease to full notifiable status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government have no plans to reintroduce controls on sheep scab.

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many non-departmental public bodies had fully expensed executive car leasing schemes in the year 1991-92; how many have revised them since; if he will issue updated guidelines on such schemes to all such bodies in Wales; if he will list which bodies had schemes which involve *(a)* free petrol and oil to executives benefiting, *(b)* no contribution to the leasing costs and *(c)* contributions of less than two sevenths of the total lease costs to the executives in the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: One non-departmental public body, the Welsh Development Agency, had an executive car leasing scheme which in 1991-92 did not require repayments for personal mileage. Repayments for petrol and oil commenced from 1 April 1992. The Development Board for Rural Wales —DBRW—had a scheme which required no contribution to leasing costs for some executives, including the chief executive, who also received full petrol and oil, and less than two sevenths from others. As stated in the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on the DBRW's 1991-92 accounts, this matter is being pursued by the Welsh Office. Guidance produced by the Treasury's central unit on purchasing on car contract hire or lease schemes was passed to Welsh non-departmental public bodies this year.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to issue a comprehensive statement on delegated powers to Welsh non-departmental public bodies; if he will place a copy of the statement in the Library; what proposals he has to keep it up to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Delegations to non-departmental public bodies—NDPBs—are set out in the financial memoranda, guidelines and other control documents applying to the individual bodies.

These are kept under review and amended in the light of changing circumstances. The Welsh Office has recently taken action to remind NDPBs of the delegations currently in force.

Training, Education and Enterprise

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about resources for training, education and enterprise in Wales in 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: I attach great importance to training and education, and to the encouragement of enterprise. It is by developing people's abilities that our economy is strengthened and grows. I have established a department of training, education and enterprise to take the opportunity which we have uniquely in Wales to combine our efforts across these sectors. I am pleased to announce that a total of £559·4 million will be available for these sectors in 1993-94. This includes £248·5 million recurrent and £21·5 million capital expenditure for higher education, £129·3 million recurrent and £13·9 million capital for further education and £146·2 million for training. These resources will assist the further and higher education institutions in meeting rising demand and offer a sound basis for the work of the training and enterprise councils in delivering training and supporting enterprise.

I am placing in the Library of the House copies of letters which are being sent today to chairmen of training and enterprise councils in Wales and to the chief executives of the higher and further education councils in Wales.

Housing for Wales

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what resources will be made available to Housing for Wales to support development in the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: In gross terms the resources available to Housing for Wales will amount to over £129·5 million in 1993-94. Taking account of associated private sector funding, the overall programme will be worth over £190 million next year. Compared to provision this year, my plans provide an uplift of about 5 per cent. in cash terms. Next year excluding the likely additional benefit of in-year transfers from local authorities, the allocation I have made will ensure that Housing for Wales's core annual production target can be raised from the present 3,500 to 3,650 homes. As regards current expenditure, I shall be making available almost £7·1 million in 1993-94 to cover the costs of the special needs management allowance scheme. This is of particular importance in supporting the housing component of our strategies for the vulnerable groups in Wales. It amounts to an 18 per cent. increase over provision for 1992-93.

Noise-induced Hearing Loss

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the number of claimants in Wales who will not be eligible to claim for noise-induced hearing loss as a result of the decision to exclude those whose claim is for less than 20 per cent. disablement.

Mr. Scott: I have been asked to reply.

The information on which to base a separate estimate for Wales is not available. The proposed change would bring war pension rules for claims in respect of noise-induced hearing loss more into line with those for occupational deafness under the industrial injuries scheme.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tax Relief and Allowances

Mr. Knox: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the yield if *(a)* the personal income tax allowances, *(b)* mortgage interest income tax reliefs and *(c)* employers' employees' and personal pension income tax reliefs were restricted to *(a)* 25 per cent. and *(b)* 20 per cent. income tax.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest estimates of the direct revenue yields in a full year with the 1992-93 levels of allowances and tax rates are as follows:

	Restriction to 25 per cent. £ million	*Restriction to 20 per cent. £ million*
(i) All main income tax allowances	1,500	6,800
(ii) Mortgage interest relief[1]	—	1,000
(iii) Pension contribution reliefs[2]	470	1,100
(iv) Combination of (i), (ii) and (iii)	2,100	9,000

[1] Mortgage interest relief is currently restricted to the basic rate of tax.

[2] Employees' contributions to occupational pension schemes and contributions to personal pensions including retirement annuity premia and free-standing additional voluntary contributions.

The yield from restricting the rate of relief on employers' contributions to pension schemes would depend on the method by which such contributions were allocated to individual employees.

No account has been taken of possible behavioural changes resulting from such restrictions.

Value Added Tax

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning the introduction of VAT on newspapers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I have received a number of representations about this issue. The Government have no present plans or proposals to extend the scope of VAT to newspapers.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many businesses have been wound up as a result of Customs and Excise taking action on value added tax in the last available year; and what percentage that represents of the number of businesses that ceased trading in that period.

Mr. Dorrell: Figures for businesses that cease trading are not collected centrally. During the year ending 31 March 1992, there were 42,676 insolvencies, in 6,775—16 per cent.—of which Customs and Excise were the petitioning creditors. In virtually all of these cases, other creditors were also involved.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the annual change in the revenue to the Exchequer if a reduced rate of value added tax at 6 per cent. were imposed on *(a)* the bloodstock industry, *(b)* funeral undertakings and cremations, *(c)* theatre and cinema tickets and video retail sales, *(d)* all snack foods, including chocolate, confectionary and chocolate coated biscuits and *(e)* admission to all sporting events.

Mr. Dorrell: Precise costings are not available. The following estimates are based on consumers' expenditure data and make no allowance for the likely behavioural response to the change in the VAT rate:

	£ million (1991-92 prices)
Bloodstock industry	−5
Theatre and cinema admissions and video retail sales	−120
All snack foods	−930
Admissions to all sporting events	−40

All snack foods include chocolate biscuits, confectionery, crisps, nut products, soft drinks and ice cream. These items are almost all standard rated at present.

Funeral undertakings and cremations are presently exempt from VAT. The revenue effect from applying a VAT rate of 6 per cent. would need to take account of input tax which would be reclaimed at the standard rate of VAT. The revenue effect is likely to be close to zero.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will meet the editor of the *Biddulph and Congleton Chronicle* to discuss concerns about the removal of VAT zero-rating on newspapers.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government have no present plans or proposals to extend the scope of VAT to newspapers. I do not think that any useful purpose would be served by a meeting at this time.

Interest Rate Cuts

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to make retail banks pass on the interest rate cuts more rapidly to their customers.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced at the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee hearing on 16 November that he intended to ask the Bank of England to have another look at the interest rates the banks charge their business customers and also to meet the bank chairmen when he has the opportunity.

Tobacco and Alcohol Taxation

Mr. Parry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to facilitate the convergence of tobacco and alcohol taxation in the EC by *(a)* reducing current United Kingdom taxes or *(b)* making no further increases in taxation, until such convergence is achieved.

Sir John Cope: A commitment to rate convergence is not necessary for the successful establishment of the single market and would unduly constrain my right hon. Friend's Budget flexibility.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects convergence of tobacco taxes to be achieved in the European Community.

Sir John Cope: Recent directives have brought greater uniformity to the coverage and structure of EC tobacco duties, and have set minimum duty rates. For cigarettes the agreed minimum duty incidence is 57 per cent. of the retail price at the most popular price category. We accepted this reluctantly in the interests of agreement on a package of indirect tax measures, as we had been pressing for a minimum duty in cash terms. We intend to return to this issue in the first review of EC duty rates due by the end of 1994.

We are committed to reducing smoking in the United Kingdom and have already undertaken, in the White Paper "The Health of the Nation", Cm 1986, at least to maintain the real level of the tobacco taxes. During our presidency of the EC, we have strongly advocated to finance and health colleagues the merits of using taxation to support health objectives. To avoid our own health and fiscal policy being adversely affected, we would like to see upwards convergence of EC duty rates towards United Kingdom levels.

Crown Estate Commissioners

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the amount of tax paid or other contributions made to the Consolidated Fund by the Crown Estate Commissioners since 1962.

Mr. Lamont: The Civil List Act 1952 provides that the net income from the Crown estate, after defraying costs of collection and management, is paid into the Exchequer. The costs defrayed include VAT where applicable, but the Crown estate is not subject to corporation, income or capital gains tax.

The net income paid into the Consoidated Fund for each financial year since 1962 was published in the *Official Report* of 2 July at columns *659-60*. The payment for 1991-92, then provisional, has since been confirmed at the same figure, £70 million.

Taxation

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer of 17 December 1991, to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), *Official Report*, column *121*, to provide similar estimates of the burden of direct and indirect taxes for the years 1991-92 and 1992-93; and if he will publish any revisions for earlier years.

Mr. Dorrell *[pursuant to his reply, 24 November 1992, c. 569]:* Updated figures for 1991-92, including estimates of community charge payments, and the latest estimates for 1992-93 for direct taxes and indirect taxes excluding the community charge are given in the table on a similar basis as that provided to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East on 17 December 1991.

Estimates of community charge payments in 1992-93 for specimen households are not yet available.

Income tax, National Insurance contributions and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings 1991-92

	Multiples of average earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1,000*	*2,000*
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	25·25	45·79	66·33	107·42	169·25	300·73	432·21	563·69	826·65	1,221·09	2,535·89
NICs	11·15	18·55	25·94	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46
Total income tax and NICs	36·40	64·34	92·28	138·88	200·71	332·19	463·67	595·15	858·11	1,252·55	2,567·35
VAT	—	13·25	17·73	27·44	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	18·42	22·76	32·18	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community Charge	—	6·86	7·05	7·45	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	102·88	139·82	205·96	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	15·4	18·6	20·2	21·8	25·7	30·5	32·9	34·3	35·9	37·1	38·6
NICs	6·8	7·5	7·9	6·4	4·8	3·2	2·4	1·9	1·4	1·0	0·5
Total income tax and NICs	22·1	26·1	28·1	28·2	30·5	33·7	35·3	36·2	37·3	38·1	39·1
VAT	—	5·4	5·4	5·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·5	6·9	6·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community Charge	—	2·8	2·1	1·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	41·7	42·5	41·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	16·98	37·52	58·06	99·15	156·02	287·50	418·98	550·46	813·42	1,207·86	2,522·66
NICs	11·15	18·55	25·94	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46
Total income tax and NICs	28·13	56·07	84·01	130·61	187·48	318·96	450·44	581·92	844·88	1,239·32	2,554·12
VAT	—	12·23	17·10	27·67	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	20·58	25·04	34·74	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community Charge	—	11·09	11·22	11·49	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	99·96	137·37	204·51	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	10·3	15·2	17·7	20·1	23·7	29·2	31·9	33·5	35·4	36·7	38·4
NICs	6·8	7·5	7·9	6·4	4·8	3·2	2·4	1·9	1·4	1·0	0·5
Total income tax and NICs	17·1	22·7	25·6	26·5	28·5	32·3	34·3	35·4	36·7	37·7	38·9
VAT	—	5·0	5·2	5·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·3	7·6	7·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community Charge	—	4·5	3·4	2·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	40·5	41·8	41·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, both working											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	1·14	21·68	42·22	83·31	124·40	212·49	325·27	456·75	719·71	1,114·15	2,428·95
NICs	7·51	14·91	22·30	37·09	51·49	62·92	62·92	62·92	62·92	62·92	62·92
Total income tax and NICs	8·65	36·59	64·53	120·41	175·88	275·41	388·19	519·67	782·63	1,177·07	2,491·87
VAT	—	13·99	19·27	29·84	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	23·73	27·59	35·30	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community Charge	—	11·67	11·72	11·82	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	85·98	123·11	197·37	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	0·7	8·8	12·8	16·9	18·9	21·5	24·7	27·8	31·3	33·9	36·9
NICs	4·6	6·0	6·8	7·5	7·8	6·4	4·8	3·8	2·7	1·9	1·0
Total income tax and NICs	5·3	14·8	19·6	24·4	26·8	27·9	29·5	31·6	34·0	35·8	37·9
VAT	—	5·7	5·9	6·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	9·6	8·4	7·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community Charge	—	4·7	3·6	2·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	34·9	37·5	40·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, two children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	0·85	21·39	41·93	83·02	139·89	271·37	402·85	534·33	797·29	1,191·73	2,506·53
NICs	11·15	18·55	25·94	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46
Total income tax and NICs	12·00	39·94	67·88	114·48	171·35	302·83	434·31	565·79	828·75	1,223·19	2,537·99
VAT	—	12·10	17·61	29·59	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	20·33	23·76	31·19	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community Charge	—	10·82	11·43	12·64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	83·18	120·68	187·91	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

	Multiples of average earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1,000*	*2,000*
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	0·5	8·7	12·8	16·8	21·3	27·5	30·6	32·5	34·7	36·3	38·1
NICs	6·8	7·5	7·9	6·4	4·8	3·2	2·4	1·9	1·4	1·0	0·5
Total income tax and NICs	7·3	16·2	20·7	23·2	26·1	30·7	33·0	34·4	36·0	37·2	38·6
VAT	—	4·9	5·4	6·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·2	7·2	6·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community Charge	—	4·4	3·5	2·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	33·7	36·7	38·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Income tax, National Insurance contributions and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings
1992-93

	Multiples of average earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1,000*	*2,000*
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	24·76	46·39	68·01	111·26	180·01	318·41	456·81	595·21	872·01	1,287·21	2,671·21
NICs	11·79	19·58	27·36	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67
Total income tax and NICs	36·55	65·96	95·37	143·93	212·68	351·08	489·48	627·88	904·68	1,319·88	2,703·88
VAT	—	14·13	18·85	29·13	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	18·55	22·88	32·32	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	98·65	137·11	205·39	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	14·3	17·9	19·7	21·4	26·0	30·7	33·0	34·4	36·0	37·2	38·6
NICs	6·8	7·5	7·9	6·3	4·7	3·1	2·4	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·5
Total income tax and NICs	21·1	25·4	27·6	27·7	30·7	33·8	35·4	36·3	37·4	38·1	39·1
VAT	—	5·4	5·4	5·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·1	6·6	6·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	38·0	39·6	39·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	16·50	38·12	59·75	103·00	166·78	305·18	443·58	581·98	858·78	1,273·98	2,657·98
NICs	11·79	19·58	27·36	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67
Total income tax and NICs	28·29	57·70	87·11	135·67	199·45	337·85	476·25	614·65	891·45	1,306·65	2,690·65
VAT	—	13·03	18·17	29·36	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	20·75	25·14	34·72	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	91·50	130·40	199·70	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	9·5	14·7	17·3	19·8	24·1	29·4	32·1	33·6	35·5	36·8	38·4
NICs	6·8	7·5	7·9	6·3	4·7	3·1	2·4	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·5
Total income tax and NICs	16·3	22·2	25·2	26·1	28·8	32·5	34·4	35·5	36·8	37·8	38·9
VAT	—	5·0	5·3	5·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·0	7·3	6·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	35·2	37·7	38·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, both working											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	1·48	19·68	41·26	84·51	127·76	224·42	346·79	485·19	761·99	1,177·19	2,561·19
NICs	8·01	15·79	23·58	39·15	53·80	65·34	65·34	65·34	65·34	65·34	65·34
Total income tax and NICs	9·49	35·48	64·84	123·66	181·76	289·76	412·13	550·53	827·33	1,242·53	2,626·53
VAT	—	15·07	20·65	31·80	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	24·02	27·83	33·44	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	74·57	113·32	190·90	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	0·9	7·6	11·9	16·3	18·5	21·6	25·1	28·0	31·5	34·0	37·0
NICs	4·6	6·1	6·8	7·5	7·8	6·3	4·7	3·8	2·7	1·9	0·9
Total income tax and NICs	5·5	13·7	18·7	23·8	26·2	27·9	29·8	31·8	34·2	35·9	38·0
VAT	—	5·8	6·0	6·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	9·3	8·0	6·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	28·7	32·8	36·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, two children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	−0·95	20·67	42·30	85·55	149·33	287·73	426·13	564·53	841·33	1,256·53	2,640·53

	Multiples of average earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1,000*	*2,000*
NICs	11·79	19·58	27·36	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67
Total income tax and NICs	10·84	40·25	69·66	118·22	182·00	320·40	458·80	597·20	874·00	1,289·20	2,673·20
VAT	—	12·96	18·78	31·46	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	20·45	23·90	31·42	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	73·66	112·34	181·09	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	−0·6	8·0	12·2	16·5	21·6	27·7	30·8	32·6	34·7	36·3	38·2
NICs	6·8	7·5	7·9	6·3	4·7	3·1	2·4	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·5
Total income tax and NICs	6·3	15·5	20·1	22·8	26·3	30·9	33·2	34·5	36·1	37·3	38·6
VAT	—	5·0	5·4	6·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·9	6·9	6·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	28·4	32·5	34·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Notes:

1. Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances and only have income from employment. All earners, including wives, are assumed to pay class 1 NI contributions at the contracted-in rate.

2. Since 1990-91, husbands and wives have been taxed independently. Previously, the tax liability of couples depended on their joint income. To permit comparisons with earlier years, the table therefore shows income tax and national insurance contributions paid by a married couple as a proportion of their joint income, assuming, as in the earlier years, that where both partners are earners, the husband and wife share the relevant multiple of earnings in the ratio 60:40.

3. In order to provide comparability with 1987-79, when support for children was given partly through child tax allowance, child benefit is treated as a negative income tax for the married couple with two children.

4. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. These are £328·70 per week in 1991-92 and is estimated to be £346·00 per week in 1992-93, based on the Autumn Statement earnings growth assumption of 5¼ per cent. in 1992-93.

5. The estimates of indirect taxes apart from the community charge are based on equations derived from the 1985 family expenditure survey, uprated to later years using forecasts of aggregate tax receipts. They are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved. There are wide variations in spending patterns between households with the same composition and similar incomes and estimated payments of VAT and other indirect taxes are therefore approximate, even within the income range for which figures are shown. Outside this range, the margin of error is even higher and reliable estimates cannot be made. Because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between estimates obtained from family expenditure surveys for different years.

6. Estimates of the burden of the community charge has been derived from the 1991 family expenditure survey. All respondents were assumed to pay the charge to which they were liable. The calculations include water charges in order to put the estimates on a comparable basis to the estimates for earlier years. Community charge payments are net of transitional relief and community charge benefits. Since community dharge payments vary widely between households with similar incomes, the estimated charge payments are only approximate.

Safes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the necessity of distinguishing between the value of the production of safes and the value of the production of armoured doors for safes in the EUROPROD COM returns was required by the European Community or evolved nationally; and what value he places on this distinction.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* The text of the PRODCOM questions refers to

"armoured or reinforced safes and strong boxes"

and

"armoured or reinforced doors . . . for strong-rooms".

These are two entirely separate products and have been distinguished from one another for many years in both United Kingdom domestic production statistics and in external trade statistics. The distinction between a safe and the armoured door for a strong-room is a necessary and useful one. The definitions are required by the European Community.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Yugoslavia

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what humanitarian aid has been given to prisoners in Serbian concentration camps by direct intervention, or through the Red Cross or the United Nations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The International Committee of the Red Cross—ICRC—takes the lead role in providing humanitarian aid to detention camps. It has committed over £18 million in humanitarian aid to all victims of the conflict throughout the former Yugoslavia so far, to which the United Kingdom has directly contributed £1·8 million. We are also channelling humanitarian aid to the former Yugoslavia through the EC, which has in turn made contributions to assist the Red Cross. In November the ICRC reported that it had visited a total of 20 detention camps containing 5,404 detainees. Of those, six were in Serbian-controlled areas and contained 4,103 detainees.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid is currently granted to his Department to *(a)* Austria, *(b)* Hungary and *(c)* Slovenia to assist displaced refugees from the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: To date we have committed over £70 million—£29·5 million bilaterally and £41 million through the EC—towards the relief programme in the former

Yugoslavia. Our aid is planned in co-operation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees who co-ordinates the international relief effort in the region. The priority is the supply of humanitarian relief to central Bosnia, where the suffering is greatest. But some of the aid through the EC, UNHCR and other international organisations has been used to assist displaced people in Slovenia. Figures detailing the amount of this aid are unavailable. No United Kingdom bilateral aid has been given to Austria or Hungary.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to offer more money to displaced refugees from the former Yugoslavia over and above the money granted to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees/ UNICEF/World Health Organisation appeal.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is already our policy to provide support to displaced people in former Yugoslavia over and above the money granted towards the UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO appeals. We are providing support to the ICRC and non-governmental organisations, as well as direct bilateral assistance in such things as the rehabilitation of existing buildings in order to provide shelter for displaced people. We have so far committed over £70 million towards the humanitarian relief effort in the former Yugoslavia. This is in addition to the cost of the 2,400 British troops we have made available to the UN protection force—UNPROFOR.

Tropical Timber

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will detail the proposals put forward *(a)* directly by the Government and *(b)* through the EC during the United Kingdom's presidency concerning the reform of the international tropical timber agreement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have proposed focusing the objectives of the international tropical timber agreement on the achievement of the year 2000 target for all internationally traded tropical timber to come from sustainably managed sources. We have also proposed measures to improve the operational performance of the International Tropical Timber Organisation and its ability to help tropical timber producing countries meet this target. We act in close co-ordination with our EC partners who share these objectives.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what mechanisms have been established by the Overseas Development Administration to monitor the performance of the International Tropical Timber Organisation in attaining its target of sustainable management of tropical timber.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We will monitor information from a range of sources including national reporting of progress towards the year 2000 target and reliable independent assessments of the sustainability of timber production as these are developed.

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the British contribution to the United Nations military effort in Somalia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We will pay our full share of United Nations operations in Somalia in accordance with assessed contributions. We have provided two RAF transport aircraft and accompanying personnel to support the US-led coalition's actions in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution 794. We will also pay our share of the EC's commitment to assist with the funding of the Belgian contributions to military operations in Somalia.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice he has given to British aid agencies in Somalia about their role during the military initiative in Somalia by the United Nations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has discussed the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 794 with representatives of British non-governmental organisations working in Somalia twice in the last three weeks and with senior US Government officials. She has stressed the need for regular liaison between the military commanders and NGOs in the planning and execution of Operation Restore Hope.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution Britain has made in diplomatic and humanitarian terms to the area of the former British Somaliland during the period since the end of the civil war in Somalia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We provide humanitarian assistance to northern Somalia in response to requests from United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations. Since Siad Barre's fall in January 1991, Britain has provided £2 million in emergency humanitarian relief to northern Somalia. Since the British embassy in Mogadishu was closed in early January 1991, officials have visited northern Somalia on three occasions and maintained informal contact in London, Nairobi and Addis Ababa with representatives of Somali groups. We have also pressed the United Nations, at all levels, to take account of northern Somalia's distinct needs.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice, help and support he has given to the Republic of Somaliland since September with a view to assisting the re-establishment of law and order.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have advised the authorities in north-west Somalia to co-operate with the United Nations Somalia initiative. This recognises the need for assistance with the establishment of law and order through the creation of local police forces.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what sums of money he has *(a)* offered and *(b)* provided to pay administrator police and militia in northern Somalia, Republic of Somaliland, since September.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received no formal requests for assistance with the establishment of a police force or a militia in northern Somalia; nor have we made any offers to do so.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what role he expects the

United Kingdom to play in the mission to provide relief aid to Somalia; and to what extent United Kingdom efforts will be directed towards aid and reconstruction in the north of Somalia, Republic of Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Britain is already a major donor of humanitarian assistance to Somalia. On 4 December my noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development announced a new pledge of £4·5 million. This brings our total commitment of humanitarian assistance to Somalia this year to £31·5 million, including our contribution to European Community actions. These resources are available to support the work of British and international non-governmental organisations and United Nations agencies throughout Somalia.

Crown Agents and Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for the future status of the Crown Agents and Commonwealth Development Corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Ministers have decided to review the status of the Crown Agents. Consultants will be appointed to advise on the feasibility of various options, including retention in the public sector. Account will be taken of the implications of any change for the Crown Agents' existing clients, which include a wide range of international aid donors, the Overseas Development Administration and many overseas Governments.

Similarly, options for the future status of the Commonwealth Development Corporation—CDC—are being examined in the context of the current quinquennial review. The recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, contained in its recent efficiency scrutiny of the CDC, are being considered as part of this review.

In commissioning these reviews, Ministers recognise the valuable role that both Crown Agents and the CDC play in their respective spheres of activity.

Forests

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Yokohama conference on forest conservation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* Two meetings relating to forest conservation were held in Yokohama recently. These were the 13th International Tropical Timber Council—ITTC—and the first preparatory committee for the renegotiation of the international tropical timber agreement—ITTA. Some progress was made in the ITTC towards our objective of improving the capacity of the International Tropical Timber Organisation to help tropical timber producing countries manage their forests sustainably. The ITTA renegotiation will continue in a second preparatory committee meeting in Quito, Ecuador in January.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy at the conference at Yokohama on the conservation of northern forests.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* Two meetings relating to forest conservation held in Yokohama recently were the 13th International Tropical Timber Council and the first preparatory committee for the renegotiation of the international tropical timber agreement. The ITTC and ITTA focus on international trade in timber from tropical forests.

We are pursuing our policies towards the conservation of non-tropical forests in other forums such as the meetings next year of European Forestry Ministers in Helsinki and of Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe members in Montreal.

Along with other European Community and G7 Governments, we are committed to producing plans for the implementation of the forest principles agreed at the UN Conference on Environment and Development last June and for the establishment of an international review process.

DEFENCE

Munitions Orders

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with Royal Ordnance plc about future orders for munitions from his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I discussed future ammunition requirements, among other matters, with representatives from British Aerospace defence group and Royal Ordnance plc on 18 November. I also refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) on 8 December, *Official Report*, column *614*, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) on 24 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *730*.

Operation Granby

Mr. Menzie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the items of equipment lost during Operation Granby and the cost of replacement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Full information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Work is still continuing in inspecting items returned from the Gulf and the final replacement costs will not be known for some time. The Comptroller and Auditor General stated in a note to the class I appropriation accounts 1991-1992, Cm 197-I, that he was

"generally satisfied that, in the circumstances, the Department took all reasonable steps to maintain control over their stores and equipment".

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many containers of equipment were lost during Operation Granby; and what each contained.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Some 7,000 containers were used in the Gulf, and 87 remained unaccounted for when action was taken in July 1992 to compensate their owners and to write them off. No record is available of what, if anything, these containers held.

Explosives and Propellants Agreements

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his plans for the future of the explosives, propellants and related products agreements which were signed in 1987 when Royal Ordnance was privatised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) on 8 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *614*.

Legal Immunity

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what public legislation is not applicable to the operations of his Department; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement about the application of Crown immunity to the operations of his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence is in general subject to regulatory requirements and enforcement arrangements on the same basis as others, except where there is a legitimate reason for exemption, for example on grounds of national security. Even in circumstances where the Department is not bound by legislation it is the Ministry's policy that it should comply as though requirements applied to it wherever this is appropriate and practicable. Since the repeal in 1987 of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947, the position of service personnel injured on duty is the same in relation to the Ministry of Defence as that of any other employees and their employer.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Standing Committees

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many Standing Committees have been set up so far in this Parliament; what was the ratio of Government, main Opposition and minority Opposition party members serving on each committee; and if he will show, in rising numerical order, the ratios for Standing Committees from 16 to 60.

Mr. Newton: (i) As of Monday 30 November, 12 Bills have been committed to Standing Committee in the current Session. The Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments have been constituted on 38 separate occasions. There are also two Standing Committees on European Documents.

(ii) The ratios of Government, main Opposition and minority Opposition party Members on each of these committees were as follows:

Bill	*Size of Committee*	*Conservative*	*Labour*	*Other*
Asylum and Immigration Appeals	22	12	9	1
Bankruptcy (Scotland)	20	11	8	1
British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals)	22	12	9	1
Cardiff Bay Barrage	20	11	8	1
Civil Service (Management Functions)	18	10	7	1
Community Care (Residential Functions)	21	11	9	1
Education	33	17	14	2
Finance	34	18	14	2
Housing and Urban Development	32	17	14	1
Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland)	20	11	8	1
Sea Fish (Conservation)	18	10	7	1
Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights	30	16	13	1
all SI committees	18	10	7	1

(iii) Under Standing Order No. 86 the Committee of Selection is required to nominate not fewer than 16 nor more than 50 members to serve on these Standing Committees. In nominating members, it is required to have regard to the qualifications of Members and to the composition of the House.

(iv) Proportions for Standing Committees of between 16 and 50 Members are as follows:

Size of Committee	*Conservative*	*Labour*	*Other*
16	9	6	1
17	9	7	1
18	10	7	1
19	10	8	1
20	11	8	1
21	11	9	1
22	12	9	1
23	12	9	2
24	13	10	1
25	13	10	2
26	14	11	2
27	14	11	2
28	15	11	2
29	15	12	2
30	16	12	2
31	16	13	2
32	17	14	2
33	17	14	2
34	18	14	2
35	18	15	2
36	19	15	2
37	19	15	2
38	20	16	2
39	20	16	3
40	21	16	3
41	21	17	3
42	22	17	3
43	22	18	3
44	23	18	3
45	23	19	3
46	24	19	3
47	24	20	3
48	25	20	3
49	25	21	3
50	26	21	3

Parliamentary Pensions

Mr. Dixon: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Members for Jarrow and for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) on 7 December, *Official Report*, column *510*, what further action he has now taken in relation to parliamentary pensions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Following the debate on 25 November, I held a meeting with the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and the trustees of the parliamentary contributory pension fund. Officials are now considering, in consultation with the Fees Office, how to take matters forward.

Divisions

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will now respond to the second report of Session 1991-92 from the Select Committee on Procedure relating to the Chair's discretion to extend the time allowed for a Division.

Mr. Newton: I have now considered this report and agree with the main recommendation that the existing discretion of the Chair as set out in Standing Order No. 37 should remain unchanged. The other recommendations flow from that and are matters already within the discretion of Madam Speaker and other House authorities. The separate proposal to amend Standing Order No. 37 to bring it into line with current practice and remove a confusing ambiguity will be implemented at a convenient opportunity.

Public Petitions

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will now respond to the fourth report of Session 1991-92 from the Select Committee on Procedure relating to public petitions.

Mr. Newton: I have now completed my consideration of this report and agree with its recommendations for changes in the rules relating to the format and wording of petitions. I will shortly table a motion to approve the report. If passed, this will give the Journal Office the necessary authority to implement the recommendations and prepare revised rules and guidance for Members. The changes do not involve any amendment to Standing Orders.

TRANSPORT

Fisheries Safety

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has received from the European Commission concerning a proposed directive on the occupational safety of both fishermen and fishing vessels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: An amended proposal for a directive (9284/92) was received from the European Commission on 6 November. The Commons Select Committee on European Legislation has recommended that the proposed directive should be debated by European Standing Committee A.

Bus Priority Measures

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Tansport which bus priority measures will be funded from his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Freeman: We shall be making available a total of £15·475 million to local authorities in England for measures to promote bus use in 1993-94. Of this total, £6 million will be found from the Department's provision for local public transport and £9·475 million from the provision for local roads; £3·3 million of the total will be allocated to schemes in London and a separate announcement about those will be made by the Minister for Transport in London. The allocations to successful local authorities outside London are listed. In addition, the Department will be supporting a low floor bus demonstration project and research into alternative fuels.

I am delighted that we have been able to increase substantially the level of resources available for measures to promote bus use. This is in response to increased interest from local authorities in the role of the bus in helping to alleviate road congestion. The allocations will enable authorities to continue schemes funded in 1992-93 and to introduce many new ones.

Bus priority measures 1993-94: local authorities outside London

	£000s
Counties	
Avon	1,525
Berkshire	200
Cambridgeshire	120
Cheshire	625
Cleveland	600
Devon	250
Durham	50
East Sussex	125
Essex	130
Gloucestershire	70
Hampshire	170
Kent	500
Lancashire	580
Norfolk	3,000
Northamptonshire	100
Nottinghamshire	175
Oxfordshire	50
Shropshire	50
Suffolk	100
Surrey	240
Wiltshire	140
Metropolitan Areas	
Birmingham	400
Bury	40
Coventry	250
Dudley	75
Doncaster	50
Gateshead	75
Knowsley	250
Leeds	450
Liverpool	300
Manchester	750
Newcastle	100
Oldham	40
Salford	75
Sheffield	200
Solihull	50
Stockport	30
Trafford	10
Wirral	30

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which bus priority measures in London will be funded from his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Norris: I am pleased to announce that we have been able to make available the sum of £3·3 million for bus priority measures in London in 1993-94.

The allocations are listed.

Bus priority measures 1993-94: London boroughs

	£000s
Camden	50
Ealing	548
Hammersmith	600
Haringey	75
Hillingdon	752
Hounslow	250
Kensington	50
Lambeth	124
Newham	106
Richmond	45
Tower Hamlets	600
Wandsworth	100

Dangerous Goods

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what controls his Department requires of port authorities in respect of the import and export of dangerous goods.

Mr. Norris: The movement of dangerous substances through ports is controlled by the Dangerous Substances in Harbour Areas Regulations (SI 1987 No. 37).

Freight

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what dates British Rail's objectives of 19 December 1989 for rail freight were superseded; and on what date British Rail was informed.

Mr. Freeman: The objectives have not been superseded.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the change in the amount of freight traffic carried by rail since May 1991.

Mr. Freeman: In the year ending May 1992, there was a decline of some 10 per cent. in terms of tonnes lifted. Factors affecting changes in rail freight are discussed at pages 18 to 20 of the 1991-92 annual report and accounts of the British Railways Board.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the five most used motorways for the purpose of freight haulage.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The five motorways which carry most heavy goods vehicle traffic on average per mile are the M25, M1, M6, M62 and M56.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of British goods for the domestic market are transported by *(a)* rail and *(b)* road; and how this compares with the EC average.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The information that is readily available for 1990 is published in "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1992" as tables 8.9 and 8.10. Definitions and more detailed comparisons for earlier years are published in the transport statistics report "International Comparisons of Transport Statistics Part 1: Intermodal". Both publications are in the House of Commons Library.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to extend compensation provisions for rail users outlined in the citizens charter to cover all users of public transport.

Mr. Freeman: I welcome the fact that our citizens charter initiative has led British Rail and London Underground to introduce compensation schemes for poor performance. It is for other public transport operators to decide whether to follow their example, but I hope that many will do so.

Road Planning

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish *(a)* the terms of reference and *(b)* the line table including completion date, of the review of the road planning process he announced in October.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The terms of reference for the review were to review the statutory and administrative procedures involved in preparing a major road scheme from programme entry to the start of construction, and to recommend possible changes, either statutory or administrative, which might speed up the process; and to report by the end of November 1992.

We are now considering the consultants' report.

EC Road Proposals

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the status of the European Commission's proposals for a network of major roads in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The European Commission's proposals for a trans-European road network of routes of Community interest have been laid for opinion before the European Parliament. They have yet to be discussed by the Council of Ministers.

The route proposals are intended to encourage action by member states. A member state's positive assent is required before any project can go ahead.

Regional Consultative Meetings

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the dates for his Department's regional annual consultative meetings for each region for 1993-94; what issues are expected to be raised at these meetings and if he will place in the Library copies of all minutes of meetings held since April 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The dates of the regional annual consultative committee meetings for 1993-94 have not yet been arranged, but they are normally held between October and December. The agenda items are generally proposed by the local highway authorities of the region concerned, and are agreed with the regional office nearer the date of the meeting. I am arranging to place the minutes of the 1991-92 round of meetings in the Library, and will do the same for the current 1992-93 round when they become available.

Regional Brief

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is his policy regarding the preparation by regional offices of regional briefs;

(2) by what means regional briefs are available to the public; and if it is his intention to consult the public during their preparation;

(3) if he will list those regional briefs which have been prepared; when they were published; and if he will provide a timetable for their revision and preparation for each of his regional offices;

(4) if he will set out the remit of the regional briefs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Regional briefs contain information about transport, including Government policy, in the eight Department of Transport regions outside London. The briefs were commissioned by the Secretary of State in 1990 to inform local Members of Parliament and others about planned transport improvements. Publicity was given to their publication and copies are available to the public on request. Details of publication dates are:

Regional Brief	*Date of publication*
Eastern	May 1991
East Midland	May 1991
Northern	November 1990
North West	December 1991
South East	December 1991
South West	November 1991
West Midland	January 1991
Yorkshire and Humberside	January 1991

The briefs may be updated from time to time as considered necessary by the individual regional offices.

Road Schemes

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to ensure the compatibility of trunk road and motorway proposals with land use planning policies in forthcoming regional planning guidance.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We shall continue our long-standing policy of consultation both with the Department of the Environment in the joint Environment/Transport regional offices, and with the local planning authorities.

Traffic Congestion, Greenwich

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made by his Department following the visit by the Minister of Transport in London to Greenwich on 25 June, in considering proposals for easing traffic congestion in Greenwich town centre, and in particular the feasibility study for a bypass, and the interim proposal for a ban on heavy goods vehicles in the town centre; and when he expects to announce his decision in respect of the application by Greenwich council for transport supplementary grant to pursue such options.

Mr. Norris: An announcement about the allocation of transport supplementary grant will be made before Christmas. The hon. Member will appreciate that I cannot comment on specific bids in advance of this announcement.

Fares

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to oppose any attempt by the European Commission to make public transport fares subject to value added tax.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

The Government have maintained, during the single market negotiations, our right to retain the coverage of our current zero rates including domestic passenger transport. The present agreement reached by Finance Ministers covers the period until 1997 without prejudice to what happens thereafter.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Citizens Charter

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many copies of the summary "Guide to the Citizen's Charter First Report: 1992" have been distributed to date.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have distributed 500,000 copies of the summary guide.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the cost to date of the publication and distribution of the summary "Guide to the Citizen's Charter First Report: 1992".

Mr. Waldegrave: The cost to date of the publication and distribution of the summary guide is in the region of £160,000.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the total cost to date of the publication and distribution of the "Citizen's Charter First Report: 1992", Cm 2101.

Mr. Waldegrave: The costs of printing, publishing and distributing the report were borne by HMSO, which expects to recover its costs from sales revenue. HMSO does not normally reveal details of such costs, which are treated on a commercial in confidence basis.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the overall charge to date from the Post Office for the distribution of citizens charter material.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have to date paid the Post Office £23,500 for the distribution of the summary guide to the "Citizen's Charter First Report: 1992".

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the average time taken by his Department to reply to queries from hon. Members concerning the citizens charter; what were the targets set; and what means of redress is available to hon. Members if his Department fails to meet those targets.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department aims to respond to all letters from hon. Members within 15 working days. Over the last four months we have met this target with just under half our cases. No means of redress is available, but I am happy to investigate any individual complaints about the handling of correspondence.

Publications (Cost)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the average cost of the purchase from HMSO for a full five-day sitting week of one copy of the daily *Official Report* of the House of Commons and the

House of Lords, the daily Order Paper, the Vote Bundle of each House and the Weekly Information Bulletin; and what plans he has to seek to alter the cost of such publications.

Mr. Robert Jackson If both Houses sit for a full five days, which is not usual for the House of Lords, the following prices would apply:

	£
The *Official Report*, House of Commons *(daily)*	37·50
The *Official Report*, House of Lords *(daily)*	21·00
House of Commons Vote Bundle (including Order Paper)	[1]145·80
House of Commons Order Paper alone	[1]25·45
House of Lords Minutes of Proceedings	[1]23·50
Weekly Information Bulletin	2·30

[1] Average.

HMSO prices for these items have not been increased during 1992 and HMSO intends that current prices should continue unchanged throughout 1993.

Civil Servants (Complaints)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will bring forward proposals to create the post of inspector general of the civil service to deal with complaints on the conduct of civil servants.

Mr. Robert Jackson: No. Standards conduct in the civil service are regulated by the "Civil Service Code", a copy of which is in the Library. The Royal Commission on Standards of Conduct in Public Life 1974-1976 (Cmnd. 6524) recommended against the establishment of a new agency to oversee investigations of alleged impropriety. There are no grounds for reconsidering that recommendation.

Patents and Licences

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assistance his Department provides for patenting or licensing of any products or processes developed from work funded by his Department.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The research councils are expected to meet the cost of protecting their intellectual property rights from within their annual grant-in-aid from the Office of Public Service and Science.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Mans: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on progress under the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for people of ethnic minority origin.

Mr. Robert Jackson: There has been further progress this year; the proportion of ethnic minority staff in the civil service continues to rise. A report summarising progress during 1991-92 is being published today. Copies are being placed in the Library of the House.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Textiles

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the tariff levels for United Kingdom exports of wool cloth, headings 5111 and 5112, to the following markets, and any non-tariff barriers which apply, together with the tariff level for imports of that product from the same countries into the Community *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* South Africa, *(c)* Australia, *(d)* Turkey, including additional duties payable, *(e)* India, *(f)* Pakistan, *(g)* Thailand and *(h)* Malaysia.

Mr. Needham: United Kingdom exports attract the following charges:

United States

tariff 51.11—duties range between 7 per cent. and 38 per cent. on an ad valorem basis depending on quality and size of fabric.

51.12—duties range between 7 per cent. and 38 per cent. by value depending on quality and size of fabric.

South Africa

tariff 51.11—40 per cent. duty plus a 5 per cent. import surcharge.

51.12—40 per cent. duty plus 5 per cent. import surcharge.

The South African system of duties on textile imports is currently under review.

Australia

tariff 51.11—32 per cent. duty.

51.12—32 per cent. duty.

Turkey

tariff 51.11—10 per cent. duty.

51.12—10 per cent. duty.

Plus the following additional duties:

1. Municipality tax: 15 per cent. of customs duty;
2. Stamp duty: 10 per cent. of the cost/insurance/freight (CIF) value. NB The Turkish authorities have informed the GATT secretariat, that from 1 January 1993, stamp duty will cease to be applied;
3. Price support and stability fund tax: 10 per cent. of the CIF value;
4. Transport infrastructure duty: 3 per cent. of the cumulative total of the above duties (including Customs duty) and taxes if commodity arrives by air or land, 4 per cent. if by sea;
5. Value added tax: usually 12 per cent. of the cumulative total of the above duties (including transport infrastructure duty) and taxes. Although 1 per cent., 2 per cent., 6 per cent. and 20 per cent. may also be applied, depending on the type of commodity.
6. Mass housing fund tax (surcharge): only applied to certain products. This tax depends on the type of commodity—it could be a percentage of the CIF value, or based on a fixed dollar, weight, or unit rate.

From 1 January 1993 a new Turkish import regime is to be introduced, based on a unified single customs duty system. In addition to the ending of stamp duty, the import regime is to abolish the municipality tax, the transport infrastructure duty, and the price support and stability fund tax. Details are not yet available on how the single customs duty system will be applied.

India

tariff 51·11—duties range between 110 per cent. and 140 per cent. by value;

51·12—110 per cent. duty;
plus 45 per cent. auxilliary duty.

Pakistan
tariff 51·11—90 per cent. duty;
51·12—90 per cent. duty;
In addition the following taxes are payable:
(1). Sales tax: 12·5 per cent.
(2). General import surcharge: 10 per cent.
(3). Iqra tax (allocated to education budget): 5 per cent.

Thailand
tariff 51·11—80 per cent. duty
51·12—80 per cent. duty

Malaysia
tariff 51·11—2 per cent. duty
51·12—2 per cent. duty

United Kingdom Customs duties on import from the following sources:

United States
tariff 51·11—13 per cent.
51·12—13 per cent.

South Africa
tariff 51·11—13 per cent.
51·12—13 per cent.

Australia
tariff 51·11—13 per cent.
51·12—13 per cent.

Turkey
Duty free (Mediterranean preferential country)

India
Duty free under the terms of the generalised system of preferences (GATT)

Pakistan
Duty free

Thailand
Duty free

Malaysia
Duty free

Baghdad Pact Nuclear Training Centre

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what benefits have accrued to the United Kingdom as a result of the financial contributions given to the Baghdad pact nuclear training centre.

Mr. Heseltine: No direct financial contributions were given to the centre. From the limited information available no scientific benefit accrued to the United Kingdom from the assistance provided by United Kingdom experts at the nuclear training centre on the peaceful uses of radioisotopes.

Iraq (Arms Exports)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what investigation has been made by his Department's export control organisation into the sale of militarily sensitive equipment and technology to Iraq by the Astra Company since 1985.

Mr. Needham: Matters relating to the sale of such equipment and technology to Iraq are for Lord Justice Scott's inquiry to consider.

Sizewell B

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) to what extent Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate has relied upon the experience of other nuclear regulators in its reliability assessment of the primary computerised safety system for the Sizewell B nuclear plant;

(2) what information he has received from Her Majesty's chief nuclear installations inspector in regard to progress made by Nuclear Electric in the installation of the secondary non-computerised safety protection system at the Sizewell B nuclear plant;

(3) what progress has been made by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate in validating the Sizewell B computerised primary safety system against the latest international standards.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate (NII) has participated over several years in meetings with nuclear regulators from other countries—the United States of America, Canada and France—who have experience in the assessment of computer based safety systems in nuclear applications.

Similarly, I understand the chief inspector is satisfied with progress made on the installation and commissioning of the secondary non-computerised safety protection system at Sizewell B.

The work of validation against the NII's regulatory requirements including the latest relevant international standards is well advanced. Comparison with international standards is only one part of NII's assessment of the primary protection system safety case for Sizewell B.

Coal Research

Mr. Clapham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on the expenditure on clean coal research for the latest year for which figures are available in each G7 country.

Mr. Eggar: The most recent outturn expenditure figures on coal research for the G7 countries are for 1990 and were published by the International Energy Agency in "Energy policies of IEA Countries—1991 review". No figures are available specifically for clean coal research, but most of the expenditure on coal research in the G7 countries is believed to be focused on the development of clean coal technologies for power generation.

Coal Research and Development expenditure for 1990 in G7 countries

	£ million
Canada	16·3
France	3·1
Germany	42·3
Italy	n/a
Japan	134·5
United States	472·2
United Kingdom	[1]39·4

[1] Total United Kingdom research and development expenditure is only available on a United Kingdom financial year basis. The United Kingdom total for coal research and development is for 1990-91 and includes expenditure by Government Departments, British Coal and, where available, United Kingdom industry. Since 1981-82 about £1,000 million of public sector funds have been invested in coal technology research and development in the United Kingdom. Around half this total has been spent on clean coal technology research.

The figures published by the IEA were in 1991 United States dollars. These have been converted to pound sterling using the IEA average exchange rate unit of $1·764 to £1 for 1991.

Small Businesses

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance he has given to small businesses in each year since 1989.

Mr. Leigh: The support programmes for small businesses operated by my Department together with their annual cost in each year since 1989 are as follows:

Expenditure

£ million

Programme	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Enterprise initiative consultancy scheme	35·6	40·2	52·10
Small firms loan guarantee scheme	99·4	85·0	69·85
Small firms merit award for research and technology	8·8	10·7	12·70
Support for projects under research	—	—	12·40
Regional enterprise grants (investment)	8·5	8·5	6·40
Regional enterprise grants (innovation)	3·1	2·5	2·20
Export marketing research scheme	3·0	3·8	1·10
Your business success	—	0·5	1·00
Graduate enterprise	—	0·4	0·30

My Department also provides funding for development work which aims to benefit small firms and produces a wide range of publications aimed at small businesses.

From April 1993 my Department will take over responsibility from the Employment Department for funding training and enterprise councils (TECs), which provide a wide range of business support services to help small businesses.

Tour Operators

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to stop tour operators from surcharging customers after a contract has been signed, in cases where the operators in fact incur no corresponding rise in their costs.

Mr. Leigh: My Department has recently laid draft regulations to implement the EC package travel directive. These regulations permit surcharges to be made for certain specified reasons only, such as fuel price fluctuations, exchange rate changes and certain taxes. In order to apply a surcharge, the operator must first have reserved the right to so do in his contract with the consumer. The contract must describe the manner in which the price revision would be calculated. The operator is, in addition, required to absorb any price increase amounting to 2 per cent. of the price of the package and may in no circumstances make a price increase in the period 30 days before departure. An operator who attempted to make a price increase where there has been no corresponding increase in costs would be in breach of contract.

Fossil Fuel Levy

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *107-8*, if he will establish a separate fund for the proceeds of the fossil fuel levy in order that the amounts applied from it to the decommissioning costs of nuclear power stations can be quantified.

Mr. Eggar: In addition to premium income from the levy, Nuclear Electric receives income from the sale of electricity. From this total income, the company must finance its current operations and make provision for decommissioning its stations. How precisely these funds are provided for is a matter for Nuclear Electric plc, subject to the safety requirements of the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate and to the scrutiny of the company's auditors.

Telephone Information Services

Ms. Abbott: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services' code in preventing the abuse of premium rate telephone services by invitations to unemployed people to make calls about non-existent jobs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: Since the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services (ICSTIS) introduced its revised code of practice in February this year, the number of complaints received by ICSTIS about employment services has halved. ICSTIS remains concerned about misleading and dishonest employment services, however, and an ICSTIS working party published a review on 3 November which contains the recommendation to ban all employment services from the premium rate network, except those where the service provider or information provider is the direct organisation offering the jobs. ICSTIS has invited comments on its recommendations by 15 December.

Government Chemist Agency

Mr. Merchant: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what targets he has set for 1992-93 for the performance measures of the Laboratory of the Government Chemist agency.

Mr. Leigh: The primary performance target of the Laboratory of the Government Chemist (LGC) for 1992-93 continues to be the recovery of its full economic cost from income from customers. In addition, new secondary performance measures have been developed to supersede those agreed when the agency was originally established in October 1989. For 1992-93 these are:

completion of reports on research into the feasibility of further analysis of samples by the date agreed with customers: to increase from an average of 80 per cent. in the first quarter to an average of 88 per cent. in the last quarter;

to achieve more than 85 per cent. of contract research milestones within the time scale agreed with customers;

to maintain accreditation from the National Measurement Accreditation Service (NAMAS) for the existing 15 categories of work and obtain NAMAS accreditation for a further category of work by April 1993;

to acquire accreditation for LGC as a whole to BS 5750 Part 1 (ISO 9001) by April 1994.

These targets will be subject to annual review.

Sixth Landward Licensing Round

Mr. Merchant: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the sixth landward licensing round.

Mr. Eggar: I have today announced the conditional award of 22 new exploration licences for blocks in England, Wales and Scotland. The licences allow companies to search and drill for petroleum, subject to the requirements of the planning system and the technical approval of my Department.

Details of the awards have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

I am particularly encouraged to see in this round a strong continuing interest in coal-bed methane exploration by a growing number of companies. Most are new to the United Kingdom licensing scene, and bring valuable experience from coal-bed methane operations in the United States. The methods of working are significantly different from those used for conventional oil and gas exploration. The prospects for coal-bed methane have yet to be fully tested here, but it has been successfully developed in the United States and already represents about 17 per cent. of its recoverable gas reserves. If it can be successfully exploited here, it could represent a very valuable addition to our future energy supplies. The opportunities which we are now providing for licensees to test the prospects for coal-bed methane are therefore of especial importance.

The new licences allow companies to conduct seismic operations and test drill for oil and gas subject to all necessary planning permission and landowners' or occupiers' consent and, where operations involve the penetration of coal-seams, permission from British Coal. No seismic or drilling operations will be allowed until companies have provided me with evidence that they have received any necessary permission from the mineral planning authority.

Pit Closures

Mr. Hague: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the present position with respect to licensing to the private sector pits which British Coal had planned to close.

Mr. Heseltine: British Coal is statutorily responsible for licensing coal mining and must consider applications from responsible organisations seeking licences. Under present legislation, licensed coal mining is subject to statutory limits of 150 on the numbers employed underground in deep mines and 250,000 tonnes of coal from the areas specified in the licence for opencast sites.

Of the 31 pits which British Coal had intended to close, 10 are the subject of statutory consultations, which the corporation has made clear will be meaningful. I understand that the corporation does not propose entering into negotiations for the licensing of any of these pits before the consultations are complete.

The coal review is considering the prospects of the other 21 pits British Coal has proposed to close and which are not subject to the statutory consultations. I understand that British Coal does not propose to enter into commercial discussions about licensing any of these pits before that review is complete.

Licensing any of these pits while the review is continuing would be difficult in practice against the background of uncertainty about the future prospects for the industry and the market for coal. The review is considering the opportunities for the private sector in the production of coal. Its conclusions on this aspect will be included in the White Paper to be published early in the new year.

Decisions on any applications for licences to operate pits will be taken once the review and consultations are complete.

Iraq

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what responses have been made by his Department to requests and reports received from the United Nations Special Commission of Inspection in Iraq or its executive chairman, Rolf Ekeus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* The Government have made a significant contribution to the work of the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq as it seeks to implement relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. In response to UNSCOM's requests we have supplied personnel for the UNSCOM inspection teams and some specialised equipment. It is not our practice to comment in detail on the information given to us by UNSCOM.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what provision he has made for the payment of bad debt on exports to Iraq of military and dual-use exports to Iraq in the period 1985 to 1990 covered by *(a)* short-term and *(b)* medium-term cover provided by the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* ECGD does not make separate provisions against loss for particular categories of goods. ECGD made total provisions of £695·9 million in relation to Iraq business in its 1990-91 accounts. The 1991-92 accounts are currently being audited and will be laid before Parliament in January next year.

Military Exports

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will specify what proportion of Export Credits Guarantee Department cover provided for military or dual-use exports in the period 1985 to 1990 was *(a)* short-term and *(b)* medium-term.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* It is not possible to provide figures on the basis requested, because of the way ECGD records have been structured to meet its business needs.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on claims made on *(a)* NCM as the potential successor company to the Export Credits Guarantee Department and *(b)* ECGD with respect to short-term cover on military and dual-use trade credit to Iraq in the last five years.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* Under the terms of the December 1991 privatisation of the short-term business of ECGD, NCM assumed no responsibility for the administration and payment of claims arising from any export business conducted with Iraq. That responsibility remained with ECGD.

ECGD does not maintain details of short-term claims paid or under examination categorised by type of goods. In the last five years, ECGD has paid a total of £23·2 million in respect of insured short-term export trade with Iraq. In addition, approximately £6 million of claims received are currently under examination. At this stage, it is difficult to forecast the extent to which claims paid will eventually be recovered.

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date he signed public interest immunity certificates in the Matrix Churchill case.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* On 11 and 26 September.

Sales Promotions

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will draw up guidelines on free-flight offers to cover *(a)* availability, *(b)* hidden costs and *(c)* the financial collapse of any party involved in the supply of the free flight.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* No. The British code of sales promotion practice, administered by the Advertising Standards Authority, already contains guidelines covering both availability and hidden costs.

Trade associations, such as the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), require that their members have protection in place for the consumer in the event of insolvency.

Charter flight passengers are protected against financial loss by the existing air travel operators licensing (ATOL) scheme. In March 1992 the DTp announced that it would be setting up a statutory financial protection scheme to reimburse scheduled passengers in the event of an airline collapsing. The Government asked the CAA to work up details of a scheme and are currently considering its proposal.

Parcelforce

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *282*, whether the uniform tariff he will maintain for Parcelforce after privatisation is inclusive of value added tax.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to him on 29 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *784*.

Coal Imports

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on the price of coal imported into the United Kingdom in *(a)* August, *(b)* September and *(c)* October.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* The information requested is:

Average price of imported coal[1]
August to October 1992

	£
August[2]	31·93
September	33·91
October	35·12

[1] The average price is for all grades of coal and includes the cost of insurance and freight.
[2] The figure for August 1992 has been revised since my previous answer of 29 October (*Official Report*, column *784*).
Source: Central Statistical Office.

Terrorism

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to the answer of 8 December from the Secretary of State for the Home Department, *Official Report*, column *558*, to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, if he will be meeting the Manchester chamber of commerce and industry to discuss the problems facing owners of commercial property for whom insurance cover against terrorist attacks is becoming unavailable; if he will list the other interested parties to which his right hon. Friend referred in his reply; and if he will make a statement on the progress of his consideration of the representations he has received.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* No. I have received a number of representations from industry, commerce and the insurance industry which are under consideration, but none as yet from the Manchester chamber of commerce.

Government Stock

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the occasions instalment payments were allowed in sales of Government stock held under the control of his Department; and if he will list the occasions when full payment of such stock was demanded.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* For privatisation by flotation and secondary share offers held under the control of my Department or its predecessors, the occasions on which payment for shares was by instalments and those on which full payment was asked for are listed at 1 and 2 respectively of the table.

Privatisation by flotation and secondary share offers under the control of DTI or predecessor departments.

1—Payment by instalments
Britoil (1982)
British Aerospace (1985)
British Gas
British Steel
British Telecom (1984)
Eastern Electricity
East Midlands Electricity
Enterprise Oil
London Electricity
Manweb
Midlands Electricity
National Power
Northern Electricity
Norweb
PowerGen
Rolls-Royce
Seeboard
Southern Electricity
South Wales Electricity
South Western Electricity
Yorkshire Electricity Group

2—Payment in full
Amersham International
British Aerospace (1981)
Cable and Wireless
Jaguar

Sellafield

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what factors not considered at the public inquiry are causing the delay in starting the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply. The thermal oxide reprocessing plant cannot start the commercial

reprocessing of oxide fuel until the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate is satisfied with the safety of the plant and the regulatory authorities have no objections on waste management grounds.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Fund

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total administrative cost of social fund payments for the last 12-month period for which figures are available, for *(a)* community care grants, *(b)* budgeting loans and *(c)* crisis loans; and if he will provide separate figures for each district office.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply, 16 November 1992, c. 75*]: The latest information on social fund administration costs is for the year 1990-91 and is in the Library.

Income Support

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will change the rules to allow income support to be backdated to the date of entitlement of disability living allowance or attendance allowance for claimants and their carers in cases where a delay of more than 12 months occurs.

Mr. Burt: Time limits form an accepted and necessary part of the social security system. It is not envisaged that claims will take more than 52 weeks to decide.

Income support may be backdated for up to 52 weeks in appropriate circumstances. We have no plans to change the current rules.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the total cost of uprating the level of income support received by people aged 18 to 24 years to the level enjoyed by those aged 25 and over.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 9 December at column *684*.

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 24 November, *Official Report*, column *595*, if he will now show how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men were dependent upon income support in May 1991, either as claimants or as the spouses or partners of claimants; of these totals how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men were above pension age; and how many were below pension age.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table.

	Numbers
Females dependent on income support	
Total of claimants and partners	3,248
of which: under age 60	1,909
over age 60	1,339
Males dependent on income support	
Total of claimants and partners	2,001
of which: under age 65	1,723
over age 65	278

Note: All figures are thousands, rounded to the nearest thousand.
Source: Income Support Statistics Annual Inquiry May 1991.

Income Statistics

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures for the latest date available showing for people above state pension ages, the number of *(a)* husbands, *(b)* wives, *(c)* single men and *(d)* single women, with weekly incomes excluding national insurance benefit, income support, family credit, housing benefit and community charge benefit as appropriate, in the following income bands *(a)* under £5, *(b)* £5 to £10, *(c)* £10 to £15, *(d)* £15 to £20, *(e)* £20 to £30, *(f)* £30 to £40, *(g)* £40 to £50, *(h)* £50 to £60, *(i)* £60 to £70, *(j)* £70 to £80, *(k)* £80 to £90, *(l)* £90 to £100, *(m)* £100 to £150, *(n)* £150 to £200, *(o)* £200 to £300, *(p)* £300 to £400, *(q)* £400 to £500 and *(r)* over £500 respectively.

Miss Widdecombe: Information is not available in the form requested. The requested distribution was in some cases too detailed to give a reliable number of sample cases to be taken into account. Certain ranges have therefore been merged in order to ensure estimates are based on at least 20 sample cases. In addition, the nature of the survey techniques used in the family expenditure survey means that the separate incomes of husbands and wives within a couple cannot be identified reliably. The answer therefore categorises single people (male and female) and couples only. The available information is in the table.

Weekly non-benefit income distribution-pensioners

Single female pensioners

Income (£)	*Thousands*
0-5	1,725
5-10	269
10-15	215
15-20	176
20-30	235
30-40	156
40-50	110
50-60	86
60-70	70
70-80	77
80-100	111
100-200	237
200+	79

Single male pensioners

Income (£)	*Thousands*
0-5	356
5-10	63
10-20	101
20-40	114
40-60	58
60-90	73
90-150	61
150+	63

Couples (husband over pension age)

Income (£)	*Thousands*
0-5	422
5-10	165
10-15	191
15-20	132
20-30	198
30-40	126
40-50	138
50-60	104
60-70	78
70-80	84

Income (£)	Thousands
80-90	69
90-100	66
100-150	246
150-200	162
200-300	126
300-400	99
400+	105

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1988.

Overseas Pensioners

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing those countries in which British state retirement pensioners are entitled to have their pensions uprated annually in the same way as if they were still residing in the United Kingdom together with the date upon which each country was added to the list of those so entitled and the cost to the taxpayer of pensions payable in those countries, for the most recent 12 month period.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is in the table. The cost of these pensions is met from the national insurance fund.

Table of overseas countries where annual pension increases are paid, the dates from which annual upratings were first applied and the total amount of pensions paid in the year ending 5 April 1992

Country	Date	Amount £
Austria	1 October 1972	2,647,768·71
Barbados[1]	1 April 1992	2,126,484·85
Belgium	1 June 1958	3,709,010·90
Bermuda	1 November 1969	410,045·35
Cyprus	18 May 1957	6,259,499·84
Denmark	1 January 1973	625,728·68
Finland	1 February 1984	127,592·06
France	5 July 1948	9,921,921·89
Germany	1 August 1961	17,321,235·12
Gibraltar	1 January 1973	1,185,360·36
Greece	1 January 1981	1,410,625·74
Guernsey[2]	4 April 1966	—[3]
Iceland	1 August 1985	32,035·23
Irish Republic	4 April 1966	97,353,314·10
Israel	1 November 1957	3,328,735·96
Italy	1 May 1953	20,613,710·35
Jamaica	1 October 1972	28,065,731·19
Jersey	4 April 1966	—[3]
Luxembourg	1 April 1955	93,973·05
Malta	29 October 1956	2,367,062·26
Mauritius	1 November 1981	246,001·42
Netherlands	1 June 1955	3,623,387·99
Norway	1 April 1991	351,415·42
Philippines	1 December 1989	111,751·74
Portugal	1 October 1979	2,599,342·84
Spain	1 April 1975	30,553,505·04
Sweden	1 May 1988	286,694·70
Switzerland	1 June 1954	2,749,002·66
Turkey	1 June 1961	321,214·32
United States of America	25 September 1969	81,974,078·39
Yugoslavia (including the newly independent former republics)	1 September 1958	1,980,710·99

[1]Increases payable from April 1992—approval to negotiate an agreement with Barbados providing for payment of pension increases was given in 1974.

[2]Including Alderney, Herm and Jethou.

[3]There is no ready way of identifying the amounts paid in the Channel Islands separately from the amounts paid to pensioners in the United Kingdom.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the annual cost of reducing the housing benefit taper to 20 per cent. for all claimants.

Mr. Burt: We estimate that the cost of reducing the housing benefit taper to 20 per cent. for all claimants would be approximately £2 billion. Estimate based on data obtained from the 1987, 1988 and 1989 family expenditure surveys modelled at 1992-93 prices and benefit levels.

This does not include any estimate of the behavioural effects of a 20 per cent. taper.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what consideration has been given to paying housing benefit in respect of interest on building society top-up loans for house improvements;

(2) what is his estimate of the annual cost of allowing claims for housing benefit in respect of interest on building society top-up loans for house improvements.

Mr. Burt: Housing benefit is payable only to meet a commercial rent liability. In income support, assistance can be given with the interest on loans that are taken out for improvements to the home's fitness for occupation providing they are reasonable in the family's circumstances. This help is available to tenants as well as owner occupiers, provided they qualify for income support.

The total amount included in income support for help with housing costs in 1991—(the latest year for which figures are available—was £949 million. No information is available separately on top-up loans for house improvements.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many non-dependant deductions for housing benefit have been made since April 1992; and of these what proportion have been at *(a)* £4, *(b)* £8, *(c)* £12, and *(d)* £18.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not yet available. Information on non-dependants since April 1992 was first collected in May 1992 and is unlikely to be available until later in 1993.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of paying housing benefit to people aged under 25 years at the full rate currently paid to people aged 25 years and over; and what proportion this figure is of total housing benefit expenditure.

Mr. Burt: The estimated cost of paying housing benefit to people aged 18-24 at the full rate currently paid to people aged 25 years and over would be approximately £360 million[1].

This represents approximately 5 per cent. of the planned 1992-93 housing benefit expenditure of £7·05 billion announced by the Department in February 1992.

Note:

[1] This estimate is based on data drawn from the 1987, 1988 and 1989 family expenditure surveys and the 1991 annual statistical inquiry modelled at 1992-93 prices and benefit levels.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's estimate of the cost of extending the successor fund to the independent living fund to cover people over retirement age.

Mr. Scott: The estimated cost of extending the successor fund for new cases to cover people over retirement age is £2 million in 1993-94, £6 million in 1994-95 and £9 million in 1995-96.

Source: based upon the level of applications to the existing independent living fund.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of help there were from the independent living fund in each region in the United Kingdom in 1991-92; and how many people are expected to be helped by the successor fund to the independent living fund in each region in the United Kingdom in 1993-94.

Mr. Scott: The number of people, in each region of the United Kingdom, in receipt of awards from the independent living fund, as at 31 March 1992, is in the table.

It is expected that, nationally, around 1,500 of the most severely disabled people of working age will receive cash payments to supplement services provided by local authorities. It is not possible to estimate a regional breakdown of this figures.

Region	*Number*	*Percentage of total*
England	9,402	68·8
Northern Ireland	1,321	9·7
Scotland	2,288	16·7
Wales	659	4·8

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) under the proposed arrangements for replacing the independent living fund for new applicants how many people he estimates will be provided for by local authorities only and how many he estimates will be eligible for assistance from the new proposed trust fund; what funding he will make available to local authorities to meet the additional costs; and if he will ensure such funding is ring-fenced;

(2) what proportion of severely disabled people requiring provision from the local authority he estimates will require a cash payment from the new trust fund under the proposed new arrangements for providing personal assistance to severely disabled people following the closure of the independent living fund; what average percentage of their total cost of personal assistance he estimates this will represent; and how many people will lose entitlement to cash that they would have received had the independent living fund continued.

Mr. Scott: From April 1993 local authorities have the primary responsibility for community care. All disabled people, including around 11,500 severely disabled people who might otherwise have looked to the independent living fund for cash help, will look to their local authority for help to live in the community. Additional funding for local authorities was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health on 26 November. This funding will be within the ring-fenced special transitional grant for community care.

We expect that around 1,500 of the most severely disabled people who get help from their local authority will also be able to get a cash payment from the new fund. For these cases, the local authority will be expected to pay for services up to the cost of residential or nursing care, with the new fund providing a cash payment in addition. The size of the cash payment will vary according to the circumstances of the individual. Payments from the current independent living fund are entirely discretionary: there is no entitlement to any payment from the fund, which is a charitable trust.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provision will be made under the proposed arrangements for replacing the independent living fund for severely disabled people seeking personal assistance provision following the winding up of the independent living fund and before the start of the new scheme in April 1993.

Mr. Scott: Local authorities have statutory duties to help disabled people. Help from the independent living fund (ILF) has always been in the form of a discretionary top-up to local authority services and the vast majority of ILF beneficiaries—and potential beneficiaries—are already getting help from their local authorities. Severely disabled people who would have applied to the ILF between now and April 1993 will, of course, be able to apply to the new body.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of the budget of the independent living fund in 1991-92 was taken up in administration costs.

Mr. Scott: The administration costs of the independent living fund during 1991-92 were approximately 4 per cent. of total expenditure.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people over retirement age received help from the independent living fund in *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* from April 1992 until the fund was closed.

Mr. Scott: *(a)* the only age breakdown available for 1991-92 is for November 1991. At that time, 37 per cent. of those receiving help were over 60.

(b) Figures for the current financial year show the position as at 30 November 1992 as being:

1. Number of independent living fund (ILF) clients over 60 (both sexes)—7,435—this figure represents 40·6 per cent. of the total caseload.
2. Number of ILF clients over 65 (both sexes)—6,218—this figure represents 34 per cent. of the total caseload.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much the median and mean payments from the independent living fund were in *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* in 1992 until the fund was closed.

Mr. Scott: Data on median payments are not available. The mean award for 1991-92 was £88 per week. For the period to 31 October 1992 the mean award was £104, but this figure may change because awards are still being processed.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *233*, what right of independent appeal there will be for an applicant refused help under the arrangements to replace the independent living fund.

Mr. Scott: Arrangements for appeal will be a matter for the trustees of the successor body. I understand that under

the current scheme any disagreement with a decision is considered by two trustees or, exceptionally, by the whole body of trustees.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Canterbury of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *233*, how much of the budget of £4 million for the successor fund to the independent living fund is for administration costs.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated that the administration costs of the successor fund for new cases will not exceed 10 per cent. of the total provision of £4 million.

Women's Pension Rights

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the rights of women to a pension from their husband's former employer if the husband divorces his wife before retirement age.

Miss Widdecombe: Under the present law, the courts have powers to take account of occupational pension rights in divorce settlements. The Pensions Management Institute currently has a working party looking at all aspects of occupational pensions and divorce with the aim of producing a report in March 1993. When that report is published we will give careful consideration to its recommendations.

War Pensions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 4 December, *Official Report*, column *424*, if he will list the different rank differential payments for each rank under war disablement pension arrangements.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is contained in schedule 1, parts I and II of the Naval, Military and Air Forces etc. (Disablement and Death) Service Pensions Order 1983, a copy of which is in the Library.

Social Fund

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to allow social fund grants and loans to be applied for the purpose of rent bonds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Social fund budgeting and crisis loans can be paid to provide help with rent in advance. Assistance with deposits is specifically excluded from the social fund. There are no present plans to change these arrangements.

However, I am always ready to consider proposals for improvements and hold regular discussions with the voluntary and other organisations involved. I shall also be looking with interest at the outcome of a pilot deposit scheme in west London currently being sponsored by the Department of the Environment.

EMPLOYMENT

Published Papers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list for the last 12 months the titles of papers published by the Employment Service.

Mr. McLoughlin *[pursuant to his reply, 27 October 1992, c. 589]:* The chief executive of the Employment Service has written further to the hon. Member.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 14 December 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, you may recall the Secretary of State asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question in October about the papers published by the Employment Service in the last 12 months. This was because it was a matter which fell to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Unfortunately, my reply of 27 October contained an error in the attached annex of papers we had published. The "Revised Administrative Assistant Interview Plan, Guidance and Rating Form" and the "Revised Administrative Officer Interview Plan, Guidance and Rating Form" should not have been included in the annex. These documents give guidance to my managers so that they can make effective use of the structured interviews used for selecting people for positions in the Employment Service. If potential candidates were to obtain copies of this material it would provide them with an advantage over other potential candidates. I am sure that you will agree that this would not be right and as a consequence these documents are not available to the public.

I am sorry this mistake was made and regret any inconvenience caused.

I have attached a corrected annex and a copy of our booklet "Competent to Recruit?", which describes in general terms how our recruitment process was developed and how it operates.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PUBLICATIONS

General information about the employment service

This is the Employment Service (CORP 1 August 1992).
Public Employment Services: Into the 1990s (article in the Employment Gazette October 1992).

Performance and accounts

Employment Service Annual Report and Accounts 1990-91.
Employment Service Annual Report and Accounts 1991-92.
Employment Service Operational Plan 1992-93.

Advisory and information booklets and leaflets

Helping You Back to Work. Information for Claimants (UB40/UBL18 revised September 1991).
Just the Job—New Edition (EMPL45 revised September 1991).
Jobseeker's Charter leaflet (JSC1L December 1991).
Jobseeker's Charter. Help us to get it right . . . and how to complain if you think we have got it wrong (JSC3L December 1991).
Restart Course leaflet No. 1 (RCL1 February 1992).
How to be Better Off in Work (BOIWL1 September 1992).
Job search Seminar Leaflet (JSSL3).
Guide for Managers/Executives/Professionals (EXJ1).
Just for the Record Leaflet—Help for People with a Criminal Record (OFJ1).
Working Abroad (OPU1).
Working in Holland (OPU3).
Working in the UK (OPU4).
Working in France (OPU5).
Working in Germany (OPU6).
Working in Belgium (OPU7).
Working in Spain (OPU8).
Working in Portugal (OPU9).
Working in Italy (OPU10).
Working in Ireland (OPU11).
Working in Denmark (OPU12).
Working in Greece (OPU13).
Working in Luxembourg (OPU14).
Employing People with Disabilities—Sources of Help (PEL2).
Employing People with Disabilities—PACT Placing,

Assessment and Counselling Team (PEL).
PF1—Folder for A4 inserts entitled "Information on Disability and Employment".
Information leaflet for people with severe disabilities on Sheltered Placement scheme (SPS1).
Information leaflet for host companies about the Sheltered Placement Scheme (SPS2).
Marketing Leaflet for Employers (EMPL46).
Our New Computer System (NUBL1).
Job Interview Guarantee scheme Client Wallet.
Job Interview Guarantee scheme Employer Wallet.
How to make the most of your Work Trial.

Research and Evaluation

The Employment Service Research and Evaluation branch carries out internal studies and commissions studies by external contractors. With the exception of those produced by some contractors the reports of these studies are not published as on sale documents. Copies are placed in the House of Commons Library and sent to people who ask for them. The following lists the reports which have been issued in the past year and, where appropriate, the name of the external contractor concerned. The items marked * are available on sale.

External Contractor Reports

Evaluation of joblink—Qualitative study report (Research Services Limited, November 1991).

National Customer Satisfaction Survey—Report of Findings (Research International Limited, January 1992).

New Clients: A survey of new clients to the Employment Service and their response to New Client Advisor interview (Social Community Planning Research, March 1992).

Quality assessment and guidance in Job Review Workshops (Psychological and Statistical Services, April 1992).

Working with a disability: Barriers and facilitators (Social Community Planning Research, May 1992*)

Job Interview Guarantee (JIG) Evaluation—Report on a survey of JIG employers (British Market Research Bureau, May 1992).

Attitudes to Employment Service Local Offices: Qualitative Survey (Ecotec Research and Consulting Limited, June 1992).

An evaluation of the Pilot Employment Initiatives for Disabled People scheme (Ecotec Research and Consulting Limited, June 1992).

Progression, Regression, Turnover, Quality and Support in Sheltered Employment (Policy Research Unit, July 1992*).

Restart Cohort Study (Policy Studies Institute, September 1992).

Quality of Assessment and Guidance in Job Review Workshops (Psychological and Statistical Services, October 1992).

Internal Research Reports

Actively Seeking Work—Evaluation (Report 68, November 1991).

Survey of non-claimant users of ES local offices (Report 69, January 1992).

Multifunctioning Pilots—an assessment of performance (Report 70, January 1992).

Evaluation of ES461—the initial claim form for unemployment benefit (Report 71, March 1992).

Private Employment Agencies (Report 72, April 1992).

Restart Course Follow-up Survey (Report 73, July 1992).

The Effectiveness of the NCA (New Client Advisor) Interview (Report 74, October 1992).

NUBS2 (National Unemployment Benefit Computer System) Business Pilots Staff Views (Report 75 October 1992).

Psychological Service Project Reports

Critical Skills of Employment Service Advisors (Report No. 410 October 1991).

Utility Analysis: A method of costing the impact of a training intervention (Report No. 407 November 1991).

A Questionnaire Survey of Training Needs in Employment Department Corporate Services Branch (Report No. 402 December 1991).

A Questionnaire Survey of Training Needs in Employment Department Estates Branch (Report No. 403 December 1991).

An Evaluation of the training which equips newly appointed Adjudication Officers to deal with Doubtful claims to unemployment benefit (Reports No. 411 January 1992).

Exist Interviews with Psychologists (Report No. 404 January 1992).

Job Interview Guarantee: An evolving Placement Programme (Report No. 408 March 1992).

Do Prison Linked Jobclubs work and evaluation for initiatives at Pentonville and Holloway.

PDCA in West Midlands—Evaluation Report (Report No. 409 March 1992).

How Users assess the reception, post, messenger and typing services provided at 236 Grays Inn Road (Report No. 410 March 1992).

Participant Observation of 3 day Occupational Assessment workshops for unemployed people in the North East Region (Report No. 412 May 1992).

Outcomes for the first Employment Department Head Office PDPLINK programme (September 1991 to May 1992): A project-based approach to personal development using external placements (Report No. 413 July 1992).

How participants and tutors rated the December 1991 SEO to Grade 7 Manager Development workshop (Report No. 141 April 1992).

End of programme evaluation of the first "Executive Stretch": A personal development option for senior managers (Report No. 415 June 1992).

Referrals to Sheltered Employment (Report No. 416 September 1992).

Evaluating the Impact of the ES Stress Pack (Report No. 399 September 1992).

Is there a gap in provision for people with special needs (Report No. 406/R September 1992).

How People in the Employment Service view Travel and Subsistence, Development and Pay Issues (Report No. 417 October 1992).

Training Disability Employment Advisors in assessing individual clients with the aid of psychological tests: An early evaluation of Enhanced Assessment Training (Report No. 418 October 1992).

Improving the usability of information systems . . . a briefing for systems developers (Report No. 400).

Adjudication

Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions for Quarter ending 31 December 1991.

Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions for Quarter ending 31 March 1992.

Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions for Year ending 31 March 1992.

Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions for Quarter ending 30 June 1992.

Personnel related

Article on "Promotion Through Vacancy Advertising" (PVA) appeared in the Spring edition of "Equality Network".

Unfair Dismissal

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many full-time employees in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* each standard planning region are not covered by the right to appeal against unfair dismissal.

Mr. McLoughlin: I regret that the information is not available as there is no statutory definition of what constitutes full-time employment for the purposes of unfair dismissal.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many part-time employees in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* each standard planning region are not covered by the right to appeal against unfair dismissal.

Mr. McLoughlin: I regret that the information is not available as there is no statutory definition of what constitutes part-time employment for the purposes of unfair dismissal.

Career Development Loans

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in each region and for Great Britain as a whole are *(a)* currently on a course which has been supported by a career development loan, *(b)* have obtained jobs at the end of their period of study supported by a career development loan, *(c)* are repaying a career development loan and *(d)* have had to defer repayments on their career development loan because of hardship, what is the average amount of loan taken out; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The table sets out for each English region, Scotland and Wales, information on the number of people currently in trained supported by a career development loan (CDL) and the number of people currently repaying a loan. Information on number of trainees in work following training is obtained from a sample number of trainees. On the basis of the sample, 74 per cent. of trainees supported by a CDL find work following training. No information is held on the number of trainees who have had to defer repayment of loans due to hardship. At the end of October 1992, the average loan amount for loans taken out in the current financial year was £2,745.

English regions	*Number currently in training*	*Number currently repaying loans*
South East	1,258	2,805
Greater London	1,111	2,692
East Anglia	224	531
South West	616	1,318
West Midlands	403	1,060
East Midlands	308	743
Yorkshire	454	1,243
North West	369	1,354
Northern	230	757
Wales	219	460
Scotland	534	1,478
Great Britain	5,726	14,441

Youth Training

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of youth training allowance, or equivalent, for 16 and 17-year-olds for every year between 1978-79 and 1993-94 *(a)* in cash prices and *(b)* at 1978-79 prices.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* Information about actual allowance levels is not available. The following tables show minimum allowance levels; providers of youth training can pay more.

Youth opportunities programme (YOP)/youth training scheme (YTS) minimum allowance levels

(£)	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Minimum allowance (YOP/YTS)[1]	20·55	23·50	23·50	25·00	25·00	25·00	26·25	27·30	27·30	28·50
At 1978-79 price level	20·55	20·14	17·02	16·51	15·41	14·73	14·72	14·51	14·01	13·92
Minimum allowance (YOP/YTS)[2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	35·00	35·00
At 1978-79 price level	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	18·03	17·09

[1] Minimum level of allowance payable to first-year trainees until 29 May 1990. Payable to 16-year-old trainees thereafter.
[2] Minimum level of allowance payable to second-year trainees until 29 May 1990. Payable to trainees aged 17 and above thereafter. This rate of allowance was introduced in April 1986 to coincide with the transition of YTS from a one year to a two-year training programme.
[3] 1978-79 price levels obtained by application of appropriate GDP deflator index.
NB: The youth opportunities programme (YOP) was replaced by the youth training scheme (YTS) in April 1983.

Youth Training Scheme (YTS)/Youth training (YT) minimum allowance levels (£)

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Minimum allowance					
YT/YTS[1]	29·50	29·50	29·50	29·50	29·50
At 1978-79[3] price level	13·43	12·60	11·67	10·92	10·47
Minimum allowance					
YT/YTS[2]	35·00	35·00	35·00	35·00	35·00
At 1978-79[3] price level	15·93	14·95	13·85	12·95	12·42

[1] Minimum level of allowance payable to first-year trainees until 29 May 1990. Payable to 16-year-old trainees thereafter.
[2] Minimum level of allowance payable to second-year trainees until 29 May 1990. Payable to trainees aged 17 and above thereafter. This rate of allowance was introduced in April 1986 to coincide with the transition of YTS from a one year to a two-year training programme.
[3] 1978-79 price levels obtained by application of appropriate GDP deflator index.
Note: The youth training scheme (YTS) was replaced by youth training (YT) on 29 May 1990.

Travel-to-interview Scheme

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she will tighten up the travel-to-interview scheme in order to provide early payments to claimants; and if she will make a statement about the inception and operation of the scheme including take-up in the last 12 months;

(2) if she will amend the travel-to-interview scheme to enable applicants to claim for losses incurred in attending a second interview; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. Cooper to Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, dated 15 December 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer Parliamentary Questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your questions about the Travel to Interview Scheme (TIS).

TIS was introduced in 1986 to help with travel costs for unemployed people to attend job interviews beyond daily travelling distance of their home area, thus widening the applicant's jobsearch, improving their chances of obtaining work and encouraging labour mobility. From October 1991 to September 1992 the scheme helped 38,000 applicants. A few basic conditions must be met before assistance can be granted, to ensure that the limited funds available are concentrated on those unemployed people in most need.

Assistance is normally given to clients in the form of a British Rail travel warrant, which they receive before attending the interview. Where clients choose to travel by car or are entitled to help with overnight subsistence costs they are reimbursed on their return from the interview. Payment is usually made in cash by our local Jobcentre or, if the amount to be reimbursed is quite large, then a girocheque will be sent to the client from our Regional Finance Offices. The Finance Office in Cardiff have a target of repayment within seven days and I am pleased to say that in almost all cases payment is made within five.

You have asked about amending TIS to help applicants with assistance for second interviews. Whilst we realise it would be popular with jobseekers if help was available to cover the cost of repeat interviews, it could in practice be very costly. It may, for example, lead to the available funds having to be concentrated on a smaller number of people. We therefore limit the assistance to one interview per job. Where the selection process is a lengthy one we have to rely on the employer being sensitive to costs likely to fall on the applicant and offer help towards them.

You may like to know that the scheme is currently under review and the eligibility conditions are being looked at to see whether, within the limited resources, there are ways of helping more people. The possibility of helping with second interviews is included in the review. As you will appreciate the recommendations for a change in the eligibility rules of the scheme are subject to Ministerial and Treasury approval. I hope that the decisions on this issue will be taken in the very near future.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Professional Footballers

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the application of articles 7 and 48 of the treaty of Rome, as amended, to the employment of professional footballers.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* It is the policy of Her Majesty's Government that articles 7 and 48 of the treaty of Rome, as amended, apply to the employment of all nationals of the European Community working in the United Kingdom, including professional footballers.

Unemployment Statistics

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people aged 16 and 17 years in the Liverpool travel-to-work area are not in employment, not on a youth training scheme and not in full-time education.

Mr. McLoughlin: In October 1992 there were 297 unemployed claimants aged 16 and 17 years in the Liverpool travel-to-work area.

Changes to the benefit regulations in September 1988 coincided with the extention of a guaranteed YTS (now YT) place to all those aged under 18 not in full-time education or employment, which meant that those who declined an offer of a YTS place were no longer entitled to benefit. However, there are still a small number of under 18-year-olds entitled to benefit due to special circumstances, such as severe hardship or by virtue of their being orphans.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was *(a)* her Department's budget expressed in 1987-88 prices, *(b)* the average number of unemployed people and *(c)* a figure for *(a)* divided by *(b)* for each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The figures requested are as follows:

Year	*(a) Department's budget (£ million)*	*(b) Average number of unemployed people (Great Britain)*	*(a)/(b) (£s)*
1987-88	3,903	2,674,858	1,459
1988-89	3,592	2,142,008	1,677
1989-90	3,307	1,702,250	1,943
1990-91	3,041	1,757,266	1,730
1991-92	2,756	2,448,791	1,125

(i) Figures for years to 1989-90 include a public corporation the National Dock Labour Board.

(ii) The 1991-92 figures exclude the amounts transferred to the Scottish Office (mainly for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise) which is responsible for delivering the main training and enterprise programmes in Scotland.

Construction Sites

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful prosecutions took place in each of the last five years as a result of investigations into deaths and serious injuries on construction sites in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland as a whole.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many deaths and serious injuries have occurred on construction sites in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland as a whole in each of the past five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The numbers of deaths and major injuries occurring in the construction industry in Strathclyde and Scotland in the past five years are provided in the table.

Occupational injuries occurring in the construction industry[1] as reported to HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorates and local authorities, 1986-87 to 1991-92[6]

Year[2]	Fatal injuries			Major injuries[3]		
	Employees	Self employed	Members of public[4]	Employees	Self employed	Members of public[4]
(a) Strathclyde						
1987-88	7	—	1	180	9	4
1988-89	10	1	3	170	8	8
1989-90	5	1	2	159	17	4
1990-91[5]	5	1	1	154	17	7
1991-92[5,6]	4	—	—	162	8	5
(b) Scotland						
1987-88	13	1	2	396	16	11
1988-89	19	1	4	355	17	23
1989-90	15	3	2	383	37	11
1990-91[5]	12	3	1	347	40	18
1991-92[5,6]	8	—	1	399	45	21

[1] As defined by Standard Industrial Classification 1980 Division 5
[2] Year commencing 1 April
[3] As defined under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985
[4] Injured as a result of someone else's work activity
[5] Includes reports made to HSE's quarries inspectorate
[6] provisional

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many investigations were undertaken into deaths and serious injuries on construction sites in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland as a whole in each of the last five years by (i) the Health and Safety Executive and (ii) the respective police forces.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not readily available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The available information is given in the following table.

Number of accidents and dangerous occurrences on construction sites which were investigated by Health and Safety Executive inspectors in Scotland 1987-88 to 1991-92[1]

Year[2]	Total
1987-88	189
1988-89	188
1989-90	223
1990-91	190
[1]1991-92	200

[1] Provisional.
[2] Years commencing 1 April.

Questions about the work of police forces are for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Lough Shore, Greyabbey

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment has been made of the adequacy of the foul sewerage system for the additional homes proposed at the Lough Shore, Greyabbey, planning application No. 0772.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has not yet concluded the assessment of the adequacy of its foul sewerage system to serve the proposed construction of 53 houses on land adjacent to Islandview road, Greyabbey.

Non-fossil Fuels

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration has been given to encouraging electricity generation from non-fossil fuel sources in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement regarding the future application of the non-fossil fuel obligation to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of Economic Development and NIE plc have jointly commissioned a study into the potential for renewable energy in Northern Ireland and plan to publish its findings next spring. No decisions on a non-fossil fuel obligation for Northern Ireland can be made until then.

Community Relations Council

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many staff are employed by the Community Relations Council; and how many are *(a)* Roman Catholics and *(b)* Protestants.

Mr. Hanley: The Community Relations Council employs 16 staff, eight of whom are Roman Catholics and eight Protestant.

Newtownbreda Bombing

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many interim payments of £10,000 or more have been issued by the Compensation Agency to householders whose homes were damaged by the IRA bomb at Newtownbreda on 23 September.

Mr. Mates: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Compensation Agency under its chief executive, Mr. J. Robinson.

I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. Robinson to Mr. John D. Taylor, dated 14 December 1992:

I refer to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning the criminal damage resulting from the bombing of the Forensic Science Laboratory at Newtownbreda on 23 September. The Secretary of State has asked me to respond.

In the case of householders a total of 111 claims are valued at £10,000 or more and 64 interim payments of various

amounts have been made. Three have been for more than £10,000. In addition four offers of settlement over £10,000 have been made.

I hope this is helpful.

Housing

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he is taking to ensure that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive introduces an effective new build and improvements to purpose-built stock programme following the publication of the annual housing statistic report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Following the announcement on 8 December of its public expenditure allocation the Housing Executive will prepare its 1993-94 budget for approval by Government. I am confident that this budget will provide for the continuation of effective new build and IPBS programmes.

School Examinations

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he will take to ensure that secondary school students from Northern Ireland can continue to undertake examinations set by examining boards in England and Wales at both GCSE and A-level; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There is no change to the arrangements whereby NI schools may choose A-level syllabuses offered by examining boards in England and Wales.

At GCSE, pupils commencing courses in key stage 4 in September 1993 in English, mathematics and science, business studies, drama and home economics must follow the statutory programmes of study in those subjects and the Department of Education will approve only those GCSE syllabuses which confirm to the programmes of study. The Department invited examining boards in England and Wales to submit syllabuses for approval, in these subjects, but none has done so for courses commencing in September 1993, although interest has been expressed in offering syllabuses for approval for 1994. Schools may offer GCSE syllabuses in all other subjects set by examining boards in England and Wales for courses commencing in September 1993.

Home Helps

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many home helps have been employed in west Belfast during each of the last five years.

Mr. Hanley: The information is not available in the form requested. The number of home helps employed in the North and West Belfast community unit of management of the Eastern health and social services board at 30 September of each of the last five years was as follows:

Year	*Number of home helps*	*Whole-time equivalents*
1988	1,519	477·87
1989	1,392	440·54
1990	1,343	404·86
1991	1,142	389·58
1992	1,039	346·26

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many home helps are currently employed throughout west, east, north and south Belfast.

Mr. Hanley: The information is not available in the form requested. The number of home helps employed in the North and West Belfast, and South and East Belfast community units of management at 30 September 1992, the latest date for which information is available, was as follows:

Community unit of management	*Number of home helps*	*Whole-time equivalents*
North and West Belfast community unit	1,039	346·26
South and East Belfast community unit	1,429	315·68

Single Parents

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many single parents are claiming social security benefit in *(a)* west Belfast and *(b)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. Wylie to Dr. Joe Hendron, dated 11 December 1992:

As I am responsible for Social Security operational matters your recent Parliamentary Question on the number of single parents claiming social security benefit has been passed to me for a reply.

Information available on the number of single parents claiming social security benefit is as follows:

Income support

West Belfast Area	*Numbers of lone parents in receipt of income support*
Andersonstown Social Security Office	2,570
Falls Road Social Security Office	2,398
Shankill Social Security Office	1,139
Total	6,107
Northern Ireland Total	33,183

Other Benefits

Information is not available for specific areas and the figures supplied are for Northern Ireland as a whole. Some single parents may be getting more than one of these benefits.

Benefit	*Numbers of lone parents in receipt*
Family Credit	5,500
One Parent/Child Benefit	28,000
Widowed Mothers Allowance	2,500
Sickness and Invalidity Benefit	400

I hope you find this information helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report* and copies will be placed in the Library.

Military Complaints Procedure

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to announce the appointment of an independent assessor of military complaints procedures.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am pleased to announce that I have appointed Mr. David Hewitt as independent assessor of military complaints procedures. Mr. Hewitt is a respected legal figure in Northern Ireland and will bring considerable experience to the post. The main role of the assessor will be to provide an independent audit of the operation of procedures for handling non-criminal complaints against HM forces. His terms of reference are set out in section 60 and schedule 6 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991. This appointment reaffirms the Government's commitment to maintaining public confidence in the attainment of the high standards of behaviour required from the security forces. Mr. Hewitt will take up his duties early in the new year.

Race Relations

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about race relations in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: Earlier this year, the Government, in responding to the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights second report on "Religious and Political Discrimination and Equality of Opportunity in Northern Ireland" (Cm 1107), indicated that they would bring forward in 1992 a consultative document to examine the scope for race legislation in Northern Ireland. This consultative document will be published later today. It will examine the need for and possible scope of legislation on race relations in Northern Ireland and the possible form and content of any such legislation. The consultative document also reviews a range of departmental policies and programmes which affect ethnic minority groups.

The document will also seek views about legislation to make discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities, services and premises on the ground of religious belief or political opinion unlawful.

SCOTLAND

Local Rail Services

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy that any reorganisation of Scottish local government should provide a structure to maintain the integrity of local rail services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* Regional and islands authorities are required to secure the provision of such passenger transport services as they consider appropriate where these are not being provided by the market and to formulate general policies as to the services they propose to secure. There are no plans at present to change this. The Government's consultation paper on local government reform invites views on the most appropriate arrangements for enabling the provision of public transport services in Scotland.

After-school Care

Mr. Chisholme: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money has been given to Scottish Enterprise for after-school care provision by local enterprise councils.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* It is for Scottish Enterprise and local enterprise companies to deploy the funds available to them, subject only to the broad budget block structure set out in the Supply Estimates and to the rules on virement between budget blocks. However, I have written to the chairman of Scottish Enterprise and to local enterprise company chairmen indicating that they will be expected in 1993-94 to support the piloting of after-school and holiday child care initiatives, in line with the Government's election manifesto commitment to introduce a new child care grant throughout Great Britain. The substantial increase in funding for the Scottish Enterprise network's enterprise activities for 1993-94 will clearly be very helpful in enabling the network to undertake this task.

Housing

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage change in right-to-buy receipts he has assumed in setting out his planned provision for housing in 1993-94.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* Estimates of right-to-buy receipts in 1993-94 will be included in the provisional housing revenue account capital allocations to local authorities for 1993-94 when these are issued later this month.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what account he has taken of changes in housing stock between 1992-93 and 1993-94 in his planned provision for expenditure on council housing for 1993-94.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* The local authority housing stock in Scotland is expected to change from an estimated total of 695,655 dwellings at 30 September 1992 to an estimated total of 668,537 dwellings at 30 September 1993. These estimates, which have been agreed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, will be reflected in the calculation of housing support grant for 1993-94. The allocations to local authorities for capital investment in council housing in 1993-94 will also take account of these estimates.

Water Quality

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what are the additions or reductions of each of the chemical constituents of water and their percentages to or from the existing supplies in the areas served by each of the water authorities in Scotland which are required in order to meet the new EC water standards; and if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* chemical constituent of water, *(b)* each water authority and *(c)* each supply point;

(2) what changes to the chemical analysis of water are envisaged as a consequence of implementing new EC water standards compared with the existing chemical analysis employed by Scottish water authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* There are no new EC water standards. The EC drinking water directive (80/778/EEC) of July 1980 came into force in July 1985. The Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 1990 adopted the standards set in the directive, together with a number of additional national standards on quality.

There are over 700 water supply zones in Scotland taking water from more than 800 different surface and groundwater sources. The raw water quality varies with location and time of year. The water treatment carried out to meet the requirements of the regulations is equally varied. Water quality information is available from authorities' public registers and this is summarised in their annual reports. The Scottish Office publishes an annual overview of water quality in Scotland. The last, "Drinking Water Quality in Scotland 1990", is in the Library and a more detailed report for 1991 will be published shortly.

Scottish Natural Heritage

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much Scottish Natural Heritage is paying out in the current financial year in management agreement; and whether he will list each current management agreement and its cost.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* I have asked Scottish Natural Heritage to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much Scottish Natural Heritage paid out in compensation payments in the current financial year under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and if he will list each individual amount.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* I have asked Scottish Natural Heritage to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of claims for compensation under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 that are currently outstanding in Scotland, their county and the amount that has been claimed.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* I have asked Scottish Natural Heritage to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list grants given by Scottish Natural Heritage for the purchase of land in Scotland for nature conservation purposes, their location and the organisations that received them in the current financial year.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* So far in 1992-93 Scottish Natural Heritage has paid £500 to Kilmuir Village Woodlands Association under section 9 of the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991. SNH estimates that a further £175,000 may be paid to voluntary bodies for land purchases in this financial year. The details remain confidential until negotiations are completed.

Skye Bridge

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place a copy of the Skye bridge toll concession agreement in the Library.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* The development agreement regulates the design and construction of the scheme and the concession agreement regulates the operation and maintenance thereafter. These are commercial agreements and as such are confidential. However, certain key provisions of the agreements are required to be made public under provisions in the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991. These were published in an assignation statement at the time of publication of draft orders for the scheme. My right hon. Friend has arranged for a copy of the published assignation statement to be placed in the Library.

Transport Users Consultative Committee

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he has taken on each of the recommendations of the Transport Users Consultative Committee for Scotland contained in its 1991 annual report.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* The committee's recommendations on railway issues are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. The committee's recommendations on shipping issues relate directly to the operational responsibilities of Caledonian MacBrayne. I understand that the company's existing arrangements for consultation on the design of new vessels, and changes in the pattern of services or timetables are fully in accord with the committee's recommendations.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Foreign-owned Trawlers

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the numbers and types of United Kingdom-Spanish trawlers or Spanish-owned trawlers and United Kingdom-Dutch-owned trawlers fishing within the United Kingdom quota system and the number and type of licences each of these vessels have; if he will express this as a percentage of the United Kingdom fleet; and if he will list the aggregate tonnage and aggregate horsepower in kilowatts of each of these vessels.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport gave to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 19 October 1992 at column *200*. All the vessels listed in this reply hold United Kingdom fishing licences. I also refer to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 24 November 1992 at column *576* on the subject of beam trawl licences held by Anglo-Dutch vessels. I regret that it is not possible to provide the other information requested except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fishing vessels of other European community member states are operating inside the United Kingdom quota system.

Mr. Curry: Only vessels which are registered in the United Kingdom are entitled to fish against United Kingdom quotas.

Fisheries

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost of policing and administering fisheries in the United Kingdom for the years 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91; and what are the expected costs for 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Curry: The cost of policing and administering sea fisheries in the United Kingdom was as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	20·5
1989-90	21·7
1990-91	23·4
1991-92	23·8
[1]1992-93	25·4

[1]Forecast outturn.

Fishermen (Effort Limitation)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the conservation measures and effort limitation measures which have been applied by him and which affect British fishermen only.

Mr. Curry: After consultation with the fishing industry the United Kingdom introduced on 1 June 1992 a package of conservation measures which complemented EC measures brought into force on the same day. The United Kingdom measures included a one-net rule, the use of square mesh panels in all nephrops fisheries and for whitefish in the area west of Scotland south of 56°N southwards to the southern edge of the Irish sea, and an anti-ballooning provision for all whitefish fisheries. We also, along with the Irish Republic, retained the 27 cm minimum landing size for whiting. A ban on the use of twin and multi-rig trawls in certain nephrops fisheries as requested by the industry will come into operation early next year. Also, while the EC limit in relation to cod and haddock fisheries of 135 days at sea, set for 1992, applied mainly to United Kingdom vessels, we were able to negotiate a gear option for vessels prepared to use 110 mm and 120 mm mesh nets.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information his Department has about prevailing limitation of fishing effort by curtailment of days at sea operated by each member country of the European Community.

Mr. Curry: EC regulation 3882/91 requires certain vessels of over 10 m length, fishing for cod and haddock in the North sea and to the west of Scotland, to be tied up for 135 days during the period 1 February 1992 to 31 December 1992. Member states affected by this have been able to obtain full or partial exemptions from this requirement on the basis that they would not catch quotas, or the use of alternative arrangements.

The available information for each member state is summarised as follows:

The United Kingdom is operating limited tie-up regime under EC Reg. 3882/91, such that vessels may opt to use certain technical measures instead of tying up for the full 135 days (partial exemption from Reg 3882/91).

Belgium, Denmark, Germany and Ireland have also obtained exemptions from Reg. 3882/91.

France, Spain and Portugal have no regime of days at sea limitation as far as we are aware.

Greece and Italy have national regimes.

Netherlands—most Dutch vessels are limited to 150-165 days at sea under national legislation.

Common Agricultural Policy Subsidies

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the value of common agricultural policy subsidies *(a)* in total and *(b)* for each agricultural product paid to United Kingdom farmers in the last financial year; and what was *(a)* the average and *(b)* the median value of subsidy paid to each farm.

Mr. Curry: Details of public expenditure under the common agricultural policy, including expenditure on national grants and subsidies, are published in table 9.1 in "Agriculture in the United Kingdom", an annual publication produced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Copies are placed in the Library. Statistical information is not retained recording the average and median values of subsidy received by individual farms.

Radioactive Discharges

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what division within his Department is currently dealing with the application by British Nuclear Fuels plc for the authorisation of radioactive discharges for the thermal oxide reprocessing plant.

Mr. Curry: The divisions dealing with these applications are: emergencies and food protection division, for the disposal of radioactive gaseous waste and waste oil; and marine environmental protection division, for disposal of radioactive liquid waste. Appropriate scientific support is provided by the Ministry's food science division and directorate of fisheries research.

Surplus Butter

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his oral answer of 3 December, *Official Report*, columns 384-85, what records it is compulsory for organisations distributing EC butter to keep.

Mr. Curry: Designated organisations must ensure that records are kept of the produce received and distributed. Details of records that are required to be kept are set out in annex B of leaflet LP46 entitled "Surplus Food Scheme".

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his oral answer of 3 December, *Official Report*, columns 384-85, what methods his Department uses to contact recipients of EC surplus butter in order to carry out checks.

Mr. Curry: It is a requirement that all designated organisations receiving produce for distribution must notify the local office of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food at least one week in advance of a distribution to eligible recipients. This enables official visits to be made on a random basis.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his oral answer of 3 December, *Official Report*, columns 384-85, whether he will consider the production by his Department of standard advertisements, posters or leaflets which could be used or adapted by voluntary organisations participating in the scheme for the distribution of EC surplus butter.

Mr. Curry: The Intervention Board executive agency produces and distributes a standard poster listing the eligible groups under this scheme. Detailed publicity of the timing and location of individual distributions is best left to designated orgnisations.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his oral answer of 3 December, *Official Report*, columns 384-85, what checks are carried out by his Department on organisations which apply to take part in the scheme for the distribution of EC surplus butter, prior to their acceptance as distributors.

Mr. Curry: Organisations are required to certify that they are charitable or non-profit making; preferably already involved in the provision of goods and services to the most needy; and not concerned in the production, wholesaling, storage or retailing of butter and/or beef. Applications must also be supported by an independent referee such as a justice of the peace, minister of religion or a prominent citizen of the local community.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his oral answer of 3 December, *Official Report*, columns 384-85, how many organisations which have participated in the scheme for the distribution of EC surplus butter have been barred from participation in a following year by his Department.

Mr. Curry: Applications from six organisations which had participated in the 1991 scheme were refused for the 1992-93 distribution.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his oral answer of 3 December, *Official Report*, columns 384-85, how many of the voluntary organisations distributing EC surplus butter are visited by staff from his Department to observe distribution.

Mr. Curry: It is planned that 30 per cent. of the 1,300 designated organisations will be subject to official inspection on a random basis.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his oral answer of 3 December, *Official Report*, columns 384-85, what instructions are issued to voluntary organisations distributing butter as to the details of recipients of butter which they are required to record.

Mr. Curry: Designated organisations are required to keep records of the number of recipients, the quantity of butter and beef each received, and how eligibility was established. Documents that organisations may accept as proof of eligibility are listed in annex C of leaflet LP46, entitled "EC Surplus Food Scheme", copies which are available in the Library of the House.

Sellafield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what date his Department received applications from British Nuclear Fuels plc for authorisation of discharge from the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield, of *(a)* low-level liquid waste from the marine pipeline, *(b)* gaseous waste, *(c)* radioactively contaminated waste oil and *(d)* low-level liquid waste from the facility sewer.

Mr. Curry: The dates these applications were received are as follows:

	1992
(a) low-level liquid waste from the factory sewer	21 January
(b) low-level liquid waste from the marine pipeline	5 May
(c) gaseous waste	5 May
(d) radioactively contaminated waste oil	5 May

Farmers (Early Retirement)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations he has received calling for the implementation of a pension scheme to assist early retirement among farmers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: Since the EC scheme for early retirement was agreed in May, my department has received 29 representations from Members of Parliament and members of the public about its possible application in the United Kingdom.

Wool Prices

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect of the discontinuance of the guaranteed price for wool; and what plans he has to reconsider his decision.

Mr. Curry: Termination of the wool guarantee will give the industry financial responsibility for its own affairs, allowing it to respond more directly to market forces. Although there will be some short-term impact on producers' returns, their total returns from wool amount to only approximately 5 per cent. of the total return from sheep production. The Government have no plans to reconsider this decision, which will be implemented by means of the Agriculture Bill.

Suckler Cow Premium Scheme

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect on the industry of the refusal of top-up payments for the suckler cow premium scheme; and what plans he has to reconsider his decision.

Mr. Curry: Substantial increases in the EC-funded element of the suckler cow premium from 1993 onwards mean that rates of premium will be higher in 1993 than this year, despite the removal of the national top-up. I have no plans to reconsider this decision.

HEALTH

Homoeopathic Medicines

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many prescriptions for homoeopathic medicines have been made *(a)* in the out-patient clinic of

hospitals, *(b)* in in-patient clinics, *(c)* from general practitioners' surgeries and *(d)* in total in the last calendar year.

Mr. Sackville: The number of preparations dispensed by community pharmacists, dispensing doctors and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered in England in 1991 was 161,000. The remaining information is not available centrally.

Community Health Services

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much funding is allocated to community health councils for training purposes in each regional health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not held centrally.

We have asked regions to ensure that adequate arrangements are made for the development of community health council staff.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what sums were expended by her Department in respect of European Drug Prevention Week, additional to those in existing annual programmes; and for what specific purposes.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since 1985 the Department of Health has run a series of campaigns against drug misuse, using mass media advertising and other media. As the main thrust of the 1992-93 campaign, European Drug Prevention Week was financed using existing allocations. The purpose of the week, consistent with previous campaigns, was to raise awareness of the dangers of drug and solvent misuse, especially among young people, their parents and other concerned adults.

Warner Report

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to implement the recommendations of the Warner report; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) on 7 December at column *526*. Local authorities have been asked to report progress by 8 April 1993 on the implementation of recommendations for improving employers' personnel practices. We are consulting widely on other important recommendations, for comment by 26 February 1993.

Newchurch Hospital, Warrington

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent on resettling the residents and patients of Newchurch hospital, Culcheth in Warrington; on what was the money spent; and what was the average cost per patient.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. D. Hannah, the chairman of Warrington health authority, for details.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health is she will publish the number of patients in each standard age group who received kidney dialysis in the most recent available year; and what information she has on the proportion these numbers represent of kidney patients in each age group.

Mr. Sackville: According to information provided by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association, there were 9,087 patients in the United Kingdom receiving dialysis as at the end of 1991, the latest date for which information is available. The table shows the estimated numbers by age group and the proportion they represent of all patients receiving renal replacement therapy at that time.

Age	*Dialysis numbers + percentage of total*	*Proportion of all renal replacement therapy per cent.*
Under 15	109 (1·2)	0·5
15-34	1,263 (13·9)	6·5
35-44	1,145 (12·6)	5·9
45-54	1,636 (18·0)	8·5
55-64	2,108 (23·2)	10.9
Over 65	2,808 (30·9)	14·5

General Practitioners

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will review the system for making deprivation factor payments to general practitioners to give a greater role to family health service authorities; and if she will make a statement on the effectiveness of the present system in targeting resources where they are most needed.

Dr. Mawhinney: The deprivation payments system recognises the higher workload faced by doctors in deprived areas. As up-to-date data become available from the 1991 census, there will be opportunities to improve the targeting of the payments: we shall need to consider this with the profession and with national health service management, taking account of experience to date.

Health Services

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to encourage health providers to manage their contacts, and treatments provided, more evenly over the financial year.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is the responsibility of local managers to schedule their contracted work evenly over the financial year. The vast majority are doing this successfully. Where there are isolated problems, these are being resolved by local managers with help, where appropriate, from their regional health authority.

Sefton General Hospital, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the future of Sefton general hospital, Liverpool.

Mr. Yeo: On 27 October 1992, Liverpool health authority commenced public consultation on proposals to

replace outdated in-patient services for the rehabilitation of the elderly and people with acute mental illness, currently at Sefton general hospital, with a wide range of modern, purpose built facilities at Broadgreen and Mossley Hill hospitals. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. D. H. Tod, the authority chairman, for more details.

Redundancies

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy on compulsory redundancies within the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: Employing authorities in the NHS decide their own policies on matters such as redundancy, taking into account the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service code of practice, employment legislation and the procedures governing the eligibility to benefits outlined in sections 45 and 46 of the General Whitley Council handbook.

Regional Hospital Authorities

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will indicate for each regional hospital authority *(a)* the cash allocation for hospital and community health services spending in 1993-94 and *(b)* the region's resident population in 1993-94 in each age band in the national capitation funding formula, and to subdivide the cash allocation for each region by the population in each age band in proportion to the age-related weightings in the capitation formula in such a way as to show the amount of money allocated per person in each age band in each region for HCHS in 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: Table 1 shows for each region the main revenue allocation for resident population in 1993-94. These were based on an across the board increase of 0·4 per cent. above inflation with a similar sum distributed to bring regions closer to their population shares. They do not therefore equate to weighted capitation shares.

Table 2 shows the projected births and resident population in each age band used in the weighted capitation formula.

The formula does not make allocations in respect of specific age groups. It weights the crude population for:

Age, using the expenditure weightings in table 3;
Standardised mortality ratio, all causes under 75;
London weighting and market forces factor;
Thames regions addition.

Table 4 shows the successive effects of each of these weighting factors on each region's population shares.

The age weightings reflect past estimated national spending on these age bands and cannot be used in isolation to produce meaningful information in the form requested.

Table 1
Regional health authority allocations: 1993-94
Revenue allocations for resident populations

	Allocation for resident populations £000s	[1] *Percentage increase over inflation*
Northern	1,159,723	1·03
Yorkshire	1,334,886	0·67
Trent	1,672,751	1·16
East Anglia	704,794	1·18
North West Thames	1,320,749	0·40
North East Thames	1,490,187	0·40
South East Thames	1,439,276	0·40
South West Thames	1,116,107	0·40
Wessex	1,033,656	1·48
Oxford	794,779	0·86
South West	1,185,708	1·16
West Midlands	1,855,142	1·00
Mersey	890,032	0·58
North West	1,505,427	0·70
England	17,503,217	0·80

[1] Above forecast inflation for the hospital and community health services of 1·9 per cent.

1989 based population projections for mid-1993

Table 2

Age bands	*Births*	*00-04* *1*	*05-14* *2*	*15-44* *3*	*45-64* *4*	*65-74* *5*	*75-84* *6*	*85+* *7*	*Total* *1-7*
RHA									
Northern	41,344	204,195	399,985	1,275,568	705,088	295,696	152,444	46,627	3,079,603
Yorkshire	52,050	254,276	476,588	1,541,858	818,873	330,915	191,539	62,098	3,676,147
Trent	64,254	317,311	591,339	1,985,123	1,078,310	441,979	242,529	74,835	4,731,426
East Anglia	27,650	136,894	265,732	891,126	472,771	200,464	120,663	39,338	2,126,988
North West Thames	52,989	247,168	441,479	1,627,217	772,747	267,956	164,541	53,568	3,574,676
North East Thames	57,910	273,155	480,696	1,672,102	796,067	307,148	182,977	59,538	3,771,683
South East Thames	52,713	255,375	454,418	1,585,462	797,947	335,075	211,945	73,463	3,713,685
South West Thames	40,025	197,699	357,403	1,312,490	672,707	259,969	172,071	62,410	3,034,749
Wessex	39,805	194,501	366,830	1,257,977	676,441	293,996	177,740	61,184	3,028,669
Oxford	37,872	182,471	346,655	1,165,918	568,251	193,304	112,555	36,874	2,606,028
South Western	43,138	211,470	404,171	1,341,429	768,209	338,856	207,413	71,695	3,343,243
West Midlands	75,089	370,102	688,779	2,181,941	1,206,701	474,349	256,622	77,936	5,256,430
Mersey	33,995	166,143	317,455	989,317	550,883	216,341	121,115	37,888	2,399,142

Age bands	Births	00-04 1	05-14 2	15-44 3	45-64 4	65-74 5	75-84 6	85+ 7	Total 1-7
North Western	58,654	287,137	531,113	1,680,715	888,688	354,077	205,456	64,527	4,011,713
England	678,388	3,297,897	6,122,643	20,508,243	10,773,683	4,310,125	2,519,610	821,981	48,354,182

RHA cash limits 1993-94: Age weighting[1] *Table 3*

	[2]Births	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7
1988-89	1,382.67	186.33	108.31	103.04	230.20	519.60	939.42	1,799.10
Reflated	1,597.65	215.30	125.15	119.06	265.99	600.39	1,085.48	2,078.82
1989-90 Cash	1,361.72	204.60	103.99	115.87	256.63	545.86	1,015.50	1,877.05
Reflated	1,480.19	222.40	113.04	125.95	278.96	593.35	1,103.85	2,040.35
1990-91 Cash	1,438.21	221.31	110.02	139.84	274.27	590.25	1,057.45	1,961.32
Average	1,505.35	219.67	116.07	128.28	273.07	594.66	1,082.26	2,026.83

[1]Estimates are quoted here to 2 decimal places for use in calculation of sub-regional allocations but should not be regarded as so precise and are normally rounded.

[2]Bands 2 and 3 are estimated average cost per head for age groups 5-15 and 16-44 respectively. These are used as proxies when weighting resident populations aged 5-14 and 15-44.

Table 4
1993 Resident populations weighted for age, standardised mortality ratios, London weighting/market forces and Thames factors

£000s

	A	B	C	D
Northern	3,048·91	3,328·67	3,249·16	3,221·23
Yorkshire	3,681·55	3,819·52	3,728·29	3,696·24
Trent	4,714·81	4,806·27	4,691·47	4,651·14
East Anglia	2,179·86	2,025·40	1,977·02	1,960·02
North West Thames	3,391·76	3,254·29	3,472·10	3,576·27
North East Thames	3,666·10	3,642·04	3,951·61	4,070·16
South East Thames	3,830·33	3,752·51	3,924·84	3,964·09
South West Thames	3,116·76	2,890·84	3,017·93	3,048·11
Wessex	3,170·32	2,978·07	2,906·93	2,881·94
Oxford	2,432·17	2,272·94	2,223·46	2,204·35
South Western	3,586·37	3,407·04	3,325·66	3,297·07
West Midlands	5,167·32	5,323·30	5,196·14	5,151·48
Mersey	2,382·59	2,544·67	2,483·89	2,462·54
North Western	3,985·34	4,308·63	4,205·71	4,169·56
ENGLAND	48,354·20	48,354·20	48,354·20	48,354·20

Resident populations (including births) weighted for:
A = Age
B = Standardised mortality ratios
C = London weighting and market forces
D = Thames factors

Camberwell Health Authority

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will review the appointment of the chairman of Camberwell district health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Medicine Expenditure

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 26 November, *Official Report*, column *810*, what assessment she has made as part of her Department's review of the measures being taken throughout Europe to limit medicine bills of the current spend per head on medicines in European countries; and if she will give the figure for the United Kingdom and the corresponding figures for Germany, Italy, France, Belgium and Holland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department monitors the range of measures being taken in all countries to limit spending on medicines and notes the different factors in each country which influence levels of spending. These include countries' different policies on the range of drugs for which reimbursement of cost is available, making simple per capita comparisons potentially misleading.

The latest year for which figures are available for all the countries mentioned is 1989.

In that year, spending on drugs per capita was converted into sterling on the basis of purchasing power parity:

	£
United Kingdom	47
Germany	99
Italy	79
France	83
Belgium	59
Netherlands	42

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 26 November, *Official Report*, column *810*, what assessment she has made as part of her Department's review of the measures being taken throughout Europe to limit medicine bills of the proportion of the growth in national health service spending on medicines in 1991, which was due to the cost of new medicines introduced in the past five years; and what comparable figures are available for Germany, France, Holland and Belgium.

Dr. Mawhinney: "New medicines" include both those based on active substances being introduced to the market for the first time and new presentations of medicines based on active substances which may have been introduced earlier. Under this definition, figures for England only, show that the net ingredient cost of national health service drugs dispensed by chemists grew by £207 million in 1991. Of that growth, £150 million, or 72 per cent. was spent on new medicines introduced in the previous five years.

No comparable figures are available for the other countries.

High Blood Pressure (Treatment)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to extend the proposed new limited list regulation to cover national health service medicines for the treatment of high blood pressure.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money her Department has given to support the publication and distribution of the "Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin" in each of the last 10 years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is readily available only from 1987-88.

	Expenditure £
1987-88	608,625
1988-89	660,642
1989-90	723,482
1990-91	750,863
1991-92	827,305

Note: —Figures for the years to 1990-91 include expenditure for the Adverse Drugs Reactions Bulletin which was issued quarterly with the Drugs and Therapeutics Bulletin. This was discontinued in June 1990.

Medicines (Prescription-Pharmacy Classification)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if *(a)* the Medicines Commission or *(b)* the Committee on Safety of Medicines advises her on the change of legal status of medicines from a prescription-only medicine to a pharmacy-only classification;

(2) if she will make it her policy to consult with the appropriate advisory body on any proposed changes of legal status of medicines from prescription-only to pharmacy-only in the 10 new therapeutic categories to be covered by the limited list regulations.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Medicines Act 1968 requires Ministers to consult, and take account of, the advice of the appropriate advisory committee or the Medicines Commission before making any changes to the Medicines (Products Other Than Veterinary Drugs) (Prescription Only) Order 1983 (SI 1983 No. 1212) as amended, restricting medicines to supply on prescription only. It is normal practice for Ministers to consult both the Committee on Safety of Medicines and the Medicines Commission on proposed changes of legal status of medicines from prescription-only to pharmacy classification.

NHS Spending

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total level of hospital and community health services net capital expenditure in 1990-91 and 1991-92 in *(a)* cash, *(d)* constant prices adjusted by the gross domestic product deflator and *(c)* constant prices adjusted by the changes in input unit costs.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 20 November 1992 at column *436*.

NHS Estate

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list for each regional health authority in England the amount needed to bring the estate to an overall condition which exhibits only minor deterioration for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92;

(2) if she will list for each regional health authority the amount spent on repairs and maintenance in 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: For the estimate of the cost to bring the estate to a condition which exhibits only minor deterioration for 1989-90, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my predecessor to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 12 July 1991 at columns *500-504;* and for 1990-91 to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 17 November 1992 at column *179*. Information in the same form is not held centrally for 1988-89, and the figures for 1991-92 are not yet available.

Rationalisation schemes and the replacement of old and unsuitable stock with modern buildings are the principle means of reducing the backlog, and also provide better and more efficient facilities for health care. Some 670 building schemes, each costing over £1 million, have been completed since 1979, and around £1·5 billion will be invested in new buildings this year.

The amount spent on repairs and maintenance is shown in the following table; data for 1991-92 are not yet available.

Expenditure on building and engineering maintenance

£000

Region	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Northern	30,697	31,901	33,403
Yorkshire	29,686	30,873	31,495
Trent	36,757	39,582	39,720
East Anglian	13,978	15,670	15,792
North West Thames	32,303	32,109	34,652
North East Thames	39,603	41,274	40,896
South East Thames	35,208	34,601	35,538
South West Thames	30,014	31,585	31,076
Wessex	21,062	20,879	21,502
Oxford	18,020	18,856	20,725
South Western	25,370	25,780	26,555
West Midlands	47,564	51,823	50,602
Mersey	21,754	23,010	23,437
North Western	34,298	32,745	37,389
SHAs	7,773	8,719	9,015
Total	424,087	439,407	451,797

Source: Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in England and those of the special health authorities (SHAs) for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals.

Notes:

1. The figures included for engineering maintenance are limited to expenditure incurred on the maintenance of general engineering services and plant. Total expenditure incurred on the maintenance of medical and surgical, X-ray and laboratory equipment or incurred within specific departments such as laundries, boilerhouses, etc is not fully identifiable in health authority accounts.
2. Information for 1991-92—derivable from financial returns rather than annual accounts—is not yet available.

Severely Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has held with the Association of Directors of Social Services on the motion passed by its conference urging the Government to empower local

authorities to make direct payments to severely disabled people to make their own personal assistance arrangements; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The association discussed its views with officials recently. We have no current plans to amend legislation in this way. Our policy guidance to local authorities makes it clear that disabled people should be fully involved in the decisions about the services to be provided. Where a disabled person wants to take on the day-to-day management of his or her carers, this can be written into contracts with the providers of the service.

Hospital Closures

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, by district health authority, hospitals which have *(a)* partially and *(b)* wholly closed during 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Health Charges

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will bring forward consultative proposals to simplify forms AG1, AG2 and AG3 in order to make it easier for the public to claim assistance with health charges.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are carefully considering the recommendations made following the review of the administration of the national health service low income scheme. In reaching final decisions on the measures necessary to further improve a service which already provides help to a large number of people on low incomes, we shall need to take account of current public expenditure constraints. Changes to forms AG1, AG2 and AG3 which may be required in the light of those decisions will be discussed with the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and the other interested groups who contributed to the review.

Human Growth Hormone

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the standards with respect to the strength, purity and quality of pituitary-derived human growth hormone used in clinical trials and Medical Research Council-funded research.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Medical Research Council (MRC) working party on human growth hormone issued batches of human growth hormone for use in the trial after deciding that they were of an acceptable quality for clinical use. The MRC steering committee for the human pituitary collection issued stringent criteria for the collection and inclusion of pituitary glands that were used for the production of growth hormone preparations.

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what licences or certificates were granted in respect of clinical trials for pituitary-derived human growth hormone; and if she will list in each case *(a)* the date of issue, *(b)* the holder, *(c)* dates of renewal applications made and granted, *(d)* action taken by the licensing authority and *(e)* recommendations made by the Medicines Commission or Committee on Safety of Medicines.

Dr. Mawhinney: I understand from the Medical Research Council that no clinical trial certificates were issued for pituitary-derived growth hormone, according to the available records.

Medical Negligence

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost to regional health authorities in 1991-92 of legal claims against *(a)* doctors and *(b)* dentists in the NHS for medical negligence.

Mr. Sackville: Figures for 1991-92 are not yet available. In 1990-91 medical negligence claims cost the national health service an estimated £53 million, including legal costs and damages. Figures are not collected separately on claims against doctors and dentists.

Departmental Reports

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to provide members of the Health Select Committee with confidential advance copies of her Department's reports a few days before publication.

Mr. Sackville: We supply as a courtesy to Members of the Select Committee on Health confidential advance copies of command papers responding to reports of the Committee a day or two before publication, depending on the printing timetable.

Asbestos

Mr. Alan Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing *(a)* asbestos-related deaths and *(b)* asbestos-related disorders, by region for each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 9 December 1992]:* The available information is given in the tables. The figures for discharges and deaths in hospital from 1979 to 1985 are based on very small sample numbers and may not be completely accurate.

Deaths mentioning of asbestos by regional health authority England

Regional health authority	*1985*	*1987*	*1989*	*1991*
Northern	28	25	29	43
Yorkshire	13	12	23	17
Trent	3	9	14	9
East Anglia	5	4	11	2
North West Thames	8	6	6	5
North East Thames	52	57	70	76
South East Thames	11	10	10	6
South West Thames	6	3	3	4
Wessex	11	10	5	6
Oxford	1	3	3	1
South Western	17	21	11	16
West Midlands	11	8	12	12
Mersey	11	14	14	13
North Western	12	10	16	12

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Discharges and deaths/finished consultant episodes with a diagnosis of asbestosis: 1979-1985; 1989-90

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1989-90
Northern	30	—	10	20	10	40	10	24
Yorkshire	20	30	20	20	20	20	30	5
Trent	10	—	—	—	10	—	—	0
East Anglia	—	10	10	—	20	10	—	5
North West Thames	10	—	—	10	20	10	10	6
North East Thames	20	20	30	—	20	50	20	20
South East Thames	—	10	—	10	—	—	10	0
South West Thames	10	—	—	—	—	—	10	10
Wessex	10	—	—	20	—	—	—	18
Oxford	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6
South Western	30	10	10	—	—	10	—	6
West Midlands	—	—	—	—	30	10	—	5
Mersey	—	—	—	—	—	10	—	0
North Western	—	10	20	10	10	—	10	8
SHAs	20	10	20	10	10	20	20	14
Totals	160	100	120	100	150	180	120	127

Source: 1979-85 Hospital In-Patient Enquiry 10 per cent. sample file.
1989-90 Hospital Episode System 100 per cent. file.

EDUCATION

Cumbria

13. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from educationalists in Cumbria on the quality of education provision.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend receives such representations from time to time.

Further Education Funding Council

14. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received about the role of the Further Education Funding Council.

Mr. Boswell: The establishment of the Further Education Funding Council has been widely welcomed. Further education institutions in particular are looking forward to meeting the challenges of institutional independence and diversity which will characterise the further education sector from 1 April 1993.

School Transport

15. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has for putting all school transport out to private contractors.

Mr. Forth: We have no such plans, although the decision to apply compulsory competitive tendering to school transport may lead to private contractors winning more work in this field.

Examination Results

16. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will take steps to arrange for the publication in school tables of earlier year GCSE candidates' passes, at the same time as their main results; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The comparative tables of GCSE and A/AS level results recently published by the Department included the results achieved over a two-year period by all candidates of the appropriate age as defined by the regulations.

Higher Education

17. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will estimate the number of young people entering higher education in each of the next 10 years.

Mr. Boswell: The public expenditure proposals announced by my right hon. Friend on 12 November assumed that the proportion of young people entering higher education—which is now well over one in four—would remain broadly constant over the next three years. Beyond that, the Government have made no detailed assumptions about the number of entrants each year.

Nursery Education

18. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what priority he is giving to the provision of nursery education.

Mr. Forth: It is for local authorities to determine the scale and form of provision for the under-fives in collaboration with other providers. A total of 604,000 under-fives attended maintained nursery and primary schools in England in 1991, an increase of 175,000 over the figure for 1979.

23. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of children were in nursery education in Lancashire in the last two years.

Mr. Forth: In 1990 and 1991 the age participation rate for the maintained sector was 48 per cent. The rates for nursery schools and classes specifically were 17 per cent. in 1990 and 18 per cent. in 1991.

Further Education

19. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to encourage more 16-year-olds to attend colleges of further education.

Mr. Boswell: The Government's expenditure plans for further education allow for a 25 per cent. increase in student numbers between 1993-94 and 1995-96. The participation of 16-year-olds in education and training is expected to rise to over 90 per cent. by 1995-96.

Access Funds

20. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received in respect of access funds.

Mr. Boswell: Few. The access funds are a valuable addition to an already generous system of student support from grants and loans.

Learning Difficulties

21. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to review the Education Act 1981's definition of learning difficulties.

Mr. Forth: The Education Bill currently under consideration in Standing Committee embodies the results of a review of legislative provision for children with special educational needs. The definition of a "learning difficulty" contained in section 1(2) of the Education Act 1981 has been carried forward into clause 139(2) of the present Bill. Clause 140 of that Bill provides for a code of practice. Subject to the passage of the Bill and secondary legislation, that code will contain criteria for the making of assessments and statements to which authorities will need to have regard in deciding whether children have learning difficulties.

Ministerial Powers

22. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the extent of increase in the powers which can be exercised by the holder of his office since 1979.

Mr. Forth: The Government's policy on education is not to increase the powers of my right hon. Friend. It is to devolve the maximum possible power to the individual institutions with responsibility for providing education: schools, colleges of further education and universities.

The contents of the Education Bill now in Standing Committee reflects this aim, as the most appropriate way to secure higher standards of education.

National Curriculum

25. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on progress in implementing key stage 3 of the national curriculum.

Mr. Forth: Children are now studying the national curriculum in all 10 subjects at key stage 3. Fourteen-year-olds will be tested for the first time in 1993 in English, mathematics, science and technology.

Student Incomes

26. **Mr. Olner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to receive the report of the inquiry into student incomes.

Mr. Boswell: I expect the findings of the student income and expenditure survey to be available late in 1993.

Open University

27. **Mr. Don Foster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the funding for the Open university from 1 January 1993, following the visiting committee's recommendations.

Mr. Boswell: My Department will pay grant to the Open university from January to March 1993 as part of the estimates which Parliament has already approved for 1992-93. From April 1993, the Higher Education Funding Council for England will be responsible for determining the university's grants.

Special Needs

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are his plans regarding integration of children with special needs into mainstream schools.

Mr. Forth: The Education Bill currently before the House provides that authorities should secure the education of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools so long as such education meets specified conditions and is compatible with the wishes of parents.

Hearing Impaired Children

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Eduction if he will take steps to enhance the position of hearing impaired children in respect of *(a)* the planning of services, *(b)* the responsibility for providing support services and *(c)* the exercise of choice for parents of hearing impaired children.

Mr. Forth: The Education Bill will enhance the position of all children with special educational needs, including the hearing impaired. Local education authorities will remain responsible for making assessments and statements and will do so in the light of the new code of practice embodied in the Bill. To that end, LEAs will retain the necessary support services for the hearing impaired and other children.

The Bill also extends parental choice by enabling parents of children with statements to express a preference for the maintained school at which their child should be educated and to make representations as to the non-maintained special school or independent school of their choice. Parents will be able to appeal to the new SEN tribunal if dissatisfied with the LEA's placement.

Courses (Student Awards)

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those courses which previously attracted a discretionary student award but are now deemed to attract a mandatory award as a result of the change in status of polytechnics to universities.

Mr. Boswell: Full-time and sandwich courses of at least three academic years' duration provided by universities and leading to a certificate, diploma, or other award comparable to a first degree are automatically designated, as a class, for mandatory awards by the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations 1992. Similar degree-comparable courses at institutions other than universities may be specifically designated on an individual basis by my right hon. Friend under the regulations. Where such courses have not been designated, local education authorities may make discretionary awards in respect of attendance on them. There is no central list of individual courses in the former polytechnics which became automatically designated when those institutions took the title of university.

Vocational Education

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to encourage the further growth of courses of continuing vocational education in colleges and universities in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: Since its launch in 1982, the Department's professional, industrial and commercial updating (PICKUP) programme has successfully stimulated our colleges and universities to increase the quality and quantity of courses of continuing vocational education (or PICKUP) for the adult work force, usually provided at full cost and paid for by employers or individual employee. We estimate that enrolments grew by an average of 20 per cent. a year between 1984-85 and 1989-90, and were held at their record high level of nearly 1 million in 1990-91. Providing courses tailor-made to the needs of employers is now an accepted part of the mission of the great majority of colleges and universities.

We have reviewed the PICKUP programme in the light of this success and of developments such as the establishment of the Further Education Funding Council and the training and enterprise councils (TECs). We have concluded that—after more than 10 years and over £100 million of programme expenditure—the level of expertise within institutions, and the support they increasingly receive from the TECs, is such that the advisory and promotional work of the programme, including the Department's 10 PICKUP regional offices and its adult training promotions unit (ATPU), is now no longer necessary. The PICKUP regional development agents and the ATPU have been successful in putting continuing vocational education more firmly on the educational map but we judge that it would now be better to concentrate future support even more on the direct funding of institutions to enable them to continue to develop new courses and undertake the necessary related work such as marketing. The Department's regional offices and the ATPU will therefore close on 31 March 1993.

As a consequence, the resources available for the direct funding of further education colleges for the further development of PICKUP courses will nearly double, from £1·7 million in 1992-93 (currently available from within the Department's £3·5 million PICKUP programme) to £3·1 million in 1993-94. Of this £3·1 million, £2·8 million has been included in the planned funding for the Further Education Funding Council, with £0·3 million available from the Department (within a total of £0·8 million retained by the Department to complete existing PICKUP programme commitments in 1993-94). For both 1994-95 and 1995-96 the planned funding for the FEFC includes £3·7 million for PICKUP. It will be for the council itself to consider how best to deploy these resources. The Department is considering with the council the scope for it to use the expertise of the Department's regional development agents after 31 March 1993.

Funding for the development of continuing vocational education within higher education will be unaffected by our decision on the PICKUP programme. Funding is currently the responsibility of the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (with respectively £10 million and £5 million made available for England in 1992-93). The Higher Education Funding Council for England will assume responsibility for funding higher education in England from 1 April 1993 and is at present consulting institutions on the future funding of continuing education as a whole.

It is clear—not least from recent HMI reports on PICKUP in polytechnics and PICKUP in further education—that a large amount of high-quality continuing vocational education, highly valued by employers, is already being provided. But this work will need to grow significantly, particularly to help employers meet the national education and training targets for lifetime learning, launched by the Confederation of British Industry in July 1991 and endorsed by the Government. The Department's PICKUP programme—and in particular the work of its regional development agents over the years—has laid the foundation: it is now for colleges and universities themselves, working with their business customers and with the TECs, and supported by their funding councils, to ensure that this work continues to grow. In so doing they will be helping to build the world class work force which our economy needs.

Under-fives

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of children aged under five years in the United Kingdom currently receive education in school.

Mr. Forth: In 1991 the age participation rate for these children in the United Kingdom was 53 per cent. At the start of the 1980s it was 43 per cent. This percentage increase is all the more noteworthy when we observe that the size of the three and four-year population increased over the period by 170,000.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils attend grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Patten: It is estimated that almost 192,000 full-time pupils are currently being taught in grant-maintained schools in England.

School Classes

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of children are in primary school classes of more than 30 and in secondary school classes of more than 25 *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the London borough of Redbridge.

Mr. Forth: In January 1992 in maintained schools in England, 25 per cent. of primary pupils were in classes of over 30 pupils taught by one teacher whilst 40 per cent. of secondary pupils were in one-teacher classes of over 35. The equivalent figures for Redbridge local education authority were 57 per cent. and 47 per cent. respectively.

Classrooms

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will estimate the percentage of schools using temporary or prefabricated classrooms; and what measures he is taking to enable local education authorities to provide permanent classrooms.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not held centrally. However, the 1986 survey of school buildings

showed that of the 392 primary and 403 secondary schools sampled, 7 per cent. of the primary and 6 per cent. of secondary teaching accommodation were in temporary accommodation.

We have provided significant capital resources for school buildings in recent years. Capital expenditure per pupil in maintained schools increased by 19 per cent. in real terms between 1978-79 and 1990-91.

It is for local education authorities to ensure that the school buildings within their responsibility are in a satisfactory condition. It is also for LEAs to determine their priorities for capital expenditure from the resources available to them. They have complete flexibility to give a high priority to the replacement of temporary accommodation if they wish.

Schools (Decoration)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will estimate the number of schools which have had no internal or external decoration for *(a)* five years, *(b)* 10 years and *(c)* more than 10 years.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not held centrally.

Local education authorities and school governors are responsible for the state of maintained school buildings, and for deciding expenditure levels and priorities from the recurrent and capital resources available to them. Under local management of schools, governors have the flexibility to give a higher priority to repairs and maintenance work delegated to them if they wish.

Discretionary Grants

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the number of people unable to pursue higher education because discretionary grants have not been awarded.

Mr. Boswell: Under the Education Act 1962, most students on courses at first degree or comparable level—which constitute the greater part of higher education—are eligible for mandatory awards. Discretionary awards are accordingly confined to students on further and higher education courses who are not eligible for mandatory or postgraduate awards. Higher education student numbers continue to grow, and I have seen no evidence of significant numbers failing to enter because they have not obtained discretionary awards.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 16 December 1992

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Citizens Charter

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list and describe briefly each of the initial commitments in the citizens charter to which he referred in his oral statement of 25 November, *Official Report*, column 869, and give against each of these commitments the level of performance currently being achieved.

Mr. Waldegrave: The citizens charter is a major programme of improvement to our public services. The aim is a comprehensive and durable change in the way that the services are managed and delivered, so that the citizen always comes first. Initial commitments were set out in the original "Citizen's Charter" White Paper of July 1991, Cm. 1599. The bulk of these, and much more, have already been delivered, as the "Citizen's Charter First Report: 1992", Cm. 2101 shows. The table summarises the original specific commitments and how they have been met or put in hand. References are to Cms. 1599 and 2101 where fuller descriptions can be found.

The Government's position is one of openness and constant improvement, and progress against remaining Cm. 1599 commitments, the new commitments in Cm. 2101, and the further commitments we shall be making will also be published from time to time.

Cm. 1599 Commitment	*Present position*
IMPLEMENTATION	
Implementation Unit and Panel of Advisers to be set up (p. 7).	Met. Citizens' Charter Unit and Prime Minister's Advisory Panel set up July 1991.
HEALTH	
Patient's Charter to be published in England, Scotland and Wales (p. 10).	Met. England—October 1991 Scotland—September 1991 Wales—October 1991 (p. 5).
Health authorities to produce charters specific to their own services. (p. 11).	Met. Local standards set by all health authorities in England. Local charters published in all health authorities in Wales; all health boards in Scotland; all four health and social services boards in Northern Ireland. (p. 5).
Hospitals to set out for patients the standards of service they offer. (p. 11).	Met. Standards set out in Patient's Charters and local charters (p. 5).
NHS Management Executive to set out the main areas in which local standards must be set, monitored and published. (p. 11).	Met. Set out in Patient's Charter (p. 5).
District health authorities (health boards in Scotland) to set standards for service in their contracts with hospitals (p. 11).	Met. District health authorities required to ensure that all relevant Patient's Charter standards are included in contracts with provider units (p. 5).
Targets to be published maximum admission times to hospital (p. 11).	Met. Contained in Patient's Charters (p. 5).
Specific times to be set for hospital outpatient appointments (p. 11).	Met. Contained in Patient's Charters (p. 5).
EDUCATION	
Parent's Charters to be published (p. 14).	Met. Published in England, Scotland, Wales in 1991; in Northern Ireland in 1992 (p. 10).
All parents to receive a written report on their child's progress (p. 14).	Met. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland parents now receive a written report once a year. In Scotland new report cards to be issued in 1992-93 (p. 10).
Schools, further education and sixth form colleges to publish their annual public exam results in a common format (p. 14).	In hand. Published November 1992 by DFE in relation to schools. FE and sixth form colleges requested to publish the information in 1991-92. Publication compulsory from Autumn 1993 (p. 10-11).
Comparative information on all schools to be collected and published locally (p. 14).	In hand. Comparative information on public exam results sent out through schools, LEAs and public libraries in November 1992 (p. 10).
Audit Commission to be empowered to publish comparative tables on efficiency of administration and support services in different LEAs. (p. 14).	In hand. Audit Commission consulting on a range of indicators.
Regular and independent inspection of all schools with the results reported to parents. (p. 14).	Met. OFSTED (England) and OHMCI (Wales) will inspect schools regularly (p. 50).
Schools to publish truancy information (p. 14).	Met. School prospectuses and governors' annual reports now required to include truancy rates (p. 10).
Guide to the National Curriculum to be reissued (p. 14).	Met. Published in 1991.
Independent lay assessors to be appointed to Appeals Tribunals (p. 49).	In hand. Measure in Education Bill now before Parliament (p. 12).
TENANTS	
Improved Tenant's Charter to be published for local authority tenants. (p.15).	Met. Charters published in Scotland in 1991; in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 1992 (p.28).
More freedom to exercise the right to transfer to a new landlord. (p.15).	In hand. First two transfers to housing associations have taken place. (p.28).

Cm. 1599 Commitment	*Present position*
Local authorities to delegate management to tenant bodies. (p.16).	To come. DOE to issue consultation document on delegated management shortly.
Tenants to bid for Housing Action Trusts (p.15).	In hand. HATs being set up in Liverpool, Hull and Waltham Forest (p.28).
CCT to be extended to local authority housing management (p.16).	In hand. Consultation document published June 1992. Paving legislation introduced (p.29).
All tenants to receive information about standards of local authority housing management performance (p.15).	Met. Annual reports to Tenants published in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Legislation introduced to extend this to Scotland (p.28).
Improved rights of repair for council tenants' homes. (p.15).	In hand. Primary legislation introduced. Implementation planned for 1994. (p.29).
Local authorities to be encouraged to introduce improved refurbishment contracts. (p.16).	In hand. Guidelines to be published shortly (p.29).
Stronger Tenants' Guarantee for housing association tenants (p.16).	Met. Published in 1991 in England and in September 1992 in Wales.
TRANSPORT	
BRITISH RAIL (BR)	
British Rail to publish a Passenger's Charter (p.17).	Met. Published March 1991 (p.18)
BR to review and publish its conditions of carriage (p. 17).	In hand. To be published by the end of 1992 (p. 18).
BR to display figures for reliability and punctuality at stations (p. 17).	Met. "TrackRecord" displayed at major stations throughout Britain (p. 17).
BR staff who deal with the public to wear name badges (p. 17).	In hand. All BR staff who come into direct contact with the public are to wear name badges by the end of 1992 (p. 17).
BR to restructure pay for key staff better to reflect performance (p. 17).	In hand. New pay restructuring deals incorporating performance pay introduced for some 25,000 staff, including uniformed station staff and engineers. Similar deals being negotiated for a further 40,000 staff.
BR to accelerate with its contracting out programme (p. 17).	In hand. Contracting out of train and station cleaning begun. Contracting out of other support functions being considered (p. 66).
London Underground	
London Underground to publish a Customers Charter (p. 49).	Met. Published in Summer 1992 (p. 18).
New quality of service targets to be published (p. 18).	Met. 12 new quality of service objectives set in May 1992 (p. 18).
Performance against targets to be published (p. 18).	Met. Performance information available from ticket offices and customer service centres.
Information on targets and performance to be displayed prominently (p. 18).	Met. Information displayed at every underground station (p. 18).
Compensation scheme to be publicised more widely (p. 49).	Met. New refund scheme introduced and advertised at every station (p. 18).
London Underground to accelerate its contracting out programme (p. 18).	In hand. Tenders invited for the maintenance on the Bakerloo line trains (p. 66).
Performance related pay to be extended to drivers, guards, signalling staff and other grades (p. 18).	In hand. Performance related pay to be developed and extended (p. 67).
Larger proportion of LT board members' pay to be linked to performance (p. 18).	Met. Percentage determined by performance increase from 16 per cent. to 35 per cent. (p. 67).
Driving tests	
Driving standards Agency to introduce telephone booking (p. 19).	Met (p. 15).
Driving standards Agency to accept payment by credit card or payment card (p. 19).	Met (p. 15).
Driving Standards Agency to introduce tests on summer evenings and Saturday afternoons (p. 19).	Met (p. 15).
Driving Standards Agency to explore feasibility of Sunday tests (p. 19).	Met. Idea explored and option not pursued (p. 15).
Motorway service areas	
Development of motorway service areas be deregulated (p. 19).	Met. New arrangements introduced in 1992 (p. 15).
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	
The Employment Service to publish Charter (p. 21).	Met. Jobseeker's Charter published in December 1991 (p. 27).
Details of all services to be displayed in all local offices (p. 20).	Met. Posters and leaflets in all local offices (p. 25).
National targets to be published each year (p. 20).	Met. Targets set and published (p. 25).
Performance against national targets to be published in the Employment Service's annual report. (p. 20).	Met. Employment service annual report available in every local office gives results (p. 25).
Local targets, to be displayed at all Job Centres, to include: waiting times; telephone answering targets; promptness and accuracy in benefit payments and information about local labour market (p. 20).	Met. Local offices display all standards as described. These match or better national standards.
Local office network to be integrated (p. 20).	In hand. Programme will be completed by the mid 1990. (p. 27).
Integrated Offices to offer pleasant, well designed office interiors (p. 20).	Met. All new integrated offices have been refurbished.

Cm. 1599 Commitment	*Present position*
People attending Job Centres for advisory interviews to see the same person on each occasion where possible (p. 20).	In hand. By April 1993 clients will normally see the same person each time (p. 35).
Local managers to decide opening hours suitable to clients within a minimum of 36 hours a week (p. 21).	Met. Arrangements in place (p. 25).
Annual national customer surveys to continue, supplemented by local customer surveys (p. 21).	Met. 1991 annual survey has been published. Local customer satisfaction surveys piloted this year and to continue (p. 25).
All offices to have easy to use complaints arrangements. Names of local manager, area manager to be displayed (p. 21).	Met. New complaints/suggestions procedure published in leaflet "Help us to get it Right ... And How to Complain" (p. 25). Names of the area manager and local contacts for complaints displayed in each local office.
SOCIAL SERVICES	
For individuals needing care, more reliable information to be available on services (p.21).	Met. Since April 1992 local authorities required to publish annual community care plans.
Individual care plans to be provided. (p.21).	In hand. From April 1993 people requiring community care services to be able to ask local authority for assessment of their needs; their views and preferences and those of their carers to be taken into account in all decisions about their care.
Inspection to be independent of services (p21).	Met. Inspection units, set up by local authorities in April 1991 at arms' length from directly managed services.
Complaints procedures to be improved and made more independent (p.21).	Met Statutory complaints procedures introduced during 1991 now fully operational.
For people in residential care clear standards of service and quality to be identified and promulgated (p.21).	Met. Guidance on standards settings published by HMSO in four volumes in a "Caring for Quality" series. Work on the fifth and final volume has started.
SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS	
Benefits Agency	
Customer Charter to be published (p.22).	Met. Published January 1992 (p.27).
National targets to be set and published for main services (p.22).	Met. In Customer Charter (p.27).
Equivalent targets for districts to be published and displayed. (p.22).	In hand. By the end of 1992 all 159 districts will display local targets and standards (p.27).
Annual report to be published.	Met. Annual Report available for consultation in every local office (p.27).
Information on local office performance to be displayed prominently in every office. (p.22)	In hand. Targets and standards displayed in all Benefits Agency districts by end 1992 (p.27).
Clear procedures for customer enquiries and difficulties (p.22).	Met. Procedures set out in Customer Charter (p.27).
Customer service managers in each office (p.22).	Met. Customer service managers appointed (p.27).
Programme to improve service by telephone (p.22).	In hand: a number of separate initiatives under way.
Customers normally to be dealt with by named staff (p.22).	In hand. Staff will normally wear name badges by Spring 1993 (p.38). Customer care training introduced for all staff who deal with customers.
Single point of contact where this is in customer's interest (p.22).	In hand. "One Stop" consultation paper invited views on the best means of delivering services, and these are being considered, together with financial implications of the options (p.28).
Improved office environment (p. 22).	In hand. Over half of local office public areas have been refurbished. Agency's business plan, published April 1993, will set out plans for 1993-94. (p. 27).
Results of customer survey to be published (p. 23).	Met. Published June 1992 (p. 27).
Option of automated payment to a bank or building society account to be extended (p. 23).	In hand. Availability of automated payment extended to Income Support, Invalidity Benefit and Sickness Benefit by October 1993; Unemployment benefit and Income Support for the unemployed) by December 1994 (p. 28).
More flexible opening hours, where necessary to meet the needs of the local community. (p. 22).	In hand. Benefits Agency offices consulting customers about the most convenient opening hours (p. 26).
Contributions Agency	
Contributor's Charter and Employer's Charter to be published (p. 23).	Met. Published August 1991 (p. 28).
To publish an independent survey of services (p. 23).	Met. Published October 1991 (p. 28).
INLAND REVENUE AND CUSTOMS AND EXCISE	
New Taxpayer's Charter to be published (p. 24).	Met. Joint Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise Taxpayer's Charter published summer 1991 (p. 32).
Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise to re-design some forms and literature (p. 24).	In hand. 800 Inland Revenue forms to be redesigned. 25 most frequently used forms already being revised (p. 32).

Cm. 1599 Commitment	*Present position*
New Inland Revenue leaflets to be published for particular groups of people (p. 24).	In hand. Leaflets produced, eg. on income tax for school leavers; married couples; and the tax aspects of child care (p. 32).
Inland Revenue to issue new leaflets to invite comments and explain how to complain to customer service managers if dissatisfied (p. 24).	Met. "You and the Inland Revenue" issued August 1991. Named customer service managers appointed in all Executive Offices (p. 32).
Inland Revenue to set standards for replying to taxpayers letters (p. 24).	Met. Targets for substantive replies and acknowledgements set. Performance to be published (p. 32).
Selected Tax Enquiry Centres to experiment more with flexible opening hours to test public demand (p. 24).	In hand. 17 Tax Enquiry Centres experimenting with flexible opening hours since April 1992 (p. 26).
Inland Revenue to seek people's views about services (p. 24).	Met. A major survey of taxpayers has been carried out. Further surveys planned (p. 32).
Customs and Excise to publish Charters for VAT, Excise duty payers and travellers; (p. 24).	Met. Published 1992 (p. 35).
Customs and Excise to expand and report on achievements and use of quality of service indicators (p. 24).	In hand. Indicators now included in plans. Reports to follow after the end of the financial year.
Customs and Excise to review complaints system and publish improved procedures (p. 24).	Met. Review complete; new leaflet issued. Network of complaintsco-ordinators established (p. 35).
THE POLICE	
Police services to publish targets and indicators of performance (p. 24).	In hand. From January 1993 there will be a core set of performance indicators for all police services in England and Wales (p. 37).
Police officers to be readily identifiable by name (p. 24).	In hand. Some police services wearing name badges (p. 37).
Police services to set and publish target times for answering telephone calls, and responding to incidents requiring rapid reaction (p. 25).	In hand. A number of police services have now done so (p. 37).
Information to be published on results of police action, as well as response times (p. 25).	In hand. First results to be published in 1994 (p. 37).
From 1991, systematic information on quality of performance to be gathered (p. 25).	In hand. From Spring 1993 all police services will be required to collect this information (p. 53).
Police effectiveness to be tested in inspections (p. 25).	In hand. From Spring 1993 to be tested by Inspectorate annually. All HMIC reports now include a chapter in quality of service (p. 53).

Cm. 1599 Commitment	*Present position*
THE COURTS	
Court Services	
Receptiveness to the needs of victims, witnesses and jurors to be increased (p. 26).	Met. Courts Charter (England and Wales) published (p. 40).
Management of the courts to be placed under closer scrutiny (p. 26).	Met. Courts Charter (England and Wales) published (p. 40).
Lord Chancellor to publish performance standards and indicators in his annual report on the Courts services (p. 26).	In hand. Standards to come into effect January 1993.
Information on performance at court level to be made available to the public locally through the Court user committees (p. 26).	In hand. The Court Service will ensure that performance details will be available to court user committees.
More effort to be made to obtain the views of those who use the courts (p. 26).	In hand. A number of surveys have been carried out already; others will take place
Further improvements in reducing delays in bringing cases to court (p. 26).	In hand. National targets published (p. 39).
Jurors	
Friendlier and clearer summons letter and leaflet (p. 26).	In hand. New versions to be issued early 1993 (p. 40).
Better training of those receiving jurors and explaining procedures to them (p. 26).	Going ahead. New improved training for Crown Court staff (p. 40).
Better explanations to be given to jurors (p. 26).	Met. Video available in over 80 Crown Court locations (p. 40).
Problems for those seriously inconvenienced by jury service to be reviewed (p. 27)	Met. System reviewed, revised jury summons available early in 1993.
Study to be commissioned to investigate why defendants change to guilty at last moment (p. 27)	In hand. Research to be completed in the Summer of 1993. (p. 39).
To bring forward measures to allow juries to go home at the end of the working day (p. 27).	To come. Legislative opportunity awaited.
Witnesses	
Order to attend court to be clearer, more informal (p. 27).	To come. Legislative opportunity awaited.
Leaflets to be sent to witnesses explaining what to expect when they arrive at court (p. 27).	Met. Standards set out in the Court's Charter (p. 40).
Information point to be established in each Crown Court centre (p. 27).	In hand. Available in some locations.
Witnesses in long running cases to be called only when needed.	Met. Target that prosecution witnesses should not have to wait more than two hours before being called to give evidence (p. 40).
Signs within court buildings to be revised with special attention to the needs of victims and witnesses.	In hand. One of the tasks of the named court building manager.

Cm. 1599 Commitment	*Present position*
Chief clerks to respond sympathetically to seating requests from those closely linked to particular cases (p. 27).	Met. Court officials instructed to try to find seating (p. 40).
Victims called as witnesses to be allowed to familiarise theselves with the court room surroundings before they appear in court (p. 27).	Met. Arrangements are now made (p. 39).
Government will encourage similar improvements in the magistrates courts (p. 27).	In hand. White Paper "A New Framework for Local Justice" outlined arrangements for setting up a Magistrates Court Inspectorate dedicated to raising standards (p. 53).
Prisons	
Prison officers expected to be readily identifiable by name (p. 27).	In hand. Name badges to be worn in England and Wales from April 1993 and in Scotland (p. 38 and 40).
Prisoners to receive better information about decisions affecting them and preparations for their release (p. 27).	Met. Prisoners now given information pack. Prisoner's "compacts" are being piloted (p. 40 and 41).
PRIVATISATION AND COMPETITION	
Transfers of work involving civil servants: anomalies relating to redundancy payments to be removed (p. 28).	In hand. Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill now before Parliament (p. 58).
British Rail	
Detailed plans for privatising BR to be published in 1992 (p.29)	Met 'New opportunities for the Railways' Cm 2012, published July 1992 (p. 57)
Buses	
London bus industry to be deregulated (p, 29).	To come. Legislation to be introduced as soon as possible (p. 57).
London Buses to be privatised (p. 29)	In hand. Privatisation proposals being taken forward (p. 57).
The Post Office	
Post Office monopoly to be lowered from £1 to a level closer to the price of a first class stamp.	In hand. Proposals being taken forward in Government's wider review of the structure and organisation of the Post Office (p. 24).
New independent regulator to be established. (p. 31).	In hand in wider review (p. 24).
Improved scope for contractors to trunk mail to final delivery services (p. 30)	In hand in wider review (p. 24).
Performance standards to be set by the Secretary of State and not by the Post Office (p. 30).	To come. Legislative opportunity awaited.
Clearer and more local information to be provided on service targets and performance against them (p. 30).	Met. Posters in more than 80 per cent. of Post Offices (100 per cent. by end 1992) (p. 24).
POUNC to report on redress arrangements (p. 49).	Met. POUNC report published early 1992 (p. 24).

Cm. 1599 Commitment	*Present position*
Better information to be provided about redress when service falls below standard (p. 30).	Met. Detailed information being distributed to every household during 1992 (p. 24).
Current compensation arrangements to be reviewed (p. 30).	Met. Improvements now being implemented (p. 24).
Roadworks	
Lane rental to be extended to cover half of all major contracts with eventual extension to about two thirds (p. 32).	Met. In England two-thrids of all major maintenance contracts will be subject to lane rental by 1993-94 (p. 14).
Maximum length of carriageways that can be coned off at any one time to be stipulated (p. 32).	Met. Standard maximum is now two and a half miles (p. 14).
Streetworks	
New controls under the new Roads and Streetworks Act 1991 (p. 32).	In hand. New controls to take effect from 1 January 1993 (p. 14).
COMPETING FOR QUALITY	
A White Paper to be published setting out how contracting out is to be taken forward in both central Government and the NHS (p. 33).	Met. "Competing for Quality" Cm. 1730 published November 1991 (p. 58).
Obstacles to successful contracting out to be removed (p. 33).	In hand. Treasury guidance note reissued. March 1992. Further guidance being considered. Removal of other obstacles including those concerning aspects of VAT, treatment of redundancy payments etc in hand (p. 59).
Step change required in volume of market testing (p. 33).	In hand. New central government targets represent fifty fold increase on previous levels: cover 40,000 staff and £1·4 bn worth of work (p. 60—p. 64).
In the NHS, procedures for contracting out to be simplified and streamlined (p. 33).	In hand. Revised guidance, to be published in early 1993 (p. 65).
Scope of market testing in the NHS to be extended (p. 33).	In hand. In addition to catering domestic and laundry, 20 other services have been market tested. From April 1993 health provider units to report annually on plans and progress for new areas (p. 65).
Compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) to be extended to professional local authority employees (p. 34).	In hand. Targets set in Cm 2101 (p. 65).
Private firms to have a fair chance to compete for local authority work (p. 34).	In hand. New regulations and code of guidance to be brought into effect in early 1993 (p. 65).
PERFORMANCE AND PAY	
Rewards for performance and penalties for failure to be part of the normal package of pay and conditions (p. 35).	In hand. The principle of performance pay being progressively established, eg. new performance pay schemes for half a million civil servants (p. 67).

Cm. 1599 Commitment	*Present position*
Pay review bodies to be urged to take performance more into account in their recommendations (p. 35).	In hand. Government has given evidence to this effect to the pay review bodies.
Greater delegation and flexibility in the determination of pay (p. 35).	In hand, eg. Inland Revenue to introduce new pay and grading arrangements for 68,000 staff from April 1993; government agencies to put forward proposals for their own pay and grading arrangements (p. 68).
	The School Teachers Pay and Conditions Act 1991 gave Grant Maintained schools freedom to opt out of statutory pay arrangements, and develop their own systems (p. 67).
	New bargaining machinery introduced in BR from August 1992 giving the five business unit managers greater influence over their employees' pay and conditions (p.68.).
Top management rewards for BR and London Underground to be more closely linked to the delivery of improved services to the travelling public (p.35).	Met. Both BR and LUL managers now have a proportion of their pay linked to performance (p.67).
NEXT STEPS	
All executive activities of Government, as far as practicable, to be operating along Next Steps lines by the end of 1993 (p.36).	In hand. More than half of all civil servants now work in organisations run on Next Steps lines. Ultimately around ¾ could do so. All further candidates for agency status to be announced by the end of 1993 and launched as agencies by the middle of 1995 (p.60).
Legislation will be introduced to remove technical impediments to delegation of decisions about how the Civil Service is managed (p.36).	In hand. Civil Service (Management Functions) Bill now before Parliament (p.66).
AUDIT	
Local authorities to publish their response to auditors' reports (p.33).	Met. Local Government Act 1992 requires local authorities to respond within four months to auditors reports (p.55).
Audit Commission to publish league tables of local authority performance (p.38).	Met. Audit Commission has consulted on local authority performance indicator and will issue a Direction very shortly (p.55).
League tables to be published for health services' performance (p. 39).	In hand. Performance indicators being developed jointly by the NHS Management Executive and Audit Commission. League tables to be published in early 1995 (p. 7).
INSPECTION	
Legislation to be introduced to permit Audit Commission to identify individual authorities in performance league tables (p. 39).	Met. Introduced in the Local Government Act 1992 (p. 55).
Major reform of Schools Inspectorate (p. 35).	Met. OFSTED set up in England and OHMCI in Wales (p. 10).
New independent element to be introduced into the Inspectorate of Constabulary (p. 33).	In hand. Two lay inspectors to be appointed next year (p. 53).
Consultative proposals to be published on Social Services Inspectorate (p. 38).	In hand. Consultative proposals for the reform of Social Services inspection published (p. 50).
Generally, Inspectorates to be opened up and a greater lay element introduced.	In hand. Progress set out in Cm 2101 pages 51-53.
COMPLAINTS AND REGULATION	
Complaints systems to be improved. Consultation to take place on a 'lay adjudicator' scheme (p. 43).	In hand. Complaints team to be set up to look at whether public services are in line with charter principles and identify necessary improvements (p. 49).
Legislation to be introduced to strengthen powers of regulators (p. 48).	Met. Competition and Services (Utilities) Act 1992 has brought the powers of all the utility regulators up to the level of the strongest (p. 55).
IMMUNITIES	
Government activities not to be immune from inspection and enforcement on, eg. health or safety regulations; existing limitation to be reviewed (p. 46).	In hand. Crown bodies being brought within regulatory provisions which apply to others as legislative opportunities arise; meanwhile required to behave as if bound (p. 58).
Citizens to be given the right to bring legal proceedings to stop unlawful industrial action affecting the services covered by the Citizen's Charter (p. 46).	In hand. Legislation introduced in Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill now before Parliament (p. 58).

Research and Development

Mr. Mans: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about international comparisons of research and development spending.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Office of Science and Technology is today publishing a report on international comparisons of research and development spending. Copies are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

HOME DEPARTMENT

London Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of reported incidents at each of the London prisons as from 1 January to 1 December.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There has been a total of 1,471 reported incidents in Prison Service establishments in London from 1 January 1992 to 1 December 1992 inclusive. The table shows a breakdown of these incidents:—

Establishment	*Major*	*Minor*	*Total*
Belmarsh	56	178	234
Brixton	22	142	164
Feltham	29	210	239
Holloway	32	150	182
Pentonville	31	121	152
Wandsworth	24	249	273
Wormwood Scrubs	18	209	227
Total	212	1,259	1,471

Major and minor incidents are defined in CI 18/1988, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Crime Statistics, Warwickshire

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which areas of North Warwickshire are most affected by burglary and incidents of violence and car theft.

Mr. Jack: The information is not collected centrally. Information for areas within Warwickshire is published in the annual report of the Chief Constable for Warwickshire; a copy of which is available in the Library.

Bogus Callers

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are being taken to alert the elderly to the dangers of allowing into their homes thieves posing as officials or trades people.

Mr. Jack: Individual police forces continue to develop crime prevention initiatives to reflect the needs of their areas, including measures to combat the risks posed by bogus callers. Several forces are known to have launched recent initiatives in this area working with local utility companies or crime prevention panels. For example, in November 1990 the Metropolitan police set up a dedicated unit operating in selected areas under the title of Operation Worker specifically to detect bogus callers. So far, more than 3,000 of these crimes have been cleared up throughout the areas covered by the project, representing a 58 per cent. clear-up rate for these offences.

The Home Office publication "Practical Ways to Crack Crime" and the poster and leaflet "Be Safe Be Sure" contain advice on dealing with callers at the door and have been widely distributed. Supplies are available free of charge to members of the public or, in support of local campaigns, to police forces and other agencies. The Association of British Insurers has also produced a helpful leaflet "The Knock Code" giving similar advice which has been distributed through the insurance industry and citizens advice bureaux. More than 2 million copies of the leaflet have been distributed so far.

Organisations such as Help the Aged and Age Concern through their local offices and often working in conjunction with the police and other organisations such as victim support groups, also provide practical help and advice. For example, Help the Aged ran a campaign in 1990 called "Who's There?" specifically to address the problem of bogus callers. It produced publicity material including videos for use by its local offices, which in turn arranged seminars and publicity campaigns. This material is still being used. Age Concern, through its nationwide network of 1,000 groups, has provided "security cards" with advice and local contact points, for distribution to the vulnerable.

Bullwood Hall

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he is making to the report by Judge Stephen Tumin on Bullwood Hall.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I made a statement on Judge Tumin's report on 1 December when the report was published. I shall send the hon. Member a copy.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints he has received on conditions at Bullwood Hall during the last 12 months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Four complaints about conditions at Bullwood Hall have been received by the area manager during the last 12 months.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for improving the conditions of prisoners serving life sentences at Bullwood Hall; and for how many hours each day they are currently locked in their cells.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The governor and her staff are constantly striving to improve life for all prisoners in Bullwood Hall as resources allow. New staff attendance systems will be in place by January to meet the recommendation of the chief inspector of prisons that prisoners should spend at least 12 hours each day out of their cells.

Prisoners are currently locked up for either 14 and a half hours per day with evening association or 16 and a half hours without. Evening association is currently provided on an average of four nights each week.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will arrange for children's visits to Bullwood Hall to be allowed at weekends.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Every Monday afternoon Bullwood Hall provides visits solely for children and their carers. Children may also visit Bullwood Hall on any domestic visit on every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday afternoon. The governor hopes that she will be able to provide special children's visits at the weekend in the future.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase the recreational, educational and language learning facilities for female prisoners at Bullwood Hall.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The gymnasium has recently been refurbished. There are plans to repair and enclose the swimming pool which will enable it to be used all year round. Money has been allocated to complete the conversion of workshops to an education and activity centre. Facilities for learning languages are already available to prisoners on an open learning basis as required.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide facilities for prisoners at Bullwood Hall to telephone their lawyers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: All prisoners in Bullwood Hall can use the card telephone system to contact their lawyers if they wish. In addition, urgent telephone calls at public expense will be allowed if necessary.

Assaults on Women

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many violent assaults, including rapes, were committed against women in each police area in each calendar year since 1981 inclusive and in the 12 months ended June 1992.

Mr. Jack: The available information by police force area is in terms of notifiable offences recorded by the police, with the most appropriate offence categories available being rape—offence category 19—and indecent assault on a female—offence category 20. Other types of assault do not distinguish between male and female victim. These figures are published annually in table 3.1 of "Criminal Statistics, Supplementary Volume 3", copies of which are in the Library. Statistics for the 12 months ended June 1992 are given in the table:

Notifiable offences recorded by the police
Year ending June 1992

Police force	*Rape*	*Indecent assault on a female*	*Total*
Avon and Somerset	94	352	446
Bedfordshire	52	154	206
Cambridgeshire	66	243	309
Cheshire	41	234	275
Cleveland	57	174	231
Cumbria	20	119	139
Derbyshire	43	239	282
Devon and Cornwall	59	394	453
Dorset	43	199	242
Durham	51	228	279
Essex	77	329	406
Gloucestershire	37	199	236
Greater Manchester	225	825	1,050
Hampshire	133	626	759
Hertfordshire	46	187	233
Humberside	75	497	572
Kent	147	543	690
Lancashire	48	291	339
Leicestershire	38	220	258
Lincolnshire	36	142	178
City of London	0	20	20
Merseyside	88	402	490
Metropolitan Police District	1,143	3,128	4,271
Norfolk	59	207	266
Northamptonshire	35	144	179
Northumbria	102	426	528
North Yorkshire	15	107	122
Nottinghamshire	110	630	740
South Yorkshire	70	363	433
Staffordshire	55	273	328
Suffolk	69	185	254
Surrey	38	271	309
Sussex	73	414	487
Thames Valley	111	543	654
Warwickshire	19	104	123
West Mercia	53	220	273
West Midlands	195	888	1,083
West Yorkshire	195	812	1,007
Wiltshire	63	201	264
Dyfed-Powys	46	173	219
Gwent	44	155	199
North Wales	51	181	232
South Wales	88	282	370
TOTAL	4,110	16,324	20,434

Car Crime

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement concerning his policies to combat car crime.

Mr. Jack: Our strategy to tackle crime consists of two main strands—promoting and encouraging practical ways to reduce this type of crime; and ensuring that car criminals are dealt with effectively under the criminal law.

It is important that we should do what we can to tackle car crime by adopting measures that reduce the opportunities for them occurring in the first place.

We have, therefore, been actively encouraging the motor manufacturers to improve the security of their vehicles. Many of the manufacturers are now responding positively, and more new cars are being fitted with advanced security equipment.

It is equally important to tackle the second-hand car market and to upgrade the security of vehicles already on the road. Central to this is making the public more aware of the cost of car crime and providing them with the information they need to make their cars more secure and to reduce the risk of crime happening to them. This has been a major feature of our Car Crime Prevention Year campaign, which has been running throughout most of this year. A review of this has shown a greater awareness during the year, allied with increased sales of security equipment.

We are also pressing the insurance industry to provide incentives for both manufacturers and the public to adopt appropriate security measures. Some insurers have now begun to take greater account of the risk of car crime and the presence of security features when setting premiums. This development is welcomed.

The police, too, have developed many impressive car crime prevention initiatives during the year, including the "Sold Secure" initiative in Essex and the national "Secured Car Parks" scheme. The Government will, of course, continue to support and encourage the police in these efforts.

Progress to date is encouraging. The recorded crime statistics for the most recent quarter—April to June 1992—show a reduction in car crime of 2·5 per cent. on the corresponding quarter of 1991. Of course, we cannot draw too many conclusions from a single quarter's figures; we hope, however, that this downward turn is the start of a welcome trend.

To help maintain the momentum in continuing with this strategy, I recently formed a specialist committee comprising people who are actively involved in all areas of car security and car crime prevention to advise me on these matters. I envisaged this body playing an important part in enhancing and taking forward the initiatives that we have been developing.

Our strategy for tackling car crime does, however, go much wider than improving vehicle security, essential

though this particular factor is. It is also most important to tackle offending behaviour itself. We are therefore giving every encouragement to local probation services, the police and voluntary groups to work effectively to counter motor offending.

The Government have also announced their intention to tackle the problem of people who commit offences—often vehicle related—while on bail.

We are also committed to giving the courts the support and powers that they need, such as in the Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act which came into force on 1 April, which deals firmly with those who take cars and cause damage, injury or death. My right hon. and learned Friend also announced on 16 July our intention to increase the maximum penalty for causing death by dangerous driving to 10 years, when parliamentary time allows.

Police Road Blocks

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis listing *(a)* the location of each road block recently set up by the Metropolitan police in the Greater London area, *(b)* the total number of people who have to date been stopped, *(c)* of that number, the number of members of ethnic minority groups and *(d)* the numbers of people who have refused to stop;

(2) what specific discussions his officials had with the Metropolitan police in advance of the setting up of road blocks in parts of London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The decision of the Metropolitan police, acting within their legal powers, to set up road checks in London is an operational one and as such falls within the discretion of the Commissioner. Officials in my right hon. and learned Friend's Department were not consulted in advance of the recent operations and there is no reason for him to call for a report from the Commissioner in relation to the matters listed in the question.

Winson Green Prison

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will conduct an inquiry into the circumstances that led to a man's death from dehydration in HMP Winson Green in July 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No prisoner died from dehydration at HMP Winson Green in July 1992.

The hon. Member may be referring to the death of John Joseph Ryan in July 1987 at Birmingham prison. The coroner found the causes of death to be electrolyte imbalance due to water depletion and to bronchopneumonia. The jury returned a verdict of lack of care, and Mr. Ryan's family is currently pursuing a civil action against the Home Office. It would therefore be inappropriate for me to comment further.

Prisoners

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* sentenced prisoners, *(b)* remand prisoners and *(c)* fine defaulters were received into Leeds, Liverpool, Birmingham, Durham, Brixton and Lewes prisons, respectively, each week from the beginning of September to date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest readily available information is given in the table.

Number of untried or convicted unsentenced prisoners received initially into Leeds, Liverpool, Birmingham, Durham, Brixton and Lewes: June to August 1992

Number of persons received
Remand establishment

Date of reception	*Leeds*	*Liverpool*	*Birmingham*	*Durham*	*Brixton*	*Lewes*
1 June to 6 June	39	48	52	23	46	27
7 June to 13 June	36	50	49	12	38	33
14 June to 20 June	32	51	31	3	35	33
21 June to 27 June	26	49	54	10	47	28
28 June to 4 July	12	71	45	31	58	29
5 July to 11 July	27	56	35	23	28	32
12 July to 18 July	25	55	42	7	37	25
19 July to 25 July	36	40	44	26	53	21
26 July to 1 August	42	79	58	11	38	18
2 August to 8 August	35	60	50	9	33	17
9 August to 15 August	29	34	43	23	31	15
16 August to 22 August	26	48	54	19	30	28
23 August to 29 August	43	35	58	11	33	12
30 August to 31 August	7	12	6	—	4	1
Total receptions for period	415	688	621	208	511	319

Number of prisoners received under sentence initially into Leeds, Liverpool, Birmingham, Durham, Brixton and Lewes June to August 1992

	Sentence establishment											
	Leeds		*Liverpool*		*Birmingham*		*Durham*		*Brixton*		*Lewes*	
Period date received sentence	*Fine defaulter*	*Others*	*Fine defaulter*	*Others*	*Fine defaulter*	*Others*	*Fine defaulter*	*Others*	*Fine defaulter*	*Others*	*Fine defaulter*	*Others*
1 June to 6 June	15	33	30	45	33	49	8	36	—	79	9	22
7 June to 13 June	17	43	32	48	30	51	3	41	—	90	8	16
14 June to 20 June	21	48	41	51	35	60	—	29	—	90	7	20

Period date received sentence	Sentence establishment: Leeds Fine defaulter	Leeds Others	Liverpool Fine defaulter	Liverpool Others	Birmingham Fine defaulter	Birmingham Others	Durham Fine defaulter	Durham Others	Brixton Fine defaulter	Brixton Others	Lewes Fine defaulter	Lewes Others
21 June to 27 June	36	51	33	57	30	50	1	32	—	60	11	19
28 June to 4 July	10	32	17	46	28	51	5	32	1	95	5	16
5 July to 11 July	10	57	40	57	27	50	2	29	—	88	9	24
12 July to 18 July	13	39	38	51	30	47	1	47	—	92	4	20
19 July to 25 July	17	45	33	39	38	52	3	45	—	81	6	12
26 July to 1 August	36	32	34	65	25	42	1	40	—	92	1	21
2 August to 8 August	29	22	38	103	33	46	2	22	—	95	4	9
9 August to 15 August	28	19	34	58	30	52	2	31	—	73	4	15
16 August to 22 August	26	26	28	46	28	72	1	38	—	63	1	12
23 August to 29 August	28	39	36	43	28	54	—	33	—	80	4	5
30 August to 31 August	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total receptions for period	286	486	434	709	397	676	29	455	1	1,078	73	211

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the total prison population, *(b)* the sentenced prison population, *(c)* the remand prison population and *(d)* the number of imprisoned fine defaulters on each Friday from the beginning of the September to date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the table which relates to Prison Service establishments in England and Wales and does not include prisoners in police cells. The data on the unsentenced population include inmates remanded in custody by magistrates courts, committed for trial in the Crown court and also those who have been convicted but not yet sentenced. Information on fine defaulters is currently only available for 30 September when the total was 256.

Date	Sentenced population	Unsentenced population	Total population
4 September 1992	37,838	7,698	45,536
11 September 1992	37,741	7,771	45,512
18 September 1992	37,906	7,612	45,518
25 September 1992	37,669	7,642	45,311
2 October 1992	37,075	7,790	44,865
9 October 1992	37,082	7,505	44,587
16 October 1992	36,800	7,451	44,251
23 October 1992	36,711	7,434	44,145
30 October 1992	36,450	7,335	43,785
6 November 1992	36,353	7,204	43,557
13 November 1992	36,125	7,143	43,268
20 November 1992	35,934	7,157	43,091
27 November 1992	35,893	7,106	42,999
4 December 1992	35,745	7,023	42,768
11 December 1992	35,436	6,952	42,388

Police Supernumerary Posts

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will allow police authorities to hold supernumerary posts to deal with problems of crime in city centres and town centres, on housing estates and in the community generally.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. Supernumerary police posts are considered only where there is a special commitment which is temporary. Supernumerary posts would not be considered for normal aspects of policing a force area.

Highpoint Prison

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the incident at HMP Highpoint on 24 November; and what plans he has to review security procedures in the light of the incident.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: An inquiry is currently being conducted into the disturbances at Highpoint prison. The inquiry will review security procedures and systems.

Racial Incidents

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many recorded racial incidents occurred in each London borough in each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information in the form requested is not available. The information supplied is for racial incidents recorded by the police by Metropolitan police area. The following table gives details of reported racial incidents for the 12 months to June 1992, the last month for which figures are presently available.

Racial incidents in the Metropolitan Police Areas for the twelve months ending June 1992

Month	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6	Area 7	Area 8	Total
1991									
July	39	106	66	23	34	29	57	8	362
August	29	84	73	28	31	21	66	3	335
September	30	80	51	18	33	17	66	8	303
October	34	90	49	25	17	20	56	9	300
November	27	59	35	22	13	17	54	4	231
December	18	45	30	23	20	15	31	1	183
1992									
January	35	71	40	28	18	11	49	7	259
February	20	78	68	22	38	17	37	7	287

Month	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6	Area 7	Area 8	Total
March	32	93	89	28	31	13	43	2	331
April	24	99	76	35	25	20	43	6	328
May	22	98	81	45	28	18	45	5	342
June	43	94	72	47	33	13	52	10	364

Prison Visitors

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he will take to encourage persons from ethnic minorities to join the membership of prison boards of visitors.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In making appointments to a board of visitors, consideration is given to the abilities of the individual candidate to discharge the duties effectively and the desirability of maintaining, so far as possible, a representative balance on the board in terms, for example, of age, sex, and social and ethnic background. No fewer than two members of the board are required to be justices of the peace. The membership of individual boards is reviewed every three years.

Advice on the selection and appointment of new members forms part of the training of chairmen of boards and is also included in the "Notes for the guidance of Chairmen" in the "Handbook for Members of Boards of Visitors", a copy of which is in the Library.

Chairmen are encouraged to seek members from the ethnic minorities wherever possible and to advertise as necessary.

The current ethnic make up of boards is as follows:

Ethnic origin	Percentage of members in post on 14 December 1992
Asian	2·52
Black	3·69
White	64·35
Other	0·18
Not known	29·26

Prison Education

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will continue to employ prison education officers at every prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under present arrangements, each prison establishment has an education officer, usually employed by the local education authority. Following the current competitive tendering exercise, each prison establishment, from 1 April 1993, will have an education co-ordinator employed by the successful contractor. The education co-ordinator will be an on-site manager accountable to the governor for ensuring that the educational services required of the contractor are discharged effectively and efficiently.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to improve the morale of prison education personnel in Wakefield prison following the report of Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons for 1991-92.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The report of Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons, published in July 1992, related to an inspection of Her Majesty's prison Wakefield undertaken in October 1991. The education programme was then described as lacking in imagination and breadth with an absence of a team approach, a lack of openness, poor communications and unfilled potential.

Since then, there have been changes in staff. It is also hoped, in due course, to provide improved accommodation for classes.

One of the purposes of the current competitive tendering exercise is, of course, to stimulate new and better ways of carrying out tasks. More detailed specification by the Prison Service of its requirements, establishment by establishment, and more rigorous monitoring should improve standards of education provision and the morale of the staff delivering it.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were employed in prison education within (a) individual prisons and *(b)* all prison establishments for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information is not held centrally. The Prison Service currently obtains most education services for prisoners through local education authorities. It is generally the local education authorities which employ the full and part-time salaried staff and sessionally paid teachers required. The Prison Service reimburses local education authorities for the expenditure incurred and pays a small additional charge for administrative costs.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how the prison education service will be publicly accountable in terms of services provided and overall budget, following compulsory competitive tendering;

(2) if teachers working in prisons will continue to be paid at the same level and conditions as non-prison teaching staff;

(3) which national agency will have responsibility for managing personnel in the prison education services following the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering;

(4) how administrative fees for the prison education service will alter following compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In the current competitive tendering exercise, the Prison Service has specified what educational services it requires to be provided and the contracts will provide for payment for all the services which the contractor undertakes to supply. The pay and conditions of service of the staff to provide those services and responsibility for their management and career development is a matter for their employer. The Prison Service will wish to assure itself of the adequacy of the arrangements the employer has made and also to monitor the quality for delivery of the service for which it has contracted.

This requirement that the Prison Service should specify, establishment by establishment, the services it requires and that the provider should be contractually liable if he fails to deliver is directed to improving effectiveness, public accountability, and value for money.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how recommendations in the report of Her Majesty's inspector of prisons for 1991-92 will be implemented for education following the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering within the prison education system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The arrangements for responding to recommendations from Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons will not change. The chief inspector makes an annual report to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, as required by section 5A(5) of the Prison Act 1952. He also publishes reports of inspections of individual prisons, in which recommendations may be directed to the Secretary of State, the Director-General of the Prison Service, the responsible area manager or to the governor. These recommendations will continue to be considered and, where appropriate, implemented in respect of educational services bought in from contractors on and after 1 April 1993, as they are now in respect of services bought in from local education authorities.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the budget for prison education for each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Total expenditure on education services in prisons in England and Wales since 1979 was as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	6·5
1980-81	8·6
1981-82	8·6
1982-83	9·9
1983-84	11·0
1984-85	11·9
1985-86	12·3
1986-87	14·8
1987-88	16·9
1988-89	19·5
1989-90	22·9
1990-91	25·5
1991-92	29·5

Prison Complaints Procedure

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to speed up the request and complaints procedure between prisoners and the prison service headquarters.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Seventy-one per cent. of Prison Service headquarters replies are already within the time target set. Prison Service management will be considering what can be done to improve on that proportion.

Prisons (Suicide Prevention)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to encourage greater staff training and awareness in suicide prevention in the prison service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A training package in suicide awareness forms part of the induction training for all new prison officers, and is also available to all prison establishments for local delivery. It is for individual governors to determine what priority such training should have, taking into account other staff training needs at different times.

Staff awareness is maintained by the suicide prevention management group within the establishment and by line managers. Prison Service headquarters provides active encouragement through the work of the national suicide awareness support unit. The unit issues regular newsletters as a way of sharing good practice within the Prison Service. It published an information paper in August 1992 which gives more details of national and local initiatives in this important area—my answer of 27 October, at column *580*, refers.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many prisons suicide prevention management groups are established; and how he will encourage the involvement of the Samaritans.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Suicide prevention management groups are established in all prisons in England and Wales.

The Samaritans are already extensively involved in prisons. Local branches are represented on almost all suicide prevention management groups. The nature of their involvement varies according to local needs, but many include regular surgeries for prisoners; confidential befriending of suicide prisoners by visit, phone and letter; and training and support of prison staff and prisoner befrienders. This work is co-ordinated by the national prison liaison and development officer for the Samaritans. The Prison Service is funding this post for a two-year period. In conjunction with the Samaritans, the Prison Service also issued, in January 1992 guidelines to prisons on the role of the Samaritans and how it can be developed.

Prison Roofs

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the maintenance costs for *(a)* flat roofs and *(b)* pitched roofs in prison establishments for the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not possible to provide the information requested, as maintenance costs are not recorded in such detail as to allow work to various types of roofs to be readily identified.

Prisons (Fire)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many outbreaks of fire have occurred within prison establishments in the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information on the number of fires occurring in prison establishments in England and Wales is as follows:

	Number
1988	435
1989	313
1990	421
1991	555
[1]1992	642

[1]To 13 December 1992.

Prison Inspections

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken to speed up the publication of inspection reports for Her Majesty's prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Director-General of the Prison Service has been giving priority to securing speedier publication of the chief inspector's reports on individual prison establishments. Forty of these reports have been published to date this year, including some that had been delayed by staffing and operational difficulties last year. The time taken to clear for publication reports submitted by the chief inspector on his 1992 inspections has as a general rule now come down to under four months in the case of full inspections and under three months in the case of short inspections. The inspectorate's own preparations for publication normally take an additional month.

Action to implement the chief inspector's recommendations starts as soon as we know what his findings are and is not delayed until the publication date.

Prison Accommodation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the certified normal accommodation system for prison capacity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Prison Service has no plans to review the system for certifying normal accommodation. Section 14 of the Prisons Act 1952 provides that cells may only be used where they are certified by an inspector. This function is carried out by Prison Service area managers.

The certification process enables the Prison Service to establish the total capacity of the estate. For 1993-94 the Prison Service will be providing additional help to area managers in taking stock of the accommodation available in each establishment.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he will take to improve prison reception areas.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The standard design specifications for new prisons require a self-contained unit for the reception and discharge of prisoners in humane conditions, and in a logically ordered and efficient manner. Where practical, these specifications are also used for designing improvements to existing prisons.

Between 1991-92 and 1993-94 improved reception and discharge facilities have been opened or are being provided at 17 prisons.

In addition, an admissions guide on good practice in the management of arrangements for the reception and induction of prisoners has recently been issued to all Prison Service establishments. This is intended to enable staff to identify how best to provide prisoners with the support and information they need. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ensure that self-catering facilities are available to all long-term prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Facilities to enable long-term prisoners to cook their own food and prepare additional meals in the evenings are provided in a number of establishments, particularly dispersal prisons. The provision of similar facilities will be considered elsewhere when resources allow.

Police Cells

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he will take to ensure regular HMI inspection of police cells.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary already visit police stations, including the custody areas, during their regular inspection programme and will comment on any deficiencies.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many occasions of suicide and attempted suicide took place in police cells during 1991-92.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There were 10 cases of deaths in police custody areas in England and Wales during 1991 in which an inquest verdict of suicide was returned. A further two cases have been reported in 1992, to date. Figures for attempted suicide are not recorded centrally.

Prisons (Disabled Access)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action has been taken to improve access for disabled persons within prison establishments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The current design specifications for the construction of new prisons reflect the needs of disabled prisoners, staff and visitors. Wherever practical, these are used as the basis for modernisation work in existing buildings. The specifications require that circulation routes should be suitable for wheelchairs and provide for access ramps and for lifts in certain buildings together with lavatories for use by the disabled.

Between 1990-91 and 1993-94, a total of 18 schemes within the programme for modernising existing prisons have or will result in improvement specifically for the benefit of disabled people. In addition, other improvements have been made by local management, of which there is no central record.

Schengen Agreement

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the effect on the United Kingdom of the Schengen agreement coming into force on 1 January 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is now clear that the Schengen convention will not come into effect on 1 January 1993.

Life Prisoners

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make a statement about the changes in the procedures for reviewing the cases of persons sentenced to life imprisonment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I intend to bring the procedures applying to prisoners subject to a mandatory life sentence more closely into line with those which, since 1 October 1992, have applied to prisoners who are either "discretionary life sentence prisoners" as defined in section 34 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 or prisoners who have been certified under paragraph 9 of schedule 12 to that Act as prisoners to whom section 34 would have been applied if it had been in force at the time that they were sentenced. These new arrangements will also apply to any prisoners

sentenced to life imprisonment for an offence for which life imprisonment is the maximum penalty who are not "discretionary life sentence prisoners" and to any who have not been certified under paragraph 9 of schedule 12.

The effect of these changes will be that in respect of all Parole Board reviews of the cases of mandatory lifers that commence in their local establishment after or on 1 April 1993, subject only to exceptions that may be necessary to safeguard the interests of third parties or the welfare of prisoners, or where disclosure would otherwise be against the public interest, all the papers that are before the board will be made available to those prisoners, in advance of the board's consideration. They will also be provided with the reasons for Parole Board recommendations and ministerial decisions regarding release. An implementation date of 1 April 1993 has been chosen in order to give Prison Service staff sufficient time to arrange for the necessary preparation and disclosure of the relevant papers to prisoners and for the Parole Board to provide the necessary training for its members.

Lebanese Nationals

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards Lebanese nationals applying for asylum: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: All applications for asylum are carefully considered on an individual basis in full conformity with the provisions of the 1951 United Nations convention and 1967 protocol relating to the status of refugees, and refugee status is granted where appropriate.

In addition, for some years Lebanese nationals who have expressed a fear of return to Lebanon, but who could not demonstrate that they were refugees within the meaning of the 1951 convention, have generally been allowed to remain here, exceptionally, outside the immigration rules.

The Lebanese civil war ended last year and the situation there has now improved significantly. Following consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has decided that in all the circumstances this concession is no longer justified. Asylum applications made by Lebanese nationals from today will be assessed on their individual merits in the same way as those from nationals of most other countries. The United Kingdom will, of course, continue to honour fully its obligations under the 1951 convention and 1967 protocol.

Shops Act 1950

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the European Court of Justice judgment relating to the Shops Act 1950 to be delivered; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

The European Court of Justice has today held that the prohibition in article 30 of the EC treaty does not apply to national legislation prohibiting retailers from opening their premises on Sundays. The Court thus accepted the argument that the relevant local authorities and I advanced on behalf of the United Kingdom that the Shops Act 1950 is compatible with article 30. The House of Lords and other courts that referred cases to the European Court will now apply its ruling.

Parliament has given to local authorities the primary role in enforcing the law about Sunday trading in their areas. Cases in progress can proceed and local authorities can continue to issue summonses or seek injunctions.

I have considered whether I should also take action to enforce the law, but I have decided that the public interest does not require intervention by me at present. I shall continue to keep the position under review.

Questions of policy are for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. He announced the Government's proposals to the House on 26 November and said that the Government will be bringing forward a Bill to enable Parliament to consider the options as soon as is practicable.

Crime Prevention

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to introduce the crime prevention measures recommended by the committee chaired by James Morgan.

Mr. Jack *[pursuant to his reply, 18 June 1992, c. 645]:* My right hon. and learned Friend and I have carefully considered the recommendations in the report and the views of those organisations that submitted comments on it. I welcome the report's endorsement of the partnership approach to crime prevention, which is now the cornerstone of the Government's policy. Also accepted are its general findings on the valuable contributions that each of the local partners can and do make to creating safer communities. However, I have concluded that the future development of effective crime prevention partnership groups and schemes does not depend on the report's recommendation that local authorities are given a statutory crime prevention role. In forming this view, I am mindful of not adding new burdens to local authorities and the fact that a great deal in this field can be done within the existing statutory framework. In this respect, the Government's view is that the lead on crime prevention should, for the most part, be determined by local circumstances. Nor am I persuaded that the appointment of local authority crime prevention co-ordinators requires central funding.

I am grateful to the Morgan working group for the effort it invested in its task. Its report, and earlier Home Office guidance, has stimulated the growth of local crime prevention action groups across the country.

I have placed in the Library of the House a copy of the Department's response to the recommendations in the report which are directed at the Home Office.

HEALTH

Medical Care Abroad

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action she has taken to ensure that medical care provided by Spanish hospitals under United Kingdom holiday insurance schemes is administered by suitably qualified personnel;

(2) what steps she has taken to ensure that medical treatment provided abroad by British holiday insurance companies for British holidaymakers is of a standard consistent with that provided within the British Isles;

(3) what steps she is proposing to take to prevent British holidaymakers to Spain, who fall ill, from receiving unsolicited and unwarranted treatment in the course of private hospitalisation paid for by holiday insurance companies.

Dr. Mawhinney: The standard of health care supplied abroad under commercial holiday insurance is a private matter between the insurer, the insured person and the service provider.

NHS Trusts (Contracts)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each contract made with NHS trusts by *(a)* Her Majesty's Government and *(b)* regional health authorities for the most recent available year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The National Health Service Management Executive contracts centrally with units providing designated supra-regional services. For information on individual contracts I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 23 October at column *394*.

Detailed information is not available centrally on contracts placed by regional health authorities.

Wellhouse Trust

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what allocations in the current financial year were made by the North West Thames health authority directly to reduce the projected deficit of the Wellhouse Trust; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Health authorities do not make allocations to trusts. North West Thames has however agreed to allocate £1·4 million to Barnet district health authority, the principal purchaser of services from the Wellhouse Trust. This is to enable it to increase the value of its contract for patient services during 1992-93.

Orthopaedic Services

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library the statistical information used in the preparation of the Tomlinson report relating to the percentage of patients waiting longer than one year for admission to hospital for elective orthopaedic surgery in *(a)* inner London, relative to England as a whole and *(b)* the four Thames regions, relative to the national average.

Mr. Sackville: Information about waiting times by district health authority and specialty is given in the publication "Hospital Waiting List, In-Patients and Day Cases"—ISBN 1 85839 003 6, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from the British Orthopaedic Association on the provision of orthopaedic and trauma services in inner London; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list *(a)* the hospitals in inner London which provide a comprehensive orthopaedic and trauma service and *(b)* the total number of beds available to London orthopaedic surgeons for carrying out elective and traumatic surgery.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Nurse Prescribing

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the reasons for delaying the introduction of nurse prescribing; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Competing priorities in the last public expenditure survey obliged us, very reluctantly, to postpone implementation of nurse prescribing. We will introduce nurse prescribing as soon as resources permit.

Hospital Readmissions

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of patients discharged from the acute departments of NHS hospitals were readmitted to an NHS hospital within a month in the last 12 months period for which there are figures; and what were the comparable proportions for the comparable periods 10 and 20 years ago.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally.

Romanian Adoptions

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent discussions have been held by her Department with the Romanian Committee for Adoptions; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: A meeting, originally scheduled for December, to review the working arrangements of the adoption agreement will take place early in the new year.

NHS Premises (Fire Safety)

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to provide extra funding to the national health service with a view to bringing NHS premises up to the standards required by fire safety legislation; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to the hon. Member for Bristol South, (Ms. Primarolo) on 3 November at columns *179-80*.

Casualty Departments

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what training and information is given to hospital managers and doctors to guide them in the preparation of policies and care philosophies for patient-centred management of casualty departments.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is for provider hospitals to determine the pattern of local services and to develop training programmes that provide staff with the requisite skills.

Patient Discharges

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's policy in respect of the extent to which a nurse manager in charge of a ward should be able to override a consultant's decision to discharge a patient.

Dr. Mawhinney: Guidance was issued by the Department, in health circular HC(89)5, a copy of which is available in the Library. It makes it clear that no patient should be discharged from hospital without the authority of the doctor holding responsibility for that patient, unless there are clearly agreed protocols for this authority to be delegated.

Transplants

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the number of organ or eye donations that could have been used for transplants and the actual numbers of transplants in the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The table gives the number of organs and corneas donated and the number of organs transplanted in the United Kingdom for the latest period for which information is available. The principal reason why donated organs are not used is because of clinical unsuitability. The United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority collects data on and publishes the reason for not using organs, in its annual report, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Period—1 January 1992 to 30 November 1992 United Kingdom[1]

Organ	*Number donated*	*Number transplanted*
Kidney	1,532	1,473
Heart	286	254
Heart/Lung	52	43
Lung	90	73
Pancreas	47	23
Cornea	3,518	2,187

[1] Information provided by the United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many castrophic leaks of ozone-depleting substances have occurred within her Department's buildings in the last five years;

(2) how many refrigeration and air conditioning systems in her Department are equipped with automatic leak detection systems;

(3) what quantity of HCFC 22 is purchased by her Department per annum;

(4) if she will provide details from the maintenance and servicing record of the quantity and type of ozone-destroying chemicals used annually in her Department's refrigeration and air conditioning equipment for servicing and in leakages; and what proportion is removed for recycling;

(5) what are the latest available figures for her Department's total purchase of CFCs and HCFCs;

(6) how many CFC and HCFC installations are contained within her Department's buildings;

(7) how much funding has been allocated or spent to specifically deal with measures to reduce her Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances;

(8) how many chlorofluorocarbon domestic fridges are contained within her Department's buildings;

(9) to ask the Secretary of State for Health, what proportion of her Department's consumption of ozone depleting substances becomes controlled waste in terms of section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990;

(10) what is the quantity of ozone-depleting substances recycled within her Department and returned to the manufacturer.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will give an undertaking to purchase only ozone-friendly fridges that do not contain chlorofluorocarbons or hydrochlorofluorocarbons for her Department;

(2) what action has been taken to ensure that ozone-destroying substances consumed by her Department are identified as controlled wastes when they are no longer in use;

(3) what measures have been taken to ensure that ozone-destroying substances in use by her Department identified as controlled waste under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 do not reach the atmosphere;

(4) by what date her Department's use of ozone-depleting chemicals will conform to EC regulations on limits on these chemicals;

(5) how the departmental Green Minister has promoted protection of the ozone layer with specific policy measures; which possible measures have been considered and rejected; and on what grounds;

(6) what targets have been set for the recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals within the departmental buildings.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 30 November at columns *74-75*.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which current uses of ozone-depleting chemicals by her Department are considered essential.

Mr. Sackville: Equipment in the national health service that still requires ozone-depleting agents includes refrigeration equipment and plant, which uses the less damaging hydrochlorofluorocarbons, and certain fire extinguishing systems where no alternative materials are currently available. For chlorofluorocarbons used for essential medical purposes I refer the hon. Member to the reply my predecessor gave to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 12 March 1992 at column *628*.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been sought and received on alternatives or substitutes to the ozone-destroying chemicals in use by her Department.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has been following technical developments both nationally and internationally and the information acquired is, and will continue to be used, in the preparation of guidance for the national health service. Guidance on refrigerants and air conditioning will be issued next year.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many portable halon fire extinguishers are contained within departmental buildings; and what measures are being taken to ensure their recycling and replacement.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not available centrally. Guidance will be issued in spring 1993 to assist the national health service to control the use of halon in accordance with the Montreal protocol.

Limited List Prescribing

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if her Department will carry out a survey among United Kingdom pharmaceutical companies to establish how many potential new treatments for conditions covered by the proposed new limited list regulations are currently being investigated in their research and development laboratories;

(2) what positive measures her Department will take to persuade United Kingdom pharmaceutical companies to continue research projects in the 10 therapeutic categories covered by the proposed new limited list regulations; and whether such intentions would be incorporated into a revised pharmaceutical price regulation scheme.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department does not collate information from the pharmaceutical industry on current research projects, and has no plans to do so. It is for the companies concerned to determine their research and development priorities within the framework provided by the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme.

Stallington Hospital

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will establish an inquiry, following the North Staffordshire district health authority's report into Stallington hospital, into whether all similar hospitals are currently adequately staffed and resourced; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The National Health Service Management Executive issued health service guidance (HSG(92)42), on health services for people with learning disabilities, on 26 October 1992. A copy is available in the Library. Staffing levels in individual hospitals are a matter for local decision.

Paediatric Nurses

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many paediatric community nurses were employed by the national health service in each year since 1985.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally. The Royal College of Nursing publishes a directory of paediatric community nursing services which has been place in the Library.

Day Care

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those health authorities and national health service trusts which provide separate day care facilities for children from those provided for adults.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Children

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those health authorities and national health service trusts which provide access and facilities for sick children with disabilities.

Mr. Yeo: Advice on the requirement for national health service facilities to be accessible to the disabled and the means by which access can be provided is included in all relevant policy and building design guidance issued by the Department. We are generally satisfied with compliance with these regulations, but ease of access will vary across buildings of different age and configuration.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those health authorities and national health service trusts which provide play therapists for children.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not collected centrally.

Prison Mother and Baby Units

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to publish the report on mother and baby units in British prisons by the social services inspectorate.

Mr. Yeo: A report on the first inspection of the three mother and baby units in British prisons, carried out at the request of the Home Secretary by the social services inspectorate with medical and nursing advisers, was published in March 1992. Copies are available in the Library. A report on the second inspection, carried out in November 1992, will be published in the spring and placed in the Library.

Young Offenders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the capital cost per place of the most recently constructed secure unit for young offenders; and what is *(a)* the average cost, *(b)* the highest cost and *(c)* the lowest weekly cost of placement in such a unit.

Mr. Yeo: Secure units accommodate any category of child looked after by a local authority meeting the statutory criteria for restriction of liberty, including offenders. The average capital cost per place of the two secure units opening earlier this year was £192,720.

Information about revenue costs in the form requested is not collected centrally.

Nutrition Task Force

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the nutrition task force will include a practising nutritional therapist among is members.

Mr. Sackville: No. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the membership of the nutrition task force on 7 December.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations the nutrition task force will have with professional organisations; and whether she expects those consultations to include meetings with the Society for the Promotion of Nutritional Therapy.

Mr. Sackville: The task force will determine its own methods of working at its first meeting on 16 December.

Hospital Staff

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the numbers of whole-time equivalent hospital staff in post in England on 30 September 1991 and 30 September 1992, subdivided by grade and sex.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 8 December 1992]:* The figures for the 30 September 1992 are not yet available. The required figures for 30 September 1991 are given in the table. It is not possible for non-nursing staff to code whether they work within a hospital. The figures exclude those for medical and dental staff which are not yet available. It is not possible to give non-direct care staff figures split by grade, as these are no longer collected centrally.

Staff in each nursing and midwifery grade England (excluding agency staff) at September 1991 (wte)

Grade	*Male*	*Female*
ASC non-supervisor and chargehands		
Scale A	2	1
Nurse learners student/pupils		
Pupil Nurse	46	371
Student Nurse	5,388	30,438
RGN/RSCN (4 year int. Course)	9	217
RGN/RMN (4 year int. Course)	19	27
Student Midwife (without nursing qualification)	0	38
Other	0	0
Nursing officer	0	1
Other	1	1
SNR Nurses (Clinical/Managerial, Staff Support and Staff Support—Education)		
Director of Nursing Services—6	0	0
Director of Nursing Services—5	1	0
Director of Nursing Services—4	8	14
Director of Nursing Services—3	10	14
Director of Nursing Services—2	8	11
Director of Nursing Services—1	4	3
Director of Nursing Services—1+	0	2
Other	0	0
District Nursing Officer		
DHA 3	0	1
DHA 2	0	0
DHA 1	0	1
DHA 2(T)	0	0
DHA 1(T)	0	0
DHA 1+(T)	0	0
Other	0	0
Regional Nurse		
RNO/R2	1	0
RNO/R1	0	3
Day Nursery Staff		
Day Nursery Assistant (Under age 19)	1	0
Day Nursery Assistant (age 19 and over)	0	10
Staff Nursery Nurse—NNEB	0	22
Deputy Matron (under 60 places)	0	11
Deputy Matron (under 60 + places)	0	0
Matron (under 30 places)	0	7
Matron (30 to 59 places)	0	6
Matron (60 + places)	0	1
Other	0	0
Staff in Group A&B Establishments		
Matron—A (200 + beds)	0	1
Special School Nurse—B	0	1
Other	0	0
Clinical Grading Structure		
Scale A	6,239	61,422
Scale B	2,574	12,367
Scale C	851	14,296
Scale D	5,821	53,595
Scale E	7,771	60,504
Scale F	3,255	19,463
Scale G	6,126	24,714
Scale H	1,151	3,766
Scale I	971	2,321
Other	5	15
Education staff		
Grade 1	265	850
Grade 2	903	2,133
Grade 3	189	352
Grade 4	174	264
Grade 5	58	83
Grade 6	10	17
Grade 7	15	19
Other	0	0
SNR nurses (Clinical/Managerial, Staff Support—Education)		
Senior nurse—6	15	20
Senior nurse—5	6	15
Senior nurse—4	30	48
Senior nurse—3	10	24
Senior nurse—2	8	9
Senior nurse—1	4	3
Senior nurse—1	0	0
Other	3	8
Senior nurse (Staff Support—Education)		
Senior nurse—8	2	1
Senior nurse—7	1	10
Other	3	10
Senior nurses/midwives		
District/Unit	152	274
District/Unit	9	6
Unit—1st level	145	215
District—1st level	9	6
Region	2	9
Region—1st level	1	1
Other	0	0
Undetermined	984	7,308
Nursing and midwifery other	44	615
Total nursing and midwifery	43,303	295,966

Note: There are some 9,100 whole-time equivalent staff who do not have an Occupation or Payscale code that allows them to be allocated to a specific area of work.

Staff in each PAMs, S&P, P&T grade England at September 1991 (WTE)

Description	*Male*	*Female*
PAMs		
Chiropodist	3	17
Senior Chiropodist—Grade 2	306	914
Senior Chiropodist—Grade 1	213	502
Ch. Chiropodist—Grade 4	67	107
Ch. Chiropodist—Grade 3	75	95
Ch. Chiropodist—Grade 2	10	18
District Ch. Chiropodist—Grade 2	67	47
District Ch. Chiropodist—Grade 1	21	8
District Senior Ch. Chiropodist	7	2
Teacher—Chiropody	4	3
Senior Teacher—Chiropody	4	3
Principal—Grade 2—Chiropody (annual intake of 24 or more)	1 —	— 1
Occupational Therapist	79	947
Graduate entry with 4 years training	1	64
Senior Occupational Therapist—2	58	1,091
Senior Occupational Therapist—1	89	1,966
Head Senior Occupational Therapist—4	16	279

Description	Male	Female
Head Senior Occupational Therapist—3	31	569
Head Senior Occupational Therapist—2	8	149
Head Senior Occupational Therapist—1	8	98
Teacher—Occupational Therapist	4	10
Senior Teacher—Occupational Therapist	—	5
Principal—Grade 2—Occupational Therapist (annual intake of 24 or more)	—	3
District Occupational Therapist—2	5	94
District Occupational Therapist—1	1	22
Occupational Therapist—Grade 3 (designated district)	—	2
Occupational Therapist—Grade 2 (designated district)	—	2
Occupational Therapist—Grade 1 (designated district)	1	6
Physiotherapist	195	1,495
(Graduate entry with 4 years training)	22	145
Senior Physiotherapist—Grade 2	190	2,472
Senior Physiotherapist—Grade 1	271	3,374
Supt. Physiotherapist—Grade 4	29	309
Supt. Physiotherapist—Grade 3	89	766
Supt. Physiotherapist—Grade 2	17	132
Supt. Physiotherapist—Grade 1	8	137
Student Teacher—Physiotherapist	—	2
Teacher—Physiotherapist	8	43
Senior Teacher—Physiotherapist	11	49
Principal—Grade 2 (annual intake of 24 or more)	—	1
District Physiotherapist—2	5	8
District Physiotherapist—1	15	97
Senior Rem. Gymnast—Grade 1	6	24
Designated District Rem. Gymnast—Grade 3	—	1
Orthoptist	—	1
Snr. Orthoptist—Gr. 2	—	11
Snr. Orthoptist—Gr. 1	2	185
Head Orthoptist—Gr. 4	4	211
Head Orthoptist—Gr. 3	—	15
Head Orthoptist—Gr. 2*	1	32
Head Orthoptist—Gr. 2	—	8
Head Orthoptist—Gr. 4	—	22
Teacher—Orthoptist	1	26
Snr. Teacher—Orthoptist	—	17
Principal—Gr. 2	—	4
Principal—Gr. 1	—	4
Radiographer	—	1
Snr. Radiographer—2	454	2,433
Snr. Radiographer—1	331	1,843
Supt. Radiographer—4	284	1,630
Supt. Radiographer—3	71	306
Supt. Radiographer—2	159	636
Supt. Radiographer—1	32	112
Student Teacher—Radiographer	32	59
Teacher—Radiographer	1	1
Snr. Teacher—Radiographer	16	25
Principal Gr. 2	17	28
Principal Gr. 1	6	12
"(ann. intake of 24 or more)	8	12
District Radiographer—3	4	3
District Radiographer—2	9	8
District Radiographer—1	58	48
Dietician—Diploma Entry	13	4
Dietician (Graduate entry with 4 years training)	1	12
Snr. Dietician—Gr. 2	3	199
Snr. Dietician—Gr. 1	5	254
Ch. Dietician—Gr. 4	10	562
Ch. Dietician—Gr. 3	—	36
Dist. Ch. Dietician—Gr. 2	3	88
Dist. Ch. Dietician—Gr. 1	5	133
Dist. Snr. Ch. Dietician	—	28
Art/Music Therapist	—	3
Snr. Art/Music Therapist—2	5	14
Snr. Art/Music Therapist—1	40	83
Head Art/Music Therapist—4	51	90
Head Art/Music Therapist—3	5	3
Footcare Assistant	7	12
Helpers in Occ. Therapy & Physiotherapy	9	360
Helpers in Radiography	289	4,042
	46	581

Description	Male	Female
Supervisor—Qualified—26 to 100 patients	1	—
Tech. Assts/Drivers Techs (MRU)	3	—
Technical/Instructors—Gr. 3	200	1,370
Technical Instructors—Grade 2	274	311
Technical Instructors—Grade 1	405	145
Drama Therapists	—	1
Senior Drama Therapist—2	2	6
Senior Drama Therapist—1	4	4
Head Drama Therapist—4	—	1
Head Drama Therapist—3	1	—
Part-time Hospital Chaplains	0	0
Others (PAMS)	345	677
S&P (Pharmacists)		
Pre-reg. Student Pharmacist	2	4
Pharmacist	2	5
Staff Pharmacist	4	13
DPO Scale C/Principal Pharmacist	1	2
DPO Scale B/Grade 4 Pharmacist	1	1
Pharmaceutical officer—non-teaching managed population—under 450,000	2	—
Reg. Pharmaceutical Officer (i)	1	—
Pharmacist (on call)	2	3
Staff Pharmacist (on call)	2	9
DPO Scale C/Principal Pharmacist (on call)	—	2
DPO Scale B/Grade 4 Pharmacist (on call)	1	—
Pharmacists (without Emergency Duty Commitment)		
Pre-reg. Graduate	72	218
Grade A	12	67
Grade B	20	89
Grade C	20	159
Grade D	43	176
Grade E	38	61
Grade F	39	21
Grade G	27	7
Grade H	11	4
Pharmacists (with "On Call"/Emergency Duty Commitment)		
Grade A	14	47
Grade B	100	289
Grade C	75	272
Grade D	270	579
Grade E	211	215
Grade F	144	64
Grade G	106	26
Grade H	30	1
Sandwich course student in 2nd period of practical training placement	—	3
Other (S&P Pharmacists)	2	9
S&P		
Assistant Psychotherapist (child)	3	5
Biochemist—probationary period Higher qualification	3	5
Basic Grade: post probationary period	4	5
Senior Grade	13	8
Principal Grade	9	3
Top Grade	4	—
Physicist—probationary period Higher qualification	1	2
Basic Grade: post probationary period	—	0
Senior Grade	7	3
Principal Grade	1	4
Top Grade	3	—
Child Psychotherapist Grade A	4	9
Child Psychotherapist Grade B	2	3
Child Psychotherapist Grade B + 2 Discretionary point	10	13
Child Psychotherapist Grade B + 4 Discretionary point	4	24
Clinical Psychologist Senior Grade	14	37
Clinical Psychologist Principal Grade	26	25
Top Grade	4	6
Top Grade (with greater responsibility)	14	4
Reg. Scientific Officer	1	1
Reg. Scientific Officer + 3 Discretionary point	5	0

Description	Male	Female
Reg. Scientific Officer + 5 Discretionary point	3	1
Child Psychotherapist Trainee Grade	4	35
Basic Grade	4	31
Senior Grade	10	38
Principal Grade	28	40
Top Grade	2	4
Psychology Technicians	4	8
Clinical Scientists Grade A	153	272
Clinical Scientists Grade B	1,204	742
Clinical Scientists Grade C	456	67
Assistant Psychologist	48	170
Trainee Clinical Psychologist	82	273
Other (S&P)	99	676
Clinical Psychologist—A	344	764
Clinical Psychologist—B	359	275
Speech Therapist Grade 1	1	106
Speech Therapist Grade 2	8	590
Speech Therapist Grade 3	3	109
Speech Therapist Grade A	4	164
Speech Therapist Grade B	4	453
Speech Therapist Grade B +1 Discretionary point	4	78
Speech Therapist Grade B + 2 Discretionary point	2	103
Speech Therapist Grade C	10	716
Speech Therapist Grade C + 1 Discretionary point	1	100
Speech Therapist Grade C + 2 Discretionary point	5	128
Speech Therapist Grade D	8	150
Speech Therapist Grade D plus 2 Discretionary point	2	40
Grade E	1	56
Speech Therapist Grade E plus 2 Discretionary point	1	18
Senior Speech Therapist I	—	19
Senior Speech Therapist II	—	14
Chief Speech Therapist III	—	3
Chief Speech Therapist IV	—	1
District Chief Speech Therapist II	1	5
Speech Therapists' Assistant	4	114
Whole-time Chaplains Assistants	24	28
Whole-time Chaplains	203	15
P and T		
Junior M.L.S.O. Scale A	5	17
Trainee M.L.S.O.	499	1,200
M.L.S.O.	20	22
Senior M.L.S.O.	22	6
Chief M.L.S.O.	12	4
Senior Chief M.L.S.O.	4	—
M.L.S.O. 1	1,566	3,594
M.L.S.O. 2	1,797	1,632
M.L.S.O. 3	1,431	478
M.L.S.O. 4	608	78
Medical Laboratory Assistant	407	3,102
Trainee Cytology Screener	2	100
Cytology Screener	2	288
Trainee Pathology Technician	1	2
Pathology Technician (unqualified)	5	—
Pathology Technician	10	1
Senior Pathology Technician	22	0
Dental Therapist	—	19
Dental Hygenist	—	6
Student Dental Surgery Assistant	—	28
Dental Surgery Assistant (unqualified)	—	21
Dental Surgery Assistant	—	129
Senior Dental Surgery Assistant	—	28
Dental Technicians Student B	—	1
Senior Dental Technician	3	1
Chief Dental Technician	2	—
Pharmacy Technician Student A	—	0
Pharmacy Technician Student B	—	9
Pharmacy Technician	4	17
Senior Pharmacy Technician	2	11
Senior Animal Technician	—	1
Cardiographer	—	7
Senior Cardiographer	1	—
Dark Room Technician	12	18
Medical Photographers Trainee A	—	1
Medical Photographers Trainee B	2	—
Photographer	—	2
Senior Photographer I	2	—
Senior Photographer II	1	2
Trainee Dental Auxiliary	3	326
Dental Auxiliary—1	5	1,271
Dental Auxiliary—2	23	430
Dental Auxiliary—3	2	86
Medical Physics Technician IV	7	6
Medical Physics Technician I	5	—
Physiological Measurement Technician Student A	1	1
Physiological Measurement Technician Student B	3	3
Technician	—	5
Senior Technician	1	10
Chief Technician	—	6
Senior Chief Technician	1	1
Anatomical Pathology Technician (unqualifed)	—	2
Anatomical Pathology Technician	2	1
Technician (para 3431 of PTB Handbook)	1	1
Senior Technician	3	1
Trainee Medical Technical Officer	590	988
Medical Technical Officer—1	449	765
Medical Technical Officer—2	1,662	2,209
Medical Technical Officer—3	2,258	1,885
Medical Technical Officer—4	913	535
Medical Technical Officer—5	345	129
Audio-Visual Technician	2	—
Senior Audio-Visual Technician	1	1
Graphic Designer	—	1
Laboratory Aide	—	3
Assistant Technical Officer	377	1,488
Phlebotomist	1	7
Senior Assistant Technical Officer	125	402
Cytology Screener	—	2
Hearing/Vision Screener	—	1
Electrolysis (using Hospital equipment)	—	1
Trainee ODA	3	1
Basic Grade ODA	5	2
Senior ODA	15	5
Other (P&T)	419	329
P&T (Opticians)		
Pre-registration Optometrist	—	3
Dispensing Optician	1	2
Senior Dispensing Optician	—	2
Optometrist	12	11
Senior Optometrist	5	6
Principal Optometrist	—	2
Pre-registration Optometrist	9	30
Optometrist—Grade A	3	2
Optometrist—Grade B	17	30
Optometrist—Grade C	8	4
Others (P&T Optician)	6	4
Others	—	7
Grand Total	23,357	63,536

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

United Kingdom Goods (Purchasing Policy)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidance he gives to local authorities and other Government agencies about the advantages of buying goods manufactured in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department gives no such guidance.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of the full text of the EC decision of March 1990 relating to state subsidy of the nuclear industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: It has been the policy of successive Governments to treat correspondence with the European Commission as confidential.

Electricity

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will estimate the shares of electricity generated by National Power, PowerGen, nuclear power and by others.

Mr. Eggar: According to their respective annual reports for 1991-92, National Power accounts for a 43·6 per cent. share of electricity generated in England and Wales, PowerGen 28 per cent., and Nuclear Electric 18·5 per cent. Others would, therefore, account for 9·9 per cent.

European Structural Fund

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) which county councils and Scottish regional councils have made submissions seeking inclusion of parts of their area as eligible for support under objective 5(b) of the European structural fund;

(2) if he will place in the Library a map showing the parishes or wards covered by the submissions of local authorities in respect of areas for inclusion as being eligible for support under objective 5(b) of the European structural fund.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department has been approached by a number of bodies and individuals, including some county councils and Scottish regional councils, on the question of possible future eligibility under objective 5(b) of the EC structural funds.

Regional Assistance

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 27 November, *Official Report*, column *900*, if he will give the total amount spent by his Department on *(a)* regional selective assistance and *(b)* regional enterprise grants for 1991-92 and the amount intended to be spent in 1992-93.

Mr. Sainsbury: In 1991-92 my Department spent £74,280,000 on regional selective assistance project grants and £7,278,000 on regional enterprise grants.

The amounts intended to be spent in 1992-93 are included in the 1992-93 supply estimates. For regional selective assistance project grants £98,900,000 was allocated, while for regional enterprise grants the amount was £7,760,000.

Israel

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with the European Commission on a draft competition directive covering the boycotts relating to trade with Israel.

Mr. Needham: None. No such directive is under consideration.

Japanese-owned companies

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the number of people employed in Japanese-owned manufacturing industry within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Needham: From information available to my Department, based on estimates given by companies at the time of announcing investments, it is estimated that some 50,000 direct jobs have been created by Japanese manufacturing investment in the United Kingdom.

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to require the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc to publish in full the contracts signed with Japanese Electrical Utilities to reprocess spent nuclear fuel at Sellafield *(a)* for magnox fuel and *(b)* for thermal oxide fuel.

Mr. Eggar: No. Details of reprocessing contracts are a commercial matter for the parties concerned.

Car Imports

Mr. Hague: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on whether the restrictions on the import of cars from Japan will be maintained in 1993.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government have decided that the United Kingdom will remain a restricted market in 1993 and 1994 for the purposes of implementing the agreement entitled the "Elements of Consensus" concluded last year between the European Community and Japan covering imports of cars after 1992. The position of the United Kingdom during the remainder of the period covered by the agreement up to the end of 1999 will be determined in the light of the circumstances at the time. I have placed a copy of the elements of consensus in the House of Commons Library.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he received the document "Plutonium: Deadly Gold of the Nuclear Age", released in December, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Department of Trade and Industry has no record of having received a copy of "Plutonium: Deadly Gold of the Nuclear Age".

Coal Mining

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to prevent large-scale voluntary redundancies at British Coal collieries pre-empting the outcome of his energy review; what discussions officials of his Department have had with British Coal about these matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: British Coal is continuing its normal voluntary redundancy policy. This is an important element in its drive to reduce unit costs and improve the industry's competitiveness and does not pre-empt the outcome of the review.

Oil and Gas Exploration

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to require the environmental implications of oil and gas exploration and production to be fully assessed before further exploration is allowed in United Kingdom coastal waters.

Mr. Eggar: It is our general and established policy, before offering blocks for licence in any part of the United Kingdom continental shelf, to consult relevant statutory and non-statutory bodies in advance of any announcement and to attach licence conditions agreed with such bodies which reflect each block's sensitivities. In the course of this consultation, the environmental implications of oil and gas licensing are assessed on a block-by-block basis.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what environmental criteria are used in deciding the number, identity and distribution of blocks to be offered in the offshore oil and gas production licensing rounds.

Mr. Eggar: The number, identity and distribution of blocks to be offered for licence are decided after consultation with a range of statutory and non-statutory bodies. The environmental implications of licensing are assessed on a block-by-block basis, principally by the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. Their criteria include a range of environmental indicators, including the presence of significant numbers of seabirds, fish and other sea creatures, either seasonally or throughout the year. On the basis of this advice, licence conditions may be attached to individual blocks. In some cases, environmentally highly sensitive blocks may be withdrawn at the consultation stage. In the present, 14th offshore licensing round, as a result of the consultation process, about 30 blocks nominated by oil companies and located in environmentally highly sensitive areas were not offered for licensing.

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how the decommissioning of nuclear-energy producing plants will be funded.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for the operator of the plant in question.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the annual profits and deficits for the British nuclear-generating industry for the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: Nuclear Electric plc, which is the only commercial nuclear generating company in England and Wales, has separately accounted for its operations only since 1989-80. Its annual report and accounts for the years since and including 1989-90 are available in the Library of the House of Commons. The same is true in Scotland of Scottish Nuclear Limited. Responsibility for that company rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Magnox Reactors

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what levels of public expenditure will be required to sustain safety levels throughout the remaining life span of the Magnox reactors.

Mr. Eggar: The continued safe operation of the Magnox stations is the responsibility of Nuclear Electric plc. The company must pay full regard in safety matters to the requirements of the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate. The cost of operating the stations is a commercial matter for Nuclear Electric.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what subsidy is received by Nuclear Electric for the decommissioning of old and potentially unsafe nuclear power stations.

Mr. Eggar: Nuclear Electric plc receives income from electricity sales and a premium financed by the fossil fuel levy paid by electricity consumers. From this income Nuclear Electric will meet its liabilities as they fall due, including those relating to the decommissioning of its stations. The continuing operation of these stations and their eventual decommissioning must meet the stringent safety requirements of the nuclear installations inspectorate.

Newspaper Recycling

Sir John Stanley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made with his proposed offer of financial support for investment in newspaper recycling at Aylesford, Kent.

Mr. Heseltine: Our proposal is to offer a £20 million grant under the assistance for exceptional projects facility to encourage the Swedish paper-making company SCA to invest in a newspaper recycling plant. We decided to offer this assistance because of the very significant environmental benefits which the project will provide. The plant would consume over 400,000 tonnes of newspapers and magazines, making a sizeable contribution to the Government's target to recycle 25 per cent. of household waste by the year 2000.

Our proposed grant needed the approval of the European Commission. After our discussions with the Commission, it has today announced that it can see no objection to our proposed offer. I and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment are delighted to have secured this result. The project is an important environmental project which we very much want to see happen.

The way is now clear for me to seek the authority of the House for the assistance I propose. I will lay before the House a resolution under section 8 (8) of the Industrial Development Act 1982 at the earliest opportunity. I shall then give full details about the project and the benefits it will bring.

Sizewell B

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what expenditure is required to construct the Sizewell B nuclear plant.

Mr. Eggar: The estimated cost to completion of the Sizewell B project is £2,030 million of which, at 30 September 1992, £1,725 million has been committed and £1,548 million spent—all figures are in April 1987 prices. Nuclear Electric plc remains on target to complete the project ahead of time and within budget.

Mr. Peter Butler: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the purpose of the pre-OSART mission to the Sizewell B power station undertaken by a team from the International Atomic Energy Agency in late October and early November; and what were the findings of the mission.

Mr. Heseltine: The IAEA mission, which was invited by Her Majesty's Government at the suggestion of Nuclear Electric, the operators of Sizewell B, reviewed the arrangements for operational safety at the plant. A team of experts from seven countries and from the IAEA, together with observers from a further three countries, looked in depth at nine areas relevant to operational safety.

An official IAEA report will be submitted to Her Majesty's Government in due course. However, in a press statement issued following the mission, the IAEA team leaders stated that the mission had concluded that

"Sizewell B is a well-managed nuclear plant".

The mission also identified

"a number of commendable features in the programme of the power plant".

Some areas were also identified where the team made suggestions for further enhancement of existing good performance.

The IAEA's recommendations and suggestions have been welcomed by the station's management who regard them as opportunities for yet further improvement in the station's operational safety performance.

Copies of the IAEA's and Nuclear Electric's press notices have been placed in the Library of the House.

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he had, at the time of signing public interest immunity certificates on the Matrix Churchill case, on work undertaken on behalf of Her Majesty's Government by defendants on the case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* I have nothing to add to my responses to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) during the debate on 23 November, at column 649. The Scott inquiry has specifically been asked to look at decisions taken by those signing public interest immunity certificates.

Correspondence

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the average time taken by the Ministers in his Department, including himself, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the dispatch of the substantive reply.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* Figures from my Department will be published in the *Official Report*, and be made available to the House Libraries, early next year, showing the volume of ministerial correspondence from hon. Members and members of the public in 1992, the targets set for reply and the percentage of replies sent within target.

Private Detectives

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the purposes for which private detective agencies are engaged by his Department, the procedures used to authorise such engagements, and the expenditure on the engagement of private detective agencies in each of the last two years.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* The information can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Bardsey Island (Exploration)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what environmental impact assessment will be required before any further oil or gas exploration, appraisal or production takes place in block 107/1 off Bardsey Island; and if it will be made publicly available;

(2) if he required a full environmental impact assessment to be conducted before exploratory drilling for oil and gas was allowed off Bardsey Island; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what monitoring his Department is conducting to determine the environmental impact of the oil and gas exploratory drilling operation off Bardsey Island, Wales;

(4) what advice was received by his Department from the Nature Conservancy Council concerning the proposed licensing of blocks 107/1 and 107/6 off Bardsey Island, Wales during the 12th round of oil and gas production licensing.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* Licences awarded in offshore licensing rounds allow the licensee to conduct seismic survey work in the licence area. Further approvals are required before the licensee may drill in the area on either an exploration or an appraisal basis. There is no statutory requirement for an environmental impact assessment—EIA—to be conducted prior to exploration or appraisal drilling, but additional approvals and an EIA are required before a licensee may develop a viable find for commercial production. EIAs will be made publicly available.

In considering whether to offer blocks 107/1 and 107/6, off Bardsey Island, the then Department of Energy took full account of the concerns of the Nature Conservancy Council—NCC—regarding the ecological status of the area. On balance, the evidence did not justify its total exclusion from hydrocarbons exploration, but it was agreed that the blocks should be offered subject to special conditions attached to each licence. The Department of Energy accepted all the special conditions proposed by the NCC and attached these to the licences.

The licensees have observed these conditions. In addition, although no formal EIA was required before exploratory drilling was allowed off Bardsey Island, they commissioned and published an independent appraisal of the area. In consultation with local environmental advisers, such as the Countryside Council for Wales, they have also commissioned independent monitoring of the environmental impact of the well currently being drilled in block 107/01.

Sellafield

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what provisions are being considered to ensure that any workers laid off as a result of delays in the start-up of

operations in the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield are assisted by local initiatives for retraining or redeployment.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

Cumbria training and enterprise council and the local Employment Service deliver a range of employment, enterprise and training measures, to help any person who becomes unemployed at the Sellafield plant.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Court Lists

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement of progress in the establishment of an electronic list distribution system to reduce delay in bringing cases to the courts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Over a number of years, the Lord Chancellor's Department has participated in several initiatives to test the feasibility of distributing the Crown court lists electronically. Recent experiments have aimed at establishing the technical effectiveness of such a system, whether it could meet users' needs and whether there would be widespread demand.

At present the lists are being transmitted from the Central Criminal Court to a number of barristers' chambers via the legal information exchange system. Plans are in hand to extend this experimental system during 1993.

Defamation

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether he has considered the recommendations made by the Supreme Court Procedure Committee about practice and procedure in defamation.

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether he has considered the recommendations made by the Supreme Court Procedure Committee about practice and procedure in defamation.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In February 1990 the Lord Chancellor invited the Supreme Court Procedure Committee to examine the rules that relate to pleadings in actions for libel or slander with a view to recommending such changes as might appear desirable in the interests of reducing the complexity of the procedure without having an adverse effect on the interests of justice. The committee accepted my invitation to set up a working group under the chairmanship of Lord Justice Neill to undertake this task. In July 1991 Lord Justice Neill presented the committee's report to me. The recommendations made by the committee have been of great assistance to me in considering reforms to this branch of the law. I should like to pay tribute to Lord Justice Neill and the other members of the working group for all their hard work in producing the report. The report contains a number of recommendations, including that:

(i) there should be a new procedure for an offer of amends defence with damages to be fixed by a judge;
(ii) judges should be empowered to rule as to whether words complained of are capable of bearing a particular meaning;
(iii) the rule in *Scott v. Sampson*, which prevents the defendant from proving specific discreditable acts in mitigation of damages should be abolished;
(iv) in the case of a foreign publication a plaintiff should be required to prove the relevant foreign law;
(v) generally, the limitation period should be reduced to one year; and
(vi) protection to media reports afforded by section 7 of the 1952 Act should be extended to similar reports from abroad.

I have considered these recommendations very carefully and I have decided to accept them.

The new "offer of amends" defence to defamation claims will enable a defendant to curtail proceedings, by making an offer, where he recognises that the plaintiff has been defamed and is willing to pay damages assessed by the judge.

I have also considered proposals which have been made by Lord Justice Hoffmann and others, for a new summary procedure which would enable the plaintiff to claim damages up to a fixed ceiling. Although the working group did not recommend that these proposals should be adopted, I believe that they would also provide valuable assistance to parties seeking speedy and economic disposal of defamation claims and I have therefore decided to accept them. The offer of amends defence will provide a benefit to defendants in particular, while the summary procedure would offer a counter-balancing benefit to plaintiffs. Implementation of some of these changes may be achieved by amending rules of court. I will invite the Supreme Court Rule Committee to proceed accordingly. Others, however, will require primary legislation, which will be introduced as soon as a suitable opportunity occurs.

Court Fees

Ms. Walley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what representations he has received concerning the proposed increase in court fees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The County Court Fees (Amendment) Order 1992, which revised the fees payable in the county court, came into force on 30 November 1992 in respect of general proceedings and, with effect from 1 April 1993, introduces a fee for proceedings under the Road Traffic Act 1991. There are no plans for immediate increases in other court fees. Representations on the revised county court fees have been received from eight hon. Members, the County Court Users Association and two firms of solicitors.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep Dips

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the names and numbers, if appropriate, of sheep dips which the veterinary medicines directorate has ordered to be withdrawn with effect from March 1993; and if he will make a statement on the reasons for this withdrawal.

Mr. Soames: The veterinary medicines directorate has not ordered the withdrawal of any sheep dip products. As part of the review of long-standing licensed sheep dips which is currently under way, companies have been asked to provide additional data on product ingredients. For the

dips which contain phenols, a commercial decision not to provide the required data has apparently been taken on cost grounds. We understand that such products are therefore being reformulated so as to exclude phenols, or are being withdrawn from the market.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has yet received the report of the veterinary medicines directorate on organophosphorus sheep dips; when he will publish it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the final advice expected from the independent Veterinary Products Committee following its review of licensed sheep dip products. The companies concerned have been asked to progress the additional work requested by the committee as quickly as possible. However the review will not be complete before mid-1993 at the earliest. The findings will be published in summary form.

Tuberculosis

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research has been carried out into alternative and less expensive forms of animal testing for tuberculosis; and with what result.

Mr. Soames: Alternative forms of testing for tuberculosis in cattle and deer are undergoing assessment at the Central Veterinary Laboratory, but are not yet sufficiently developed to warrant field trials. Field trials are continuing to assess the effectiveness of the live test to diagnose tuberculosis in living badgers.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the annual cost of the testing of cattle for tuberculosis.

Mr. Soames: The cost of testing cattle in Great Britain for tuberculosis in the year 1 April 1991 to 31 March 1922 was £7·2 million.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what success the Department has had in its programme for the eradication of tuberculosis in cattle.

Mr. Soames: The Department has an extremely successful record in dealing with tuberculosis in cattle. It was estimated that in 1937 at least 40 per cent. of dairy herds in this country were infected with the disease: in 1991, new cases of tuberculosis were confirmed in only 0·115 per cent. of cattle herds in Great Britain.

Dioxin, Derbyshire

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further information he has relating to the incident involving dioxin in Derbyshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I am very pleased to announce that it is now possible to lift the order under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 placed in March on a farm near Bolsover restricting its agricultural activities because of the presence of unacceptable concentrations of dioxins in milk and meat. Since this problem first became apparent in early 1991, my Department has undertaken extensive studies to investigate the extent and nature of the problem. The Department has already published two major reports giving the details of its investigations and I am pleased to announce that a further report is published today. The results in this latest report show that dioxin concentrations in meat from animals on this farm and milk from two dairy farms nearby have fallen significantly to levels which mean that these foods from the farms are safe to consume.

This announcement is possible following a full assessment of the results and I am placing a report in the Library of the House. The key findings in the report are:

- the dioxins concentrations in the milk samples obtained in August and October from the two dairy farms are below the Maximum Tolerable Concentration previously set by the Ministry and Department of Health;
- the dioxin concentrations in both muscle and liver for animals on the farm on which the FEPA Order had been placed have fallen significantly to levels similar to those found in animals from other farmers;
- the dioxins in soil samples from the farm show little change but concentrations in the herbage have fallen considerably.

These results are very encouraging, but my Department will continue to carry out some monitoring in the area to ensure that there is no recurrence of the problem. This incident also demonstrates the ability of the food surveillance programme undertaken by my Department to identify problems of chemical contamination of the food supply and our determination to ensure the fullest possible protection of the public.

At the same time, I pay tribute to the farmers whose livelihood and peace of mind have been greatly disturbed by this incident. I am very grateful for the co-operation that they have shown my Department throughout what has been a very difficult period for them.

Dietary Supplements

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the prevalence of unsubstantiated claims of health benefits made in the United Kingdom about specific vitamin, mineral and other dietary supplements, and which were not covered by existing legislation.

Mr. Soames: The Food Advisory Committee examined these issues in its recent review of food labelling and advertising and made recommendations for some tightening of controls on the claims which may be made for foods, including food supplements. My right hon. Friend is, however, expecting proposals from the European Commission shortly which will include controls on claims made on food labels, and we need to await those before deciding the way forward.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has personally had with Ministers in other European Governments in an effort to enlist their support for his policy on the continuing availability of vitamin, mineral and other dietary supplements.

Mr. Soames: My judgment is that the personal intervention of a United Kingdom Minister would be premature at this stage. Officials have established the broad views of other member states in discussion in Brussels and will seek to persuade others of the merits of the United Kingdom view as negotiations proceed.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he is expecting to receive from the European Commission a draft of the forthcoming directive on dietary supplements.

Mr. Soames: The timing of proposals is a matter for the Commission, but I have no information to suggest that any proposal on this subject is imminent.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on which companies currently market in the United Kingdom vitamin, mineral and other dietary supplements in such high concentrations that they might reasonably be considered to be potentially hazardous; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The question of potentially toxic doses of vitamins and minerals is a complex scientific issue which is currently being reviewed by the European Commission's scientific committee for food. At present dietary supplements must comply with food safety requirements set out in our food legislation which also enables us to take action to prevent unsafe products being sold.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his proposals for HLCA payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I refer to the reply given to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) on 10 December, *Official Report*, column *757*.

Farm Animals, Spain

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements he proposes to make for export of farm animals to Spain.

Mr. Gummer: As announced in the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) on 10 December, at columns *762-63*, new arrangements for safeguarding the welfare of animals in transport will apply in 1993. In accordance with Community law, there will be veterinary inspection of animals for export at the start of the journey.

Under the current arrangements, licences for export of animals for rearing or slaughter in Spain have been withheld because of doubts about compliance with Community welfare legislation in that country. The licensing system will no longer apply from January 1993, but these controls will be replaced by specific safeguards for ensuring that animals exported for slaughter in Spain are slaughtered in accordance with Community welfare legislation. Under these arrangements, any animals from the United Kingdom for immediate slaughter in Spain will only be sent to slaughterhouses that have been confirmed by the Spanish authorities as meeting Community welfare requirements. These arrangements are the subject of a formal agreement between the United Kingdom and Spanish authorities and will be kept under careful review.

Beef Special Premium

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, if he will apply the 90-head limit on the beef special premiums per age group of animals, and not on a per farm basis.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to the answer, 18 June 1992, c. 626]:* For the beef special premium, the most significant change in Great Britain is that the new scheme will be introduced on-farm from March 1993. This will give British beef producers the maximum possible flexibility to take advantage of the new, higher rate of premium. This can now be granted up to twice in the life of each animal: the first premium between the ages of 10 and 22 months and the second premium once it has reached 23 months. The headage limit of 90 animals per producer per year will apply separately to claims for first and second premium. Claims will also be limited by stocking density and by a regional ceiling. The exact rate of premium for the 1993 scheme year will depend on the green rate on 1 January 1993, but if currencies were aligned today the premium would be worth about £56·87.

There will be tough anti-fraud measures to ensure that we can identify eligible animals. Details will be announced early in the new year.

The current arrangements for claiming premium at slaughter and at live markets will continue broadly as they are at present until 31 March 1993.

The EC rules for the new scheme do not allow payments of premium to be made before 1 November in the year of claim, when they provide for payment of an advance of 60 per cent. of the combined value of first and second premium claims. The balance will be paid before 30 June of the following year. These arrangements will apply to claims at slaughter until 31 March 1993 as well as to claims under the new on-farm scheme.

Producers claiming premium at slaughter will be entitled to one premium claim only on each animal and this will count against the 90-head limit on claims for the first premium. Claims at slaughter until 31 March 1993 will also count towards producers' stocking density for 1993 and towards the regional ceiling.

The new suckler cow premium scheme will be largely unchanged. The three main changes are the introduction of individual quotas; stocking density limits on producers' claims; and new arrangements for the timing of payment, which will be the same as for the beef special premium scheme. The EC rules allow some flexibility in fixing the application period and this will be announced later. The exact rate of premium for the 1993 scheme year will depend on the green rate on 1 January 1993, but if currencies were aligned today the premium would be worth about £66·35.

EMPLOYMENT

Distributive Industries Training Trust

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what sums have been paid out in the form of grants by the Distributive Industries Training Trust in each year since its inception; and to what organisations these were paid.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Employment Department has no supervisory responsibilities for the Distributive Industries Training Trust. Inquiries about the payment of grants should be directed to the managing trustees.

Earnings

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish a table giving the proportions of full-time male manual workers, full-time male non-manual workers and all full-time male workers with earnings excluding overtime of less than *(a)* £190 per week and *(b)* £200 per week in (i) west midlands region, (ii) west midlands metropolitan county, (iii) Hereford and Worcester, (iv) Shropshire, (v) Staffordshire and (vi) Warwickshire for 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is contained in the table.

Full-time men on adult rates whose pay was unaffected by absence: proportion with average gross weekly earnings excluding overtime below the following amounts

(percentages) April 1992

	Manual		*Non-manual*		*All*	
	£190	*£200*	*£190*	*£200*	*£190*	*£200*
West Midlands region	33·8	40·6	13·9	16·4	24·2	28·9
West Midlands MC	29·0	35·6	12·7	15·2	20·9	25·4
Hereford and Worcester	47·6	53·6	13·2	15·1	31·7	35·8
Shropshire	41·1	48·1	13·2	15·9	29·5	34·6
Staffordshire	38·4	47·2	17·8	20·5	29·2	35·2
Warwickshire	27·7	32·0	15·5	17·6	21·6	24·8

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish a table giving proportions of full-time adult manual workers, full-time adult non-manual workers and all adult workers with *(a)* earnings excluding overtime less than £190 per week and *(b)* less than £200 per week in (i) west midlands region, (ii) west midlands metropolitan county, (iii) Hereford and Worcester, (iv) Shropshire, (v) Staffordshire and (vi) Warwickshire for 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is contained in the table.

Full-time employees on adult rates whose pay was unaffected by absence: proportion with average gross weekly earnings excluding overtime below the following amounts

April 1992

	Manual		*Non-manual*		*All*	
	£190	*£200*	*£190*	*£200*	*£190*	*£200*
West Midlands region	42·1	48·5	28·2	32·5	34·0	39·2
West Midlands metropolitan county	37·1	43·6	25·7	30·4	30·3	35·6
Hereford and Worcester	55·5	61·1	29·4	33·3	40·3	45·0
Shropshire	48·8	55·5	33·8	37·6	40·7	45·8
Staffordshire	46·8	54·4	32·7	36·6	39·0	44·6
Warwickshire	37·1	41·4	29·4	33·3	32·5	36·6

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish a table giving the proportions of full-time female manual workers, full-time female non-manual workers and all full-time female workers with earnings excluding overtime of less than *(a)* £190 per week and *(b)* £200 per week in (i) west midlands region, (ii) west midlands metropolitan county, (iii) Hereford and Worcester, (iv) Shropshire, (v) Staffordshire and (vi) Warwickshire for 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is contained in the table.

Full-time women on adult rates whose pay was unaffected by absence: proportion with average gross weekly earnings excluding overtime below the following amounts:

(Percentages)—April 1992

	Manual		*Non-manual*		*All*	
	£190	*£200*	*£190*	*£200*	*£190*	*£200*
West Midlands region	81·1	85·9	45·4	52·0	53·1	59·3
West Midlands Metropolitan County	77·3	83·1	42·0	49·4	49·1	56·2
Hereford/Worcester	89·2	93·1	45·8	51·8	55·2	60·8
Shropshire	91·2	96·5	55·6	60·7	63·1	68·3
Staffordshire	81·1	84·2	49·7	55·2	57·8	62·6
Warwickshire	83·3	87·9	48·9	55·4	56·5	62·5

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish a table giving proportions of full-time adult manual workers, full-time adult non-manual workers and all full-time adult workers *(a)* with earnings including overtime of less than £190 per week and *(b)* less than £200 per week in (i) west midlands region, (ii) west midlands metropolitan county, (iii) Hereford and Worcester, (iv) Shropshire, (v) Staffordshire and (vi) Warwickshire for 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is contained in the table.

Full-time employees on adult rates whose pay was unaffected by absence: proportion with average gross weekly earnings below the following amounts

	(Percentages) April 1992					
	Manual		Non-manual		All	
	£190	£200	£190	£200	£190	£200
West midlands region	31·7	36·8	26·3	30·4	28·5	33·1
West midlands MC	28·8	33·6	23·9	28·2	25·9	30·4
Hereford/Worcester	38·9	46·9	28·3	32·1	32·7	38·3
Shropshire	34·3	40·8	30·2	34·2	32·1	37·2
Staffordshire	35·3	40·2	30·6	34·3	32·7	36·9
Warwickshire	28·6	32·0	27·2	31·1	27·8	31·5

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for average earnings for men and for women in age groups 16 and 17, 18 to 24, 25 years and over and for all ages.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is contained in the table.

Average gross weekly earnings of full time employees whose pay was not affected by absence

Age group	April 1992	
	Men (£)	Women (£)
Under 18	113·8	108·8
18 to 24	217·3	182·1
25 and over	354·5	256·2
All ages	335·7	238·8

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish a table giving proportions of full-time male manual workers, full-time male non-manual workers and all full-time male workers with earnings including overtime of less than £190 per week in *(a)* west midlands region, *(b)* west midlands metropolitan county, *(c)* Hereford and Worcester, *(d)* Shropshire, *(e)* Staffordshire and *(f)* Warwickshire for 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is contained in the table.

Full-time men on adult rates whose pay was unaffected by absence: Proportion with average gross weekly earnings below the following amounts

	Percentages—April 1992		
	Manual £190	Non-manual £190	All £190
West Midlands region	22·5	12·1	17·5
West Midlands MC	20·0	11·2	15·6
Hereford and Worcester	30·0	11·8	21·6
Shropshire	24·7	9·3	18·2
Staffordshire	25·4	15·5	21·0
Warwickshire	19·7	14·0	16·8

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give the proportions of part-time female manual workers, part-time female non-manual workers and all female part-time workers with earnings excluding overtime of less than £5·20 per hour and £5·30 per hour in (i) west midlands region, (ii) west midlands metropolitan county, (iii) Hereford and Worcester, (iv) Shropshire, (v) Staffordshire and (vi) Warwickshire for 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information nearest to that requested is contained in the table.

Part-time women on adult rates whose pay was unaffected by absence: proportion with average gross hourly earnings excluding overtime below the following amounts

	(Percentages) April 1992					
	Manual		Non-manual		All	
	£4·80	£5·40	£4·80	£5·40	£4·80	£5·40
West midlands region	90·0	95·4	62·2	72·0	73·6	81·6
West midlands MC	87·9	95·9	57·6	69·8	70·1	80·6
Hereford and Worcestershire	96·5	97·7	65·5	71·3	75·8	80·0
Shropshire	94·8	96·6	[1]—	[1]—	77·7	82·4
Staffordshire	91·4	95·2	69·3	76·2	80·3	85·6
Warwickshire	87·5	89·1	[1]—	[1]—	74·1	81·1

[1] "—" denotes sample number too low or standard error too high for reliable estimate.
Source: New Earnings Survey.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish a table giving proportions of full-time female manual workers, full-time female non-manual workers and all full-time female workers with earnings including overtime of less than £190 per week in *(a)* west midlands region, *(b)* west midlands metropolitan county, *(c)* Hereford and Worcester, *(d)* Shropshire, *(e)* Staffordshire and *(f)* Warwickshire for 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is contained in the table.

Full-time women on adult rates whose pay was unaffected by absence: proportion with average gross weekly earnings below the following amounts

(Percentages)	April 1992		
	Manual £190	Non-manual £190	All £190
West Midlands region	74·7	43·4	50·1
West Midlands metropolitan county	72·3	39·9	46·4
Hereford and Worcester	76·5	45·0	51·8
Shropshire	87·7	52·3	59·8
Staffordshire	75·8	48·1	55·2
Warwickshire	72·7	45·9	51·8

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Construction Site Injuries

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful prosecutions took place in each of the last five years as a result of investigations into deaths and major injuries on construction sites in the north-west.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many investigations were undertaken into deaths and major injuries on construction sites in the north-west in each of the last five years by *(a)* the Health and Safety Executive and *(b)* the police.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information for the Health and Safety Executive's north-west region is provided in the following table.

Number of accidents, incidents and dangerous occurrences on construction sites which were investigated by HSE inspectors in the north west region (a) 1987-88—1991-92[1] (b)

Year (b)	*Total*
1987-88	261
1988-89	284
1989-90	271
1990-91	229
[1]1991-92	176

(a) HSE's administration areas covering Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Cheshire.
(b) Years commencing 1st April.
[1] Provisional.

Questions about the work of police forces are for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many deaths and major injuries have occurred on construction sites in the north-west in each of the last five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The relevant information is given in the table.

Injuries in the construction industry in the north west[1] as reported to HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorate[2] and local authorities 1987-88—1991-92[5][3]

Year[3]	*Fatals*			*Majors*		
	Employees[4]	*Self employed*	*Members of public*	*Employees[4]*	*Self employed*	*Members of public*
1987-88	15	3	1	308	37	15
1988-89	10	5	2	364	67	18
1989-90	7	7	1	399	65	13
1990-91	13	3	—	373	77	12
1991-92[5]	14	1	1	287	79	15

[1] Injuries occurring HSE's administration areas covering Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Cheshire.
[2] Data for 1990-91 and 1991-92 includes injuries reported to HSE's Quarries Inspectorate.
[3] Years commencing 1st April.
[4] Including trainees.
[5] Provisional.

Training

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make public the monthly reports of supply and demand of youth training places in each training and enterprise council area which she announced she was to receive in her press release of 7 July.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already announced the estimated numbers of young people seeking training at the national level in a reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 1 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *127-28*. Figures for the supply of places are not available. Estimates of demand for places at local level vary in precision and reliability. Changes are being introduced to improve the information we receive and my right hon. Friend will be considering what further information to make available in the light of advice on the reliability of disaggregated statistics.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds in Lancashire are currently awaiting a youth training place.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the estimated numbers of young people seeking training at national level in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member of Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 1 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *127-28*. Estimates of demand for places at local level vary in precision and reliability. Changes are being introduced to improve the information my right hon. Friend receives. In November, TECs' planned provision for training exceeded the number of guarantee young people seeking training by about 7,000.

Unemployment

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list in rank order the travel-to-work areas in the south-east region which have consistently recorded an unemployment rate above the national average for the previous 12 months.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each European Community country *(a)* the numbers of people unemployed for the latest month for which comparable figures are available and *(b)* the percentage of the work force which this represents.

Mr. McLoughlin: Comparable estimates on the numbers of people unemployed in European Community countries are not available on a monthly basis.

The following table provides the extent of the readily available information on rates.

Comparable seasonally adjusted unemployment rates in EC countries (OECD standardised rates)[1]

Country	*Unemployment rate*	*Month*
Spain	17·5	May
Ireland	16·6	November
France	10·3	September
United Kingdom	10·2	October
Italy	9·9	July
Denmark[1]	9·6	October
Belgium	8·1	October
Greece[3]	7·0	1990
Netherlands	6·8	September
Germany[2]	4·7	September
Portugal	4·1	August
Luxembourg[1]	2·0	October

[1] For those countries for which no OECD standardised rates are available, similar harmonised rates compiled by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT).

[2] There are no reliable figures available as yet for a unified Germany. The rate quoted is for what was formerly West Germany.

[3] There are no recent comparable monthly figures available for Greece. The figure quoted is for the spring of 1990.

Enterprise Allowances

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of enterprise allowances *(a)* started, *(b)* completed, *(c)* carried through to start-up and *(d)* surviving more than 12 months after start-up in England and Wales in 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what is the equivalent information for the northern region and the Tyneside training and enterprise council.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of enterprise allowances —renamed business start-up allowances from 1991-92— started is set out in the table. The number of those carried through to start-up is not an applicable measure, as allowances are awarded on start-up. The number of completions and those surviving more than 12 months is not available.

Enterprise/business start-up allowances awarded

	1990-91	*1991-92*
England and Wales	54,400	45,500
Northern region	3,600	2,800
Tyneside TEC	1,215	641

Building Industry

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the companies prosecuted since 1987 in the building and construction industry under health and safety legislation, where injuries or fatalities have resulted, by the size of the companies in terms of the number of employees employed in the building and construction industry.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps are being taken by the Government to reduce the number of deaths at the workplace in the building and construction industry.

Mr. McLoughlin: Prime responsibility for health and safety at workplaces, including those in the building and construction industry, rests with employers and others on site.

The Government and the Health and Safety Commission—HSC—recognise the need to promote long lasting changes in the construction industry. Indeed, the HSC was preparing proposals to improve the management of health and safety in the industry well before the European Commission began to develop its temporary or mobile construction sites directive. Following adoption of this directive in June of this year, the HSC published a major consultative document on proposed new Construction (Design and Management) Regulations and an approved code of practice, a copy of which is in the Library. The proposals affect everyone who can contribute to the improvement of health and safety standards on site and their coming into force at the end of next year should reduce significantly the numbers of deaths and injuries at the workplace in the industry.

The Construction (Head Protection) Regulations 1990 which require the wearing of suitable head protection at construction activities came into force on 30 March 1990 and have already resulted in a significant reduction in head injuries.

Health and Safety Executive inspectors continue to make visits to construction activities for a variety of purposes, including preventive inspection and the investigation of accidents, and take whatever action is necessary to ensure compliance with the relevant health and safety legislation. There is a programme of initiatives, most recently including the roofwork campaign.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the number of prosecutions undertaken for breaches of the health and safety legislation in the building and construction industry for each year since 1970.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information is provided in the following table. Analysis of prosecution action taken, by industrial sector, is not available for years prior to 1981.

Prosecution action taken by HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorates for all breaches of health and safety legislation occurring in the construction industry, 1981 to 1991-92[4]

Year[1]	*[3]Number of informations laid*	*Number of convictions*	*Average fine per conviction £*
1981	605	531	218
1982	856	734	219
1983	727	651	262
1984	669	590	345
1985	717	577	433
January to March 1986	158	128	436
1986-87	624	461	488
1987-88	759	654	471
1988-89	685	599	580
1989-90	781	658	762
1990-91[2]	746	600	857
1991-92[4,2]	738	601	1,042

[1] 1981-85 calendar years.
1986-87 onwards years commencing 1 April.

[2] Figures for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92[4] include action taken by the quarries inspectorate.

[3] Informations laid relate to single breaches of Health and Safety legislation.

[4] Provisional.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workers in the building and construction industry have died while in the workplace *(a)* in 1987-88 and *(b)* 1991-92.

Mr. McLoughlin: The statistics requested are provided in the table.

Number of fatalities occurring within the construction industry[1] during the years 1987-88 and 1991-92[3] as reported to enforcement authorities[2]

	1987-88	1991-92[3]
Employees	103	82
Self-employed	40	16
All workers	143	98

[1] As defined by Standard Industrial Classifiction (SIC) division 5.
[2] Under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.
[3] Provisional.

Health and Safety

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the companies which have been prosecuted for breach of health and safety regulations since 1987 distinguishing those in which fatalities have resulted, and those in which injuries have occurred.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested. However, between 1987-88 and 1991-92[1] 12,037 information were laid by the Health and Safety Executive for breaches of health and safety regulations, with a further 2,814 laid by local authorities between 1987-88 and 1990-91; figures for 1991-92 not yet available.

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which leaflets published by the Health and Safety Executive are available in languages other than English; and if she will list the languages in which they are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places the responsibility for the provision of necessary information to employees upon employers. This reflects the need for information to relate to the work in hand and the practical difficulty of providing information about hazard in the numerous minority languages spoken in the workplace.

The Health and Safety Executive has recently published a booklet "Health and Safety in Great Britain"; it is available free in all European Community Languages. A Welsh language version of the poster "Health and Safety Law—What you should know" is available in Welsh and three leaflets in the agricultural series have also been produced in Welsh. The HSE has undertaken to produce its booklet "HSE and you", which is addressed to the citizen, in a number of minority languages.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received from British Sikhs concerning possible exemptions to headgear regulations under the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received a number of representations from Sikh organisations and others on this issue, to which she and Ministers of this Department have responded individually.

Postal Ballots (Funding)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she consulted trades unions about her proposal to end funding of postal ballots and to drop funding of training through the Trades Union Congress.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Trade unions have been given as much notice as possible of the decision to end public subsidy of trade union ballots and training of officials, and the grants are being phased out gradually to allow the trade unions time to adjust and plan accordingly. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to the general secretary of the TUC to inform him of the decision on 10 December and met him and other representatives of the TUC on 14 December to listen to their views on this matter.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she decided to end funding for trade union ballots and training; and how much expenditure she expects to save.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The final decision to end public subsidy for trade union ballots and the training of officials was taken after this year's Autumn Statement. Expenditure for the two schemes together will amount to some £5·6 million in 1992-93. Full savings will not be made immediately, as the schemes in question are being phased out over three years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the cost has been each year to public funds of trade union ballots and of trade union training.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is set out in the table.

Cost to Public Funds of Trade Union ballots and of Trade Union Training

	Expenditure (£000's)	
Financial Year	*Trade Union Education and Training Grant (TUET)*	*Trade Union Ballot Funding Scheme (TUBFS)*
1976-77	400	—
1977-78	641	—
1978-79	627	—
1979-80	1,871	—
1980-81	1,701	—
1981-82	1,872	13
1982-83	1,633	52
1983-84	1,586	60
1984-85	1,583	73
1985-86	1,753	1,681
1986-87	1,774	599
1987-88	457	1,126
1988-89	1,064	808
1989-90	1,825	2,091
1990-91	1,927	2,933
1991-92	2,022	4,682
[1]1992-93	1,978	3,600

[1] (anticipated).

Notes:
1. All figures rounded to nearest £1,000.
2. The Trade Union Education and Training grant was funded jointly by Department of Employment and Department of Education and Science (DES) until, and including, 1987-88. Figures quoted for the relevant years cover total Government expenditure.
3. All details of Department of Employment payments were taken from the Department's Appropriation Account for the relevant year. Details of DES TUET expenditure were provided by the DES.
4. TUET payments began in 1976-77, and TUBFS payments in 1981-82.

Pit Closures

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her estimate of the national multiplier effect on *(a)* industry related and *(b)* service sector jobs, per redundant miner, as a consequence of the pit closure programme.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department's views on the effects of the possible pit closures on employment levels in other occupations are set out in a memorandum for the Employment Select Committee which has been placed in the Library.

Home Workers

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) when she proposes to publish leaflets containing advice and guidance for home workers; and in what languages she intends to publish them;

(2) when she intends to publish advice and guidance for employers of home workers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Advice to home workers and their employers is given in the Department of Employment booklet "Be Flexible—A Guide to Flexible Working", which was published in March 1992. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to issue versions in other languages.

Scottish Projects

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to her answer of 8 December, *Official Report*, columns *619-20*, if she will list the successful Scottish projects, including the one in Strathclyde which was awarded the sum of £142,336.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The projects which were successful in Scotland under the NOW initiative are as follows:

COTHROM
"COTHROM"
Save the Children Fund
"The Gate Programme"
Stirling Womens Technology Centre
"Telematics and Telecommunications"
Central Regional Council
"The Power Project"
Telford College
"Women in Construction"
Jewel/Esk Valley College
"National Certificate in Electronic Engineering for Women"
Lothian Regional Council
"Teleworking Mode Demonstration Project"
Dunbartonshire Enterprise
"European Women in Tourism"
Scottish Enterprises Foundation
"Stirling Enterprise Training Transfer"
Stirling University
"Action Learning for Business Growth"

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Debt Reduction

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish for 1989, 1990 and 1991 a breakdown of the write-offs and debt reduction instruments given in note 2 of "British Aid Statistics 1987-88 to 1991-92", identifying each element separately and including *(a)* debt write-off, *(b)* debt rescheduling and *(c)* bank reserves held as provision against bad debts.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The requested breakdown of the figures in note 2 of "British Aid Statistics" is:

£ million	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Write-offs	1,280	2,650	230
Debt reduction instruments	—	2,930	850
Write-offs and debt reduction instruments	1,280	5,580	1,080

Debt rescheduling does not affect the net banking flows, as no net repayment is involved.

Bank reserves held as provision against bad debts also do not affect the net banking flows, as loans are reported gross of such provisions.

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the amount of food aid currently available to feed the people of Somalia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The main problem in Somalia is not the amount of food aid potentially available for famine relief, but the difficulty of delivering this food to starving people in the midst of continuing war and civil conflict. It was in explicit recognition of this problem that the United Nations decided recently to dispatch troops to Somalia to help with the humanitarian relief operation. Food aid is now being released from Mogadishu for distribution under the protection of United States troops. Food aid commitments to Somalia since January 1992 total some 500,000 tonnes, of which nearly 60 per cent. has been already delivered. A further 20 per cent. is en route to Somalia to be delivered as soon as the right conditions for distribution prevail.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the effectiveness and efficiency of the European Community and British food aid effort in Somalia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Continuing security problems have hampered the effectiveness and efficiency of all donor activities in Somalia. The recent deployment of United Nations troops in Somalia is accelerating delivery of humanitarian relief, hitherto blocked by the actions of local warring factions, including food aid funded under British and European Community programmes.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 9 December, *Official Report*, column *675*, what representatives he has sent to regions other than the south and centre of Somalia in order to assess the current needs within the situation of relative stability and to prepare proposals for a specific British contribution to reconstruction.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have already made it clear that we are prepared to contribute, principally through British

non-governmental organisations, to reconstruction and rehabilitation work in the north of Somalia, through our humanitarian assistance programme and subject to being satisfied over the security situation. We also expect to be involved in such work in other parts of the country once conditions allow, as part of a comprehensive and integrated rehabilitation and construction plan that will need to be drawn up by the international community for a post-conflict Somalia.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 9 December, *Official Report*, column *675*, what specific contribution Her Majesty's Government have offered to make towards the United Nations plan for rehabilitation and institution rebuilding in the north of Somalia (Republic of Somaliland).

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* The United Nations has not been able to develop its proposed strategy for rehabilitation and institution building in northern Somalia because of insecurity in the region and elsewhere in the country. We hope implementation of Security Council resolution 794 will enable it to do so. We have made it clear to United Nations agencies and NGOs operating in the north that we are ready to help.

Bosnia

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make Mr. Tim Lankester's report on Bosnia, dated 30 November, available to voluntary organisations concerned with aid to Bosnia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The report by Mr. Tim Lankester is available to any interested party from ODA's information department. It was also covered in *The Independent* newspaper of 11 December.

Sudan

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the amount of financial aid given to Sudan in each of the last three years; and for what assistance or projects this aid has been spent.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The table shows bilateral development and humanitarian aid to Sudan for financial years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92. In January 1991 British bilateral development assistance to Sudan was terminated for political and economic reasons including Sudan's record on human rights. There was, however, some residual expenditure in 1991-92.

British aid to Sudan

£ thousands

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Bilateral development aid	17,768	15,962	3,038
Humanitarian assistance	7,675	8,281	14,423
Total	25,443	24,243	17,461

Development projects have been funded principally in renewable natural resources, energy, railways, and education.

Forests

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he will take to ensure that there is a reduction of deforestation in third world countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: To help forestry in developing countries we have over 200 projects either under way or in preparation at a total cost to the aid programme of about £160 million. We are also working to improve the effectiveness of the International Tropical Timber Organisation and the tropical forestry action programme in promoting the sustainable use of tropical forests, and to ensure that the statement of principles on the sustainable management of the world's forests agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio last June is followed up with effective action and an international review process.

Angola

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much Government aid has been given to Angola in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* Bilateral Government aid to Angola in each of the last five years was as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	0·471
1988-89	1·140
1989-90	0·731
1990-91	1·530
1991-92	1·278

So far this financial year we have spent £1·075 million. Our aid is mainly in the form of English language teaching, training awards, small projects, electoral assistance and emergency relief; £0·5 million has been pledged for the repatriation of Angolan refugees.

The security situation is affecting our work. At present we have no long-term aid personnel in Angola and do not contemplate sending any, other than for relief work, until the security situation improves.

Non-governmental Organisations

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the non-governmental organisations in receipt of grants from his Department for each year since 1990; and what was the size of each grant.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[pursuant to his reply, 16 November 1992, c. 60-62]:* The details of all grants to non-governmental organisations for 1991-92 are set out in the table.

1991-92 Direct grants to non-governmental organisations
Amount of direct grant awarded in financial year 1991-92

Voluntary organisation	*£*
Action Aid	1,508,340
Action Disability and Development	192,919
Action Health 2000	5,000
Afghan Aid	1,500,000

Voluntary organisation	£
Africa Now	41,245
Aga Khan Foundation	1,650,981
Al-Ul-Bayt (Islamic Centre)	170,000
AHRTAG	335,391
Alternative for India Development	74,405
AMREF	174,690
ApT Design and Development	91,375
APTT Trust-UK	3,007
Association for Consumer Research	59,362
Association of Pioneer Rescue	20,000
British Executive Service	643,584
British Red Cross Society	15,566,649
British Refugee Council	12,000
Bureau for Overseas Medical	7,114
Business in the Community	30,499
Busoga Trust	46,334
Catholic Fund for Overseas Development	6,438,956
Cambodia Trust	155,000
CARE	12,931,322
Catholic Institute for International Relations	1,521,320
Charities Aid Foundation	225,934
Child to Child	7,500
Christian Aid	10,095,546
Christian Outreach	482,654
Christians Abroad	22,056
Co-operation For Development	547,485
CODA International Training	32,390
Commonwealth Foundation	5,000
Commonwealth Human Ecology	5,423
Commonwealth TUC	108,856
Concern	3,096,207
Concern Universal	109,000
Conservation Foundation	46,172
Consumer Research Laboratory	5,799
Cusichaca Project Trust	50,000
Duke of Edinburgh's Award	42,665
Durham-Lesotho Link	30,954
Educ in World Citizen Council	4,000
Euro Action Acord	1,898,378
FARM	473,647
Feed The Children	437,527
Feed The Minds	7,677
Find Your Feet	2,322
Food for Hungry International	25,540
Forum	10,000
Friends of Urambo and Mwanhala	7,473
Friends of Conservation	58,300
GOAL	75,000
Gurkha Welfare Trust	133,539
Halo Trust	60,000
Harold MacMillan Trust	30,000
Harvest Help	22,846
Health Aid Moyo	50,000
Health Unlimited	329,469
Hedley Roberts Trust	16,340
Help the Aged	353,558
Henry Doubleday Research Association	16,608
IUCN	39,740
IBT Productions Ltd	40,000
Impact Foundation	4,837
India Development Group	33,332
International Year of Shelter	90,533
International Council of Bird Preservation	39,000
Intercare	38,723
Intermediate Technology Development	3,131,392
International Agricultural Training Programme	45,001
International Christian Relief	50,000
International Trust for Nature	2,658
International Extension College	528,570
International Institute for Environment and Development	484,366
International Planned Parenthood Federation	7,505,053
Iraqui Civilian	624,500
Iraqui Human Relief Committee	150,000
Joint Mission Hospital Equipment Board	92,038
Joe Homan Trust	14,853
King Mahendra Trust	14,750
Kurdish Relief Organisation	181,600
Kurdistan Reconstruction Organisation	100,000
Leonard Cheshire Foundation	11,950
Living Earth	79,550
Marie Stopes International	997,367
Medical Aid for Iraq	100,000
Medical Aid for Palestinians	39,915
Methodist Church Overseas	5,115
Nairobi Hospice Charitable Trust	78,348
National Association of Women's Organisation	24,525
Natue Slim (UK)	20,000
New Age Access	19,500
Ockenden Venture	244,037
Operation Raleigh	1,480
Opportunities for Women	1,208
Order of St. John	228,706
Overseas Development Institute	1,482,137
OXFAM	7,104,289
Plan International	409,665
Plunkett International	9,000
Population Concern	304,415
Project Mala	71,740
Quaker Peace 7 Service	4,699
Queen Elizabeth House	12,750
Ranfurly Library Service	51,203
RNIB	454
Royal Botanic Gardens Kew	17,737
Royal Commonwealth Society	190,195
Royal Geographical Society	12,040
Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents	505
Ryder Cheshire Mission	115,872
Special Projects in Christian Missionary Areas	21,892
Semi Arid Lands Training Livestock Improvement Centres	18,505
Salvation Army	100,000
Samburu Aid in Africa	10,600
Save the Children Fund	14,914,363
Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund	108,638
Scripture Union	37,111
Send a Cow	23,332
Skillshare Africa	1,262,295
SOS Sahel International	283,020
St. John's Ambulance	6,980
Tanzania Development Trust	50,506
Teaching Aids at Low Cost	309
Tear Fund	77,454
Thompson Foundation	7,800
Tiverton Kabale	6,000
Toc H	9,053
Trade UN International Research and Education Group	3,320
Traidcraft Exchange	122,977
Trax Program Support	11,287
Uganda Society for Disabled Children	157,500
UK Foundation for the People in the South Pacific	145,062
UKJAID	45,000
UNA International Service	760,319
Urban Aid	32,543
Urban Foundation	12,000
Vetaid	63,755
Village Service Trust	6,402
Voluntary Christian Service	5,677
Voluntary Service Overseas	12,874,139
Water Aid	770,310
Womankind	78,460
World Conservation Monitoring	91,500
World University Service	1,412,026
World Vision of Britain	1,294,959
Worldwide Fund for Nature	1,400,552
Y-Care International	252,136
You and Me	28,000
Zimbabwe Trust	267,465
Zoological Society of London	160,000
TOTAL	123,827,933

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Intergovernmental Agreements

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the proposal by Mr. Jacques Delors that the European Court could oversee intergovernmental agreements under the Maastricht treaty; what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to Mr. Delors on his proposal; and if he will place in the Library a copy of the relevant documents.

Mr. Goodlad: In a recent speech on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the European Court of Justice, the President of the Commission expressed the hope that extensive recourse would be had to the possibility of conferring on the court jurisdiction regarding the interpretation and application of international conventions in the field of justice and home affairs. Article K.3(2)*(c)* of the treaty on European union allows such jurisdiction to be conferred on the Court in relation to a convention concluded under title VI of the treaty if the convention so stipulates.

This will, therefore, be a matter for member states to consider when negotiating any such convention. Unanimity would be needed to include such a provision. No representations have been made to the President of the Commission on this matter. A copy of the speech in question has been placed in the Library of the House.

UNESCO

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the sum total of UNESCO expenditure in the United Kingdom *(a)* during 1991 and *(b)* since 1985 to date.

Mr. Goodlad: According to UNESCO statistics, the total of the organisation's expenditure—to the nearest thousand pounds—in the United Kingdom in 1991 was £4,780,000, and from 1985 to 1991 inclusive was £30,626,000. No figures are available for 1992. They include UNESCO coupons redeemed in the United Kingdom, but not payments to United Kingdom nationals employed by UNESCO.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what account he has taken of the report by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, "An Agenda for Peace", in considering when to put forward the United Kingdom's application to rejoin UNESCO.

Mr. Goodlad: We do not believe there is any direct link between the Secretary-General's report and our consideration of UNESCO membership. It has, therefore, not figured in our thinking on any resumption of United Kingdom membership.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, which of the nine objections put forward in the United Kingdom's notice of withdrawal from UNESCO in 1984 by the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs are still held by the British Government.

Mr. Goodlad: We acknowledge progress made by UNESCO towards reform. However, we believe that scope remains for further programme concentration—point (i) of the then Secretary of State's letter of 5 December 1984 to the then director-general of UNESCO.

We continue to be concerned at weaknesses in UNESCO's evaluation of programmes—point viii. Much remains to be achieved on decentralisation—point ix.

Rape

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with Governments of the Western European Union to make rape a war crime in the conventions of international law; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: No such discussions have taken place within the WEU. Under the fourth Geneva convention, women are to be especially protected against any attack on their honour, particularly against rape, enforced prostitution and indecent assault. All parties to the Geneva conventions are already under an obligation to ensure that criminal sanctions are available against those who commit grave breaches of the conventions.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussion he has had with governments of member states of the Western European Union to provide financial funding to give counselling and assistance to women and girls who have been raped in the countries of the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: There have been no discussions in the WEU. The European Council at Edinburgh strongly condemned the systematic detention and rape of Muslim women in the former Yugoslavia. The EC will send a mission of experts to the former Yugoslavia to investigate the allegations and to report urgently to Foreign Ministers.

Turkey

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to Turkey about the rights of minorities and people of non-Turkish origin in Turkey and about the death penalty.

Mr. Goodlad: The Government have regular contact with the Turkish Government on the subject of human rights.

The issue was most recently discussed during the visit of the Turkish Prime Minister in November. During the visit Mr. Demirel reiterated his Government's commitment to its programme of reforms which aims at improving human rights and increasing democratisation in the country.

We welcome this commitment on the part of the Turks and look forward to the early implementation of the Government's programme.

Kurdistan

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will make it their policy to recognise Kurdistan as an independent country.

Mr. Goodlad: No. The Kurdish population of the middle east is spread throughout a number of independent states whose territorial integrity we support.

Hong Kong

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards discussing the Governor of Hong Kong's proposal for the 1995 Legislative Council elections with the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Goodlad: The Government fully support the Governor's proposals. The Governor has said many times that these are proposals not firm decisions. We are ready to talk to the Chinese Government about them at any time and to discuss any alternative ideas they may have for the 1995 elections, which meet the criteria of fairness, openness and acceptability to the people of Hong Kong.

The proposals will be put to the Hong Kong Legislative Council in the form of draft legislation early next year. The council passed a motion in support of the Government's proposals last month and they have been strongly supported within the community.

EDUCATION

School Governors and Head Teachers

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will set out the respective responsibilities of school governors and head teachers.

Mr. Forth: The roles of school governors and headteachers are set out in different pieces of legislation, and brought together in detail in the articles of government of individual schools. In general terms, the conduct of the school is under the direction of the governing body while the head teacher has responsibility for the internal organisation and management of the school.

Science and Technology

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the current standard of science and technology facilities in state secondary schools.

Mr. Forth: Evidence from visits by Her Majesty's inspectorate shows that most schools have satisfactory facilities for science and technology. Where there is room for improvement, schools are being helped by the programme of grants for education support and training, which this year supported £30 million of expenditure on books and equipment.

Temporary Teachers

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will estimate the number of schools which rely on temporary appointments to maintain an adequate teaching staff.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not available. In January 1992 19,700 full-time teachers in England were employed under temporary contracts compared with 334,300 on permanent contracts. Temporary contracts do not necessarily imply recruitment difficulties; they may be made for a variety of reasons.

Parents Charter

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the costs to his Department of *(a)* publication of the appropriate ring files and subsequent updating of the national curriculum folders and *(b)* publishing, producing and distributing the parents charter booklet.

Mr. Forth: The total cost to the Department since 1988 of publishing and distributing ring binders containing attainment targets and programmes of study for the national curriculum is estimated at £8·77 million.

The cost of publishing, producing and distributing the parents charter—including advertising—was £1,957,500.

Examination Results

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a list of secondary schools in Derbyshire in order of their examination results, together with the amount spent per pupil in each school.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is set out in the table.

Derbyshire Secondary Schools
Comparison of budget share per pupil with the proportion of 15 year old pupils obtaining 5 or more grades A to C at GCSE

School name	*1992-93 budget share*	*1992-93 funding population*	*Implied budget share per pupil*	*Proportion of 15 year old pupils obtaining 5 or more grades A to C at GCSE*
Duffield Ecclesbourne (GM)	2,183,979	1,259	1,734	65
Chesterfield St. Mary's RC	1,763,577	1,052	1,676	60
Bakewell Lady Manners	2,478,787	1,371	1,807	58
Derby Woodlands Community	1,624,893	908	1,790	58
Derby Chellaston Community	1,525,927	930	1,641	56
Sandiacre Friesland	1,476,448	835	1,769	55
Matlock Highfields	2,642,975	1,442	1,833	53
Dronfield School	3,486,755	1,896	1,839	53
Chesterfield Brookfield	2,825,517	1,470	1,923	53
Ilkeston St. John Houghton RC	922,263	443	2,081	49
Etwall John Port	2,871,588	1,675	1,714	49
Derby Littleover Community	1,938,327	1,044	1,857	49
Hope Valley College	960,454	444	2,165	48
Ashbourne Queen Elizabeth	2,108,253	1,129	1,868	48
Belper	1,820,382	950	1,917	46
Ripley Mill Hill	2,117,376	1,248	1,697	45
Wirksworth Anthony Gell	1,251,432	615	2,036	44

School name	1992-93 budget share	1992-93 funding population	Implied budget share per pupil	Proportion of 15 year old pupils obtaining 5 or more grades A to C at GCSE
Chapel-En-Le-Frith	1,120,233	556	2,015	43
Glossopdale	3,108,957	1,613	1,927	42
New Mills	1,674,063	862	1,942	41
South Normanton Frederick GE	1,252,169	647	1,934	40
Derby St. Benedict RC	2,555,664	1,421	1,798	40
Clay Cross Tupton Hall	2,911,572	1,681	1,732	40
Glossop St. Philip Howard RC	960,235	426	2,255	39
Eckington	2,730,915	1,572	1,737	39
Denby John Flamstead	947,552	494	1,917	39
Derby Moor Community	2,142,918	1,099	1,951	38
Buxton Community School	2,229,515	1,218	1,830	37
Swadlincote William Allitt	1,254,769	644	1,949	35
Derby Murray Park Community	1,690,167	904	1,871	35
Tibshelf	1,000,760	532	1,882	34
Swadlincote Pringle	1,999,770	1,174	1,704	34
Long Eaton Wilsthorpe	2,162,144	1,167	1,853	34
Chesterfield Hasland Hall	1,489,844	777	1,917	34
Alfreton Mortimer Wilson	2,096,801	1,146	1,830	33
Ilkeston Kirk Hallam	1,359,510	705	1,927	32
Stavely Neverthorpe (GM)	1,402,900	729	1,924	31
Heanor Gate	1,618,586	950	1,705	31
Derby West Park Community	2,581,838	1,387	1,861	29
Long Eaton	2,187,839	1,105	1,981	28
Stavely Springwell	1,667,000	738	2,259	26
Ilkeston	2,176,501	1,186	1,835	26
Derby Bemrose Community	1,650,749	753	2,192	26
Buxton St. Thomas More RC	702,919	288	2,445	26
Swadlincote Granville	1,192,345	591	2,017	25
Derby Sinfin School	1,850,056	947	1,954	25
Derby The Merrill Community	1,855,682	769	2,412	24
Alfreton Swanwick Hall	1,836,112	995	1,846	23
Heanor Aldercar	1,128,684	496	2,274	22
Chesterfield Newbold	2,408,987	1,205	1,999	21
Clowne Heritage Community	1,993,883	1,006	1,981	20
Derby Noel Baker Community	2,310,779	1,151	2,007	19
Derby Lees Brook Community	1,343,329	621	2,162	19
Chesterfield Meadows	1,109,797	497	2,235	19
Bolsover Community	1,962,679	942	2,083	15
North Wingfield Deincourt	1,399,649	617	2,270	14
Chesterfield Parkside	1,201,515	499	2,408	14
Ilkeston Bennerley	1,177,357	513	2,295	13
Shirebrook Community	1,531,343	637	2,406	10
Derby Village Community	1,478,553	622	2,376	8
Derby High View Community	1,614,143	646	2,499	8

Notes:
1. Columns 2 and 3 are taken from Derbyshire's 1992-93 Section 42 statment.
2. Column 5 is taken from data published under the Parents' Charter.

Research Assessment

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the cost to public funds of the higher education research assessment exercise.

Mr. Boswell: The Universities Funding Council has asked participating universities and colleges for estimates of the costs incurred in the 1992 research assessment exercise, which has only just been completed and is due to be published very shortly. Information on the total costs of the exercise is likely to be available early next year.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the number of employees in his Department, and their total salary costs, who are engaged in *(a)* liaison with the Grant Maintained Schools Centre, *(b)* providing information to prospective grant-maintained schools and *(c)* questions concerning ballots in schools seeking grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: Liaison with the Grant Maintained Schools Centre occupies in aggregate about one full-time equivalent—FTE—at a cost of some £20,000 this year; providing information to prospective grant-maintained schools about six FTE at a cost of some £105,000; and questions concerning ballots about five FTE at a cost of some £102,000. In addition the staff concerned are able to draw when required on the services of the Department's professional staff—including lawyers and information officers.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those schools which on achieving grant-maintained status or since have applied to him to change their admissions policy to allow some form of selection on the basis of ability or aptitude in any part of the curriculum.

Mr. Forth: The following schools have applied for and had approved admission arrangements which involve the selection of 10 per cent. or less of pupils on the basis of their aptitude in music, sport, art or drama:

King's School, Peterborough
Westland High School, Kent
Bishop's Stortford School, Hertfordshire
Heathside School, Surrey
Langley Park School for Boys, Bromley
Beaverwood School, Bromley
Dame Alice Owen School, Hertfordshire

This list does not include those schools which have published statutory proposals for a significant change in character; none of the proposals involving selection have so far been approved.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on how many occasions head teachers of grant-maintained schools have been paid by his Department to attend meetings at schools which were considering whether to have a ballot for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: The Department does not pay head teachers of grant-maintained schools to attend meetings at prospective grant-maintained schools.

Grants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much in grant will be given by his Department in 1992-93 to *(a)* the Pre-school Playgroups Association, *(b)* the Church of England Board of Education, *(c)* the National Association of Governors and Managers, *(d)* the National Children's Bureau, *(e)* the Family Welfare Association, *(f)* the Girls' Brigade, *(g)* the National Association of Women's Institutes and *(h)* the Grant Maintained Schools Centre.

Mr. Forth: The grants to be given by the Department for Education in 1992-93 are as follows:—

	£ 000
Pre-school Playgroups Association	639·3
Church of England Board of Education	0·0
National Association of Governors and Managers	10·0
National Children's Bureau	55·0
Family Welfare Association	0·0
Girls' Brigade	30·0
National Federation of Women's Institutes	19·2
Grant Maintained Schools Centre	[1]760·0

[1] Up to.

Maintained Schools

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on capital allocations for local education authority maintained schools for 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: Local education authorities have today been informed of their annual capital guidelines—ACGs—for schools which will total £443·5 million in 1993-94. They have also been informed of their allocations for capital spending by the governors of voluntary aided and special agreement schools in their areas—the overall grant to be made available in 1993-94 is £131·7 million. Provision for both sectors reflects the increasing rate of transfer of local authority schools to the grant-maintained sector; and the removal of sixth form colleges from local authority control.

Annual capital guidelines do not represent the full total of funds available to local education authorities for capital expenditure. Authorities are also able to spend additional sums from capital receipts and from their revenue budgets if they so choose.

Local education authorities will be able to take advantage of the relaxation of the rules governing the permitted use of capital receipts announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his autumn statement. This removes for a period the requirement that 50 per cent. of such receipts should be used for debt redemption rather than capital spending.

Local education authorities have received considerable resources in the last few years for building work at schools. The substantial sum available in 1993-94, together with the new flexibility on capital receipts, should enable local education authorities to continue to make significant progress in improving the school building stock.

In distributing annual capital guidelines, I have again given priority to the second and third year expenditure on work covered by annual capital guidelines in earlier years, projects to provide new school places in areas of growing demand and cost-effective projects to remove surplus places.

I have also been able to make a substantial contribution towards work to put right deficiencies in existing school buildings and for the effective delivery of the national curriculum.

Of the total of £131·7 million grant for voluntary aided schools, £47·7 million has been set aside for repairs. The remainder—£84 million—is to be provided for capital work. Some £30 million of this will support new work to provide for new school places, cost-effective removal of surplus capacity as well as a range of improvement and replacement projects. Forty-nine major projects have been authorised to start and a further 24 to proceed to initial design work. My right hon. Friend and I look to local education authorities and school governors to ensure that this grant is fully and effectively utilised.

A total of £21 million of the total will be allocated in the form of supplementary credit approvals—SCAs—to LEAs and of grant aid for governors of voluntary aided schools for successful bids under the technology schools initiative, the results of which were announced yesterday by the Baroness Blatch.

Lists of ACGs and grant allocations to individual local authorities are as follows:

ANNEX 1

Capital expenditure 1993-94: annual capital guidelines

£ 000s

	Schools ACGS 1993-94
Barking	901
Barnet	3,077
Bexley	2,088
Brent	759
Bromley	2,281
Croydon	1,209
Ealing	5,432
Enfield	1,770
Haringey	2,168
Harrow	3,997
Havering	934
Hillingdon	1,190
Hounslow	3,709
Kingston	629
Merton	889
Newham	1,222

	Schools ACGS 1993-94
Redbridge	1,179
Richmond	416
Sutton	980
Waltham	2,861
City	0
Camden	178
Westminster	572
Greenwich	1,050
Hackney	1,004
Hammersmith	769
Islington	523
Kensington	794
Lambeth	924
Lewisham	1,058
Southwark	2,123
Wandsworth	1,968
Tower Hamlets	10,554
Birmingham	6,252
Coventry	364
Dudley	993
Sandwell	2,662
Solihull	1,824
Walsall	802
Wolverhampton	1,993
Knowsley	839
Liverpool	2,822
St. Helens	683
Sefton	1,943
Wirral	1,466
Bolton	314
Bury	570
Manchester	8,356
Oldham	1,208
Rochdale	903
Salford	1,971
Stockport	973
Tameside	1,051
Trafford	1,334
Wigan	1,519
Barnsley	2.056
Doncaster	436
Rotherham	1,665
Sheffield	1,908
Bradford	6,670
Calderdale	1,256
Kirklees	5,758
Leeds	4,570
Wakefield	11,402
Gateshead	847
Newcastle	1,903
North Tyneside	3,906
South Tyneside	889
Sunderland	3,854
Isles of Scilly	40
Avon	4,780
Bedfordshire	2,827
Berkshire	4,421
Buckinghamshire	5,869
Cambridgeshire	7,638
Cheshire	9,676
Cleveland	3,657
Cornwall	2,864
Cumbria	8,298
Derbyshire	12,885
Devon	10,592
Dorset	5,196
Durham	5,306
East Sussex	11,020
Essex	11,643
Gloucestershire	8,598
Hampshire	9,605
Hereford and Worcester	2,396
Hertfordshire	4,009
Humberside	6,936
Isle of Wight	1,939
Kent	15,820
Lancashire	11,129
Leicestershire	6,859
Lincolnshire	10,471
Norfolk	3,987
North Yorkshire	5,296
Northamptonshire	4,558
Northumberland	2,199
Nottinghamshire	2,989
Oxfordshire	3,301
Shropshire	3,842
Somerset	4,207
Staffordshire	6,041
Suffolk	7,494
Surrey	10,167
Warwick	2,058
West Sussex	4,277
Wiltshire	2,518

Voluntary aided and special agreement schools – 1993-94 capital allocations

LEA name	LEA Number	Total allocation 1993-94 (£000)	Allocation components: Commitments (£000)	Minor works improvement (£000)	Major and minor projects (£000)	School number	School name	Category	Major/minor	Ex DL?	Approved statutory proposals	New projects: Design list	New projects: Start
City of London	201	0	0	0	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Camden	202	237	12	204	21	4688	William Ellis S	IR	Major-design	No	—	21	—
Greenwich	203	597	469	128	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hackney	204	1,712	450	135	1,127	4697	Hackney Free and Parochial CE S	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	1,127
Hammersmith and Fulham	205	1,064	797	119	148	4632	Lady Margaret CE S	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	148
Islington	206	142	20	122	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kensington and Chelsea	207	2,789	2,692	97	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lambeth	208	769	502	147	120	3405	Streatham, St. Andrews RC P	N	Minor	n/a	120	—	—
Lewisham	209	434	0	164	270	3301	All Saints CE P	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	217
	—	—	—	—	—	4646	Prendergast S	IR	Major-design	No	—	53	—
Southwark	210	1,561	777	207	577	3460	East Dulwich, SS John and Clements CE P	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	558
	—	—	—	—	—	4680	SS Saviour and Olaves CE S	IR	Major-design	No	—	19	—
Tower Hamlets	211	1,129	866	163	100	3346	Guardian Angels RC P	IR	Major-start	No	—	—	100

LEA name	LEA Number	Total allocation 1993-94 (£000)	Allocation components: Commitments (£000)	Allocation components: Minor works improvement (£000)	Major and minor projects (£000)	School number	School name	Category	Major/named minor	Ex DL?	Approval statutory proposals	New projects: Design list	New projects: Start
Wandsworth	212	239	80	122	37	3486	St. Joseph's RC P	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	37
Westminster	213	592	409	183	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barking	301	48	0	48	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barnet	302	837	540	267	30	4752	Hampstead, Henrietta Barnet S	IR	Major-design	No	—	30	—
Bexley	303	230	142	88	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Brent	304	922	771	151	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bromley	305	72	0	72	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Croydon	306	164	9	155	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ealing	307	955	0	113	842	3302	St. Saviours CE First	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	387
	—	—	—	—	—	3301	Christchurch CE Junior	SP	Major-start	No	144	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	4602	Twyford CE High	SP	Major-start	No	252	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	4603	Greenford, Cardinal Wiseman RC S	SP	Major-design	No	—	59	—
Enfield	308	1,169	383	170	616	4700	Edmonton, Latymer	EBN/IR	Major-design	No	—	20	—
	—	—	—	—	—	4702	Bishop Stopfords CE	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	596
Haringey	309	776	654	122	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Harrow	310	81	0	81	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Havering	311	126	0	126	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hillingdon	312	462	0	104	358	4600	Bishop Ramsey CE School	EBN	Major-start	No	—	—	358
Hounslow	313	1,030	905	125	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kingston-upon-Thames	314	209	0	85	124	3305	St. Johns CE	N	Minor	n/a	124	—	—
Merton	315	101	0	101	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Newham	316	287	205	82	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Redbridge	317	1,611	0	93	1,518	4603	[illegible] RC High	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	338
	—	—	—	—	—	4604	[illegible]mon High	BN	Major-start	No	1,180	—	—
Richmond upon Thames	318	75	0	75	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sutton	319	416	344	72	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Waltham Forest	320	51	0	51	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Birmingham	330	1,372	585	527	260	3339	St. Josepha RC P	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	260
Coventry	331	1,376	1,215	161	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dudley	332	1,105	16	83	1,006	4612	Castle High S	SP	Major-start	Yes	629	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	4800	Bishop Milner RC S	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	353
	—	—	—	—	—	3354	Pedmore CE P	IR	Major-design	No	—	24	—
Sandwell	333	58	2	56	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Solihull	334	805	302	100	403	4650	St. Peter's RC S	BN	Major-start	Yes	—	—	403
Walsall	335	120	0	120	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wolverhampton	336	1,660	1,287	88	285	3316	St. Michaels CE P	IR	Major-design	No	—	18	—
	—	—	—	—	—	4601	St. Peters CE Collegiate S	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	267
Knowsley	340	334	155	179	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Liverpool	341	5,227	4,462	560	205	4782	Notre Dame RC S	SP	Major-design	No	—	75	—
	—	—	—	—	—	3553	St Francis de Sales RC P	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	100
	—	—	—	—	—	3508	Friary RC P	SP	Minor	n/a	—	—	30
St. Helens	342	279	55	185	39	3501	Nutgrove Methodist P	IR	Major-design	No	—	39	—
Sefton	343	997	692	284	21	3361	Litherland, English Martyrs RC P	IR	Major-design	No	—	21	—
Wirral	344	673	467	156	50	4611	Wallasey, St Marys RC College	SP	Minor	n/a	—	—	50
Bolton	350	350	77	203	70	4612	Thornleigh Salesian RC S	BN	Major-design	No	—	28	—
	—	—	—	—	—	4605	Bolton, Canon Slade CE S	BN/IR	Major-design	No	—	42	—
Bury	351	534	400	134	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Manchester	352	541	117	384	40	3467	St Roberts RC P	EBN/IR	Minor	n/a	—	—	40
Oldham	353	1,146	614	184	348	4600	Blue Coat CE S	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	348
Rochdale	354	151	18	133	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Salford	355	579	25	154	400	3801	Broughton Jewish P	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	400
Stockport	356	112	0	112	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

LEA name	LEA Number	Total allocation 1993-94 (000)	Allocation components: Commitments (000)	Minor works improvements (000)	Major and minor projects (000)	School number	School name	Category	Major/named minor	Ex DL?	Approved statutory proposals	New projects: Design list	New projects: Start
Tameside	357	936	581	108	247	4603	Denton, St Thomas More RC S	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	247
Trafford	358	369	271	98	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wigan	359	988	595	393	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barnsley	370	627	575	52	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Doncaster	371	85	0	85	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rotherham	372	65	—	65	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sheffield	373	438	—	92	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bradford	380	561	166	213	182	3,313	St. Stephens CE First	N	Minor	n/a	182	—	—
Calderdale	381	123	4	100	19	3,327	Elland, St. Patricks RC P	IR	Major-design	No	—	19	—
Kirklees	382	991	726	113	152	3,320	Batley Parish CE P	BN	Major-start	Yes	—	—	152
Leeds	383	5,590	5,267	306	17	3,373	St. Urbans RC P	IR	Major-design	No		17	—
Wakefield	384	378	129	107	142	3,333	Pontefract, St. Joseph's RC J & I	IR	Major-start	No	—	—	142
Gateshead	390	396	0	87	309	4,603	Wrekenton, St. Edmund Campion RC S	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	309
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	391	172	20	129	23	3,472	St. Charles RC P	IR	Major-design	No	—	23	—
North Tyneside	392	567	504	63	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Tyneside	393	69	0	69	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sunderland	394	879	756	123	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Avon	901	1,058	840	218	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bedfordshire	902	581	16	165	400	4,606	Luton, Cardinal Newman RC High	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	400
Berkshire	903	210	0	210	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Buckinghamshire	904	946	737	138	71	4803	Waddesdon CE S	BN	Minor	n/a	—	—	71
Cambridgeshire	905	434	215	133	86	4702	Peterborough St. John Fisher RC P	BN	Minor	n/a	—	—	50
	—	—	—	—	—	4602	Cambridge, St. Bedes ECU S	IR	Major-design	No	—	36	—
Cheshire	906	2,660	1,540	486	634	4610	Hartford, St. Nicholas RC S	BN	Major-start	Yes	—	—	176
	—	—	—	—	—	3645	Northwich, Davesham CE P	IR	Major-start	No	—	—	180
	—	—	—	—	—	4623	Chester, The Bishops (Bluecoat) CE High	IR	Major-design	No	—	20	—
	—	—	—	—	—	3616	Widnes, St. Michaels RC P	SP	minor	n/a	—	—	60
	—	—	—	—	—	3802	Widnes, St. Marie's RC P	SP	Minor	n/a	198	—	100
Cleveland	907	1,494	999	313	182	3384	Middlesbrough, Corpus Christi RC P	SP	Minor	n/a	—	—	100
	—	—	—	—	—	3390	Middlesbrough, St. Pius X RC P	SP	Minor	n/a	—	—	82
Cornwall	908	205	82	106	17	3881	Liskeard, Quethiock CE P	IR	Major-design	No	—	17	—
Cumbria	909	1,799	119	288	1,392	4631	Keswick S	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	777
	—	—	—	—	—	4830	Barrow in Furness, St. Bernards RC S	SP/IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	575
	—	—	—	—	—	3520	Whitehaven, St. Begha RC P	SP	Major-design	No	—	40	—
Derbyshire	910	261	38	223	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Devon	911	935	429	248	258	3768	Plymouth, Bickleigh Down CE P	BN	Major-start	No	158	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	3601	Brixham, Margaret Clitheroe RC P	BN	Minor	n/a	100	—	—
Dorset	912	3,543	2,777	261	505	4610	Poole, St. Edwards RC/CE S	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	425
	—	—	—	—	—	3359	Stalbridge CE P	BN	Minor	n/a	—	—	30
	—	—	—	—	—	3696	Lyme Regis, St. Michaels CE P	SP	Minor	n/a	—	—	50
Durham	913	865	624	214	27	3486	Durham, St. Godrics RC P	IR	Major-design	No	—	27	—
East Sussex	914	305	110	195	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Essex	915	823	400	423	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gloucestershire	916	1,381	1,160	156	65	3336	Minsterworth CE P	EBN	Minor	n/a	—	—	53
	—	—	—	—	—	3335	Brimscombe CE P	IR	Major-design	No	—	12	—
Hampshire	917	466	173	293	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hereford and Worcester	918	801	246	289	266	4600	Bishop of Hereffords Bluecoat CE S	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	156
	—	—	—	—	—	3318	Droitwich, St. Peter's CE First	EBN/BN	Minor	n/a	—	—	50
	—	—	—	—	—	4800	Hagley RC High	EBN	Minor	n/a	—	—	60
Hertfordshire	919	977	2	506	469	4619	Hemel Hempstead, John F. Kennedy RC S	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	469
Humberside	920	390	190	145	55	4,622	Kingston, Hull Trinity House S	IR	Major-start	No	—	—	55
Isle of Wight	921	44	4	40	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

LEA name	LEA Number	Total allocation 1993-94 (£000)	Allocation components: Commitments (£000)	Minor works improvements (£000)	Major and minor projects (£000)	School number	School name	Category	Major/named minor	Ex DL?	Approved statutory proposals	New projects: Design list	New projects: Start
Kent	922	2,324	1,121	512	691	4621	Sheerness, St. Georges CE Middle	BN/IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	670
	—	—	—	—	—	4617	Dover, St. Edmunds RC S	IR	Major-design	No	—	21	—
Lancashire	923	5,642	3,111	1,311	1,220	4601	Blackpool, St. Marys RC High	SP	Major-start	Yes	—	—	748
	—	—	—	—	—	3755	Colne, Sacred Heart RC P	SP	Major-start	Yes	—	—	77
	—	—	—	—	—	4850	Croston, Bishop Rawstorne CE High	BN	Major-start	No	—	—	25
	—	—	—	—	—	3709	Fleetwood, St. Marys RC P	EBN	Major-start	No	—	—	223
	—	—	—	—	—	3500	Blackburn, Sacred Heart RC P	IR	Major-start	No	—	—	30
	—	—	—	—	—	3776	Rawtenstall, St. James the Less RC P	IR	Major-design	No	—	25	—
	—	—	—	—	—	3525	Galgate, Eliel St. Johns CE P	BN	Minor	n/a	—	—	52
	—	—	—	—	—	3803	Scarisbrick, St. Marys RC P	SP	Minor	n/a	—	—	40
Leicestershire	924	187	0	187	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	925	1,145	718	145	282	3361	Lea, Frances Olive Anderson CE P	BN/IR	Minor	n/a	—	—	34
	—	—	—	—	—	3505	Lincoln, Bishop King CE P	BN	Minor	n/a	—	—	75
	—	—	—	—	—	3322	Pointon CE P	BN	Minor	n/a	—	—	75
	—	—	—	—	—	3364	Nettleham CE Junior	BN/IR	Minor	n/a	—	—	50
	—	—	—	—	—	4604	Boston, St. Bede's Rc S	BN	Minor	n/a	—	—	48
Norfolk	926	544	50	128	366	4605	Norwich, Notre Dame RC High	SP	Major-start	Yes	—	—	366
North Yorkshire	927	949	339	225	385	4611	Harrogate, St, Aidans CE High	IR	Major-start	No	—	—	385
Northampton-shire	928	1,230	431	163	636	4601	Kettering, Bishop Stopford CE S	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	636
Northumber-land	929	302	135	119	48	3355	Riding Mill, Broomhaugh CE First	BN	Minor	n/a	—	—	48
Nottingham-shire	930	280	6	274	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Oxfordshire	931	972	598	170	204	3505	Bicester, St. Edburgs CE P	SP/IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	204
Shropshire	932	212	0	91	121	3329	Whittington CE P	BN	Minor	n/a	—	—	89
	—	—	—	—	—	3312	Clun St. George's CE P	BN	Minor	n/a	—	—	32
Somerset	933	1,079	968	111	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staffordshire	934	2,054	1,298	336	420	4603	Stoke-on-Trent, St. Peters CE High	IR	Major-start	Yes	—	—	420
Suffolk	935	231	17	111	103	3330	Framlingham, Sir Robert Hitchams CE P	BN/IR	Major-start	Yes	103	—	—
Surrey	936	2,801	1,166	428	1,207	4611	Leatherhead, St. Andrews RC S	SP	Major-start	No	107	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	4619	Guildford, St. Peters RC S	SP/IR	Major-start	Yes	620	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	3475	Guildford, St. Cuthbert Mayne RC First	SP	Minor	n/a	76	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	3458	West Byfleet, The Marist RC First	SP	Minor	n/a	58	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	3470	Ewell, St. Clements RC First	SP	Minor	n/a	80	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	3488	Woking, St. Hugh of Lincoln RC First	SP	Minor	n/a	62	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	3441	Addlestone, Holy Family RC First	SP	Minor	n/a	8	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	3465	East Mousley, St. Thomas More RC P	SP	Minor	n/a	37	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	3446	Thames Ditton, St. Pauls RC First	SP	Minor	n/a	41	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	3918	Weybridge, St. Charles RC First	SP	Minor	n/a	60	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	3462	Godalming, St. Edmunds RC First	SP	Minor	n/a	58	—	—
Warwickshire	937	458	250	208	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Sussex	938	448	5	277	166	3353	Horsted Keynes, St. Giles CE P	EBN	Minor	n/a	—	—	79
	—	—	—	—	—	3313	Findon, St. John the Baptist CE P	BN	Minor	n/a	87	—	—
Wiltshire	939	234	60	174	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	92,810	52,430	19,998	20,382	—	—	—	—	—	4,484	706	15,192

VA schools statutory proposals approved since December 1991
Funds allocated as committed expenditure

LEA	School
Avon	Bradley Stoke CE, Bristol
Cambridgeshire	March, new primary
Cheshire	St. Werburgh's CE, Warrington
Cornwall	St. Dennis CE Infants, St. Austell
Croydon	St. James the Great RC Primary
Dorset	Portesham CE Primary
East Sussex	St. Thomas' CE Primary, Groombridge
Essex	Little Hallingbury CE Primary
Gloucestershire	St. Mary's CE Primary, Tetbury
Hammersmith and Fulham	St. Thomas' RC
Kent	St. James' CE Primary, Isle of Grain
Lambeth	St. Mary's RC Primary
Lancashire	St. Veronica's RC, Helmshore
Lancashire	St. Mary's RC, Haslingden
Lancashire	St. Anthony's RC, Blackburn
Lancashire	St. Cuthbert's RC, Blackburn
Lancashire	Lytham CE Primary, Lytham St. Anne's
Leicestershire	Loughborough CE
Merton	Sacred Heart RC Primary, New Malden
Northumberland	Eglingham CE First, Alnwick
Nottinghamshire	St. Patrick's RC Primary, Nottingham
Rochdale	Sacred Heart RC Primary
Rochdale	All Saints CE Primary
Sandwell	Sacred Heart RC JMI, Tipton
Surrey	Bishop Wand CE Secondary, Sunbury
Surrey	Horsell CE Middle, Woking
Surrey	Queen Eleanor's CE Middle, Guildford
Surrey	Our Lady and St. Rose RC Primary Weoley Castle
Trafford	St. Michael's CE, Flixton
Westminster	St. Peter's CE

Teacher Training

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students were recruited to courses of initial teacher training in 1992.

Mr. Patten: Overall recruitment to initial teacher training courses has increased by more than 10 per cent. for the second year in succession. A survey undertaken by my Department shows that 31,980 students entered courses of initial teacher training in 1992, an increase of 3,188 over 1991.

Intakes to secondary courses overall were 9 per cent. above the very high levels achieved last year, and recruitment in all the main shortage subjects was above the targets set by the Department. Recruitment to primary courses was 13 per cent. higher than last year and 41 per cent. above the Department's target.

I am placing in the Library the principal results of the survey.

National Curriculum Technology Order

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will publish proposals for a new national curriculum technology order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and for Wales are publishing tomorrow proposals for a revised technology curriculum tomorrow as the basis for extensive consultation. These are based on the recommendations for attainment targets and programmes of study incorporated in the accompanying report of the review group, led by Her Majesty's inspectorate.

As required by the Education Reform Act 1988, the Secretary of State will ask the National Curriculum Council to conduct the consultation exercise in England. All schools, education authorities, professional organisations and others will have until 31 March 1993 to submit their views and make representations to the NCC. A parallel consultation will take place in Wales. Subject to advice from the NCC and the Curriculum Council for Wales, my right hon. Friends then intend to publish a draft Order for further consultation later in 1993.

Copies of the report, the proposals and the Secretary of State's letter to the chairman of the National Curriculum Council will be placed in the Library of the House.

Girls

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he intends to take on the HMI report on the preparation of girls for adult and working life.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* The main findings of the report are under consideration by my right hon. Friend. No action is planned at present.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Tourism

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what measures are being taken to promote domestic tourism in England.

Mr. Key: The promotion of domestic tourism in England is undertaken by the English tourist board, ETB, which is grant-aided by my Department, and by the regional tourist boards, which receive funding from the ETB. Grant in aid to the ETB totals £15·4 million during the current financial year. Details of the boards' promotional and other activities appear in the ETB's annual report for 1991-92, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many tourists have visited Britain in each year since 1981.

Mr. Key: Information on overseas tourism in the United Kingdom is published regularly in the quarterly and annual "Business Monitors" MQ6 and MA6 "Overseas Travel and Tourism", which may be obtained from the Library of the House.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are the 10 most popular English tourist resorts for domestic holidaymakers taking their annual holidays; and what is their average length of stay.

Mr. Key: Information is not currently available from the domestic travel surveys on the most popular tourist resorts. The United Kingdom tourism survey, sponsored by the statutory tourist boards, showed that in 1991, the average number of nights per trip in the United Kingdom was 4·2.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what five *(a)* European and *(b)* non-European countries are responsible for the highest number of tourists visiting England.

Mr. Key: The available information is shown in the table:

Number of visits to England by overseas residents in 1991

Country of residence	*Visits (thousands)*
(a) Top five European countries[1]	
Germany	1,770
France	1,747
Netherlands	847
Italy	671
Spain	590
(b) Top five non-European countries	
United States of America	2,128
Canada	468
Australia	434
Japan	430
Republic of South Africa	167

[1] Figures for visits by residents of the Irish Republic to England are not available.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the average length of stay for overseas tourists visiting England.

Mr. Key: According to the international passenger survey, the average length of stay of those overseas residents who stayed at least one night in England in 1991 was 11·1 nights.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are the 10 most popular day trip resorts in England; and how many people visited each of them in the year 1991.

Mr. Key: The 10 most popular local authority districts in terms of day trips were:

Local Authority visited	*Number of trips (millions)*
Birmingham	11
Manchester	8
Blackpool	6
Bristol	5
Chester	5
East Lindsey	5
Leeds	5
West Derbyshire	5
Bradford	4
Brighton	4

Source: Leisure Day Visits Survey (1988-89).
Note: The table excludes Greater London, to which there were about 68 million trips.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the five overseas countries whose tourists spend the most money per individual when visiting England, with the amount listed.

Mr. Key: The information is shown in the table:

Expenditure by overseas residents who visited England in 1991
Top five countries of residence

Country of residence	*Average expenditure per visit £*
Kuwait	1,685
Nigeria	1,285
Saudi Arabia	1,218
Libya	1,210
Turkey	1,209

Source: International Passenger Survey.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what measures are being taken to promote England as a destination for overseas tourists.

Mr. Key: My Department funds the British Tourist Authority, which has responsibility for promoting Britain overseas. The authority undertakes, with tourist industry support, a wide range of marketing and promotional activities to attract overseas visitors to all parts of Britain. It works closely with the English regional tourist boards to encourage visitors to all parts of the country.

Tourism

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much money overseas tourism has generated for the United Kingdom economy in each year since 1981, with the figures adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Key: The available information is shown in the table:

Expenditure by overseas residents visiting the United Kingdom and estimated fares revenue from overseas visitors travelling on United Kingdom ships and aircraft, at constant 1985 prices.
£ billion

Year	*Expenditure*[1]	*Fares*[2] *revenue*
1981	5·64	1·0
1982	5·55	0·9
1983	6·55	1·0
1984	7·07	1·2
1985	7·77	1·4
1986	7·41	1·3
1987	7·86	1·5
1988	7·19	1·5
1989	7·53	1·6
1990	7·79	1·8
1991	6·61	1·6

Notes:
[1] Source: International Passenger Survey
[2] Sources: 1981-83 Department of Transport, 1984-91 British Tourist Authority estimates

National Children's Play and Recreation Unit

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the cost of the grant through the Sports Council for its National Children's Play and Recreation Unit for the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Brooke: In 1991-92, the Sports Council provided funding to the National Children's Play and Recreation Unit totalling £1,134,747. The approved budget for 1992-93 is £830,000.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what studies he has commissioned into the effectiveness of the National Children's Play and Recreation Unit.

Mr. Brooke: No such studies have been commissioned.

TRANSPORT

Rail Freight

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the value to British Rail of its freight operation in each year since 1981 with the figures adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Freeman: Information on the financial performance of British Rail's freight operation is published each year in its annual report and accounts. Copies are available from the Library.

West Coast Main Line

Mr. Marlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will give priority to upgrading of the west coast main line in his consideration of future major investment by British Rail;

(2) if he will make a statement on the criteria used for obtaining non-user benefit grants that may be available for the investment in infrastructure necessary for the upgrading of the west coast main line;

(3) if he will discuss with British Rail the necessary investment in the west coast main line being financed in partnership with the private sector.

Mr. Freeman: It is for British Rail to determine its investment priorities within available resources. I understand that it intends to commence work soon on renewing infrastructure on the west coast main line. The precise timing will be decided in the spring, when British Rail has completed its next corporate plan. A project of this size will take a number of years to complete.

Under our privatisation proposals, responsibility for railway infrastructure will pass to Railtrack, a public sector track authority. Infrastructure investment will be financed largely from charges to operators, but, as stated in the White Paper "New Opportunities For The Railways", the Government may provide direct support for investment schemes not earning an adequate financial return but which have satisfactory cost-benefit returns when wider social and economic benefits are taken into account.

Our proposals will also encourage greater private sector participation in financing railway investment, both in infrastructure and rolling stock. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement.

A1

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the most recent data on traffic volume and flows on sections of the A1 road north of Morpeth which have been prepared by the A1 steering group.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Traffic flows on the A1 are being continuously monitored. The annual average daily flows during 1991 which are the most recently collected figures are listed in the table.

	Number
Newcastle to Morpeth	25,000
Morpeth Bypass	15,600
Morpeth-Alnwick	11,800
Alnwick to Browniside	7,300
Browniside-Belford	7,800
Belford to Scremerston	9,300
Berwick Bypass	6,600
Berwick Bypass to National Boundary	8,200

Railway Accident (Walton-on-the-Naze)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects publication of the full report of the inspector of railways into the railway accident at Walton-on-the-Naze which occurred on 12 August 1987.

Mr. Freeman: The Health and Safety Executive expects to publish the inspector's report on 21 December.

Chelmsford Rail Services

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people commuted to work by rail from Chelmsford to Liverpool Street in each calendar year from 1985 to the latest available date; and what was the percentage increase or decrease in each year.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail estimated that the figures are as in the table.

Year	*Number of commuters from Chelmsford to Liverpool Street*	*Percentage change from previous year*
1985	4,534	[1]8·7
1986	5,153	[1]13·7
1987	6,062	[1]17·6
1988	6,589	[1]8·7
1989	6,216	[2]5·7
1990	5,501	[2]11·5
1991	5,522	[1]0·4
1992	5,259	[2]4·8

[1] Increase.
[2] Decrease.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current target for completion of the programme for resignalling on the Liverpool Street/Bethnal Green/Chelmsford line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is currently reviewing the timetable for the Great Eastern resignalling programme. I will write to my hon. Friend when this exercise is completed.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for ensuring that consumers of rail services are adequately represented after privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: We believe that an effective voice for consumers is vital. The current system of consumer representation by the consultative committees works well and we are committed to ensuring that none of the benefits of this system are lost. We have today published a document called "Railway Privatisation: Providing a Voice for the Passenger" which describes the Government's proposals for achieving this in the privatised railway. I am placing copies in the Library.

Street Works Regulations

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to amend the Street Works (Sharing of Costs of Works) Regulations 1992.

Mr. Freeman: I have received representations from the National Joint Utilities Group that the regulations are unfair to the utilities in their treatment of major transport works, particularly with regard to tramways. It may be that the regulations are not satisfactory as they stand. I am arranging for the Department to undertake public consultations as soon as possible, as a basis for a further decision.

Route Guidance Systems

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for licensing route guidance systems in the London area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: We have received an application from GEC for a pilot licence to operate a system called TIGER—traffic information and guidance on European roads. TIGER will provide a route guidance system for London which responds to changing traffic conditions. I now

propose to hold discussions on this proposal with the London Boroughs Associations, the traffic director and the police.

The pilot Autoguide system proposed in 1989, based on the use of roadside beacons, had similar objectives. However, the technology is developing very quickly. GEC now takes the view that cellular radio is more appropriate in this case. I have therefore decided to close the 1989 competition. It is accordingly open to other potential operators to come forward with proposals for other systems based on any technology they consider appropriate.

During the Second Reading of the 1989 Road Traffic Act the then Minister for Roads and Traffic assured the House that representatives of interested parties such as the local authorities and the police would be involved in the monitoring of the Autoguide pilot. I shall arrange for the establishment of an assessment group to implement this undertaking for the TIGER project if a licence is granted.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Debt Interest Payments

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the level of debt interest payments and other remittances paid to the United Kingdom by *(a)* African countries, *(b)* all developing countries and *(c)* other countries in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Nelson: Receipts are paid to the Overseas Development Administration, to the Commonwealth Development Corporation, and under bilateral debt rescheduling agreements to the Export Credits Guarantee Department. The following data relate to receipts received by each agency *(a)* in total and *(b)* from African countries. There is no definitive definition between developing and other countries. Figures for ECGD and ODA are for financial years, while those for CDC are for calendar years. For 1992-93, the data for ECGD are to the end of November 1992, while the ODA has supplied an estimate of the receipts it expects for the entire year. These are the most comparable latest figures available. Producing data for earlier years would entail a disproportionate cost.

£ million	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
ECGD Total	371	406	250
of which African	292	279	132
ODA Total	53	61	42
of which African	5	5	1
	1990	*1991*	
CDC Total	134	158	
of which African	72	55	

Council Tax

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the rate of VAT needed in 1993-94 to raise an equivalent amount of money to the amount raised by the council tax after taking into account expenditure savings on the costs of introducing and administering the council tax.

Sir John Cope: The amount to be raised in council tax for 1993-94 will depend on decisions, which local authorities have not yet taken, about council tax levels. Accordingly, the calculation requested is not yet possible.

Tobacco

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the losses to the Exchequer arising from the introduction of the European single market *(a)* through the increased allowances on importation of EC-produced cigarettes and tobacco products and *(b)* through increased smuggling of cigarettes and tobacco products.

Sir John Cope: The "Financial Statement and Budget Report" published on 10 March 1992 estimated a full-year loss of £250 million from increased cross-border shopping. The bulk of this is expected to concern cigarettes and other tobacco products. It is very difficult to estimate the likely extent of smuggling.

Nuclear Power Station Closures

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of the closure of the seven Magnox nuclear power stations on the public sector borrowing requirement.

Mr. Portillo: It is not possible to provide reliable estimates of the net effects.

Twyford Down

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what correspondence, conversations or meetings officials of his Department have held with representatives of Winchester college relating to the compulsory purchase of the college-owned area of Twyford Down; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: None.

Overseas Life Companies

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make an announcement about the outcome of the consultations between the life assurance industry and his officials about the taxation of United Kingdom branches of overseas life companeis authorised in his 1991 Budget.

Mr. Dorrell: Insurance industry representatives and Inland Revenue officials have held a series of meetings and significant progress was made. I am grateful to the Association of British Insurers for its constructive approach in these discussions.

Legislation in recent years has made major changes to the taxation of life insurance companies. Overseas life offices operating in the United Kingdom through branches need adaptations of the recent reforms to meet their special circumstances. But there are other equally important reasons for reforming the rules under which these United Kindom branch operations are taxed. First, many such branch operations presently have the major part of their taxable investment income determined by reference to apportionment rules which have changed little since the first world war. For a number of reasons, these have become increasingly inappropriate as a basis for measuring United Kingdom branch income. Second, in a

number of respects, the current rules under which they are taxed lead to disparities of treatment as against the United Kingdom resident life offices. Some of these presently work to the advantage of the United Kingdom branches; others do not. Our goal is to ensure that, as far as possible, United Kingdom life offices and the United Kingdom branch operations of foreign life offices are able to compete for United Kingdom business on terms which are not distorted by tax considerations.

The main proposals are as follows:

the present apportionment rules in section 445 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 will be repealed. The branch income, gains and expenses will instead be ascertained as a matter of fact. The normal rules for measuring the taxable profits of a United Kingdom branch operation in section 11 of the ICTA 1988 will apply to all categories of life insurance business, but with two modifications to reflect the unique characteristics of life and other long term insurance business;

—where the assets held by the branch to back the life insurance policies it administers are less than the assets which a United Kingdom resident company with the same portfolio of policies would be expected to hold, income from, and gains on, assets which are held outside the branch will enter into the computation of branch profits. For the purposes of this comparison the United Kingdom branch will be treated as though it were a distinct and separate enterprise dealing at arm's length with the other parts of the company. The assets to be attributed will be those which have a particular connection with the United Kingdom branch activities. If the value of any such assets is insufficient to support a fair comparison between the United Kingdom branch and a United Kingdom life office writing the same business, a proportion of the worldwide income and gains of the overseas company will also be brought into charge to United Kingdom tax;

—the scope of Section 11 of the ICTA 1988 will be extended so that gains on assets situated outside the United Kingdom and used or held for United Kingdom branch purposes will become chargeable gains;

—distributions from shareholdings in United Kingdom companies which are held as part of the branch activities will carry an entitlemenbt to tax credit. The overseas company will be able to treat distributions as though they were profits chargeable to corporation tax, against which management expenses and various other deductions can be set;

—new rules will enable the necessary figures to be established direct from the company's records where a regulatory return of the United Kingdom branch activities does not provide the information required;

—double tax relief will be available for foreign tax paid on the United Kingdom branch income of the company's long term business fund assets.

The new rules will apply for accounting periods beginning on or after 1 January 1993. I am today depositing a copy of the draft clauses in the House of Commons Library. Copies are also being sent to each of the companies known to be affected by the new proposals, and to the Association of British Insurers. Further copies are available on request from the Inland Revenue to whom representations on the clauses should be sent by 28 February 1993.

Civil Servants (Travel Expenses)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes have been made in the rules on travel expenses for civil servants.

Mr. Dorrell: As part of our ongoing programme for delegating to departments and agencies greater responsibility for managing personnel management policies, Departments and agencies have been given the freedom to determine the conditions on which advances of salary to assist civil servants in the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel are made.

European Community

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his estimate of the increase in the United Kingdom's net contribution if the EC budget is increased under the Delors proposals by each multiple of £1,000 million up to £25,000 million;

(2) what is his estimate of the net cost to the United Kingdom of the cohesion fund as proposed by the Commission for each of the years 1993 to 1997; and if he will make a statement on the expected benefits to the United Kingdom of agreeing to such a proposal.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* The European Council at Edinburgh on 11 and 12 December agreed a financing package for the Community for the next seven years, including the cohesion fund: this would allow an EC budget at a level of £62 billion in 1999, at 1992 prices. A copy of the conclusions of the European Council, including the details of the package, has been placed in the Library. The forecast annual addition to the United Kingdom's net public sector contribution arising from this package would be some £200 million, in 1999, above the underlying cost of Community spending given the present ceiling on own resources, estimated at £2,800 million in 1999, all at 1992 prices. The agreement on the Community's finances at Edinburgh made possible agreements on other important issues such as subsidiarity, openness, resolution of Danish difficulties with the Maastricht treaty, a package of measures to promote European economic growth, and the enlargement of the Community.

Coin Sizes

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received recently about the size of coins now in circulation; what weight he gives to the views of pensioners and disabled groups who may be concerned about small coins; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* A small number of representations have been received. The new, smaller 5p and 10p coins were introduced in response to public demand for a lighter coinage and followed extensive research and consultation. The views of pensioners and disabled groups were taken fully into account. The coins were given a coarse milled edge specifically to help the visually handicapped.

Inward Investment

Mr. Peter Shore: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the official estimate of United States and Japanese direct investment in the United Kingdom as a percentage of direct investment in all EC countries in each year from 1979 to the latest available date.

Mr. Lamont *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* Fully comparable information on direct inward investment in the European Community from outside the EC is not available. However, the following estimates for the years 1985 to 1991 have been prepared based on the most readily available sources.

Value of stock of direct investment in United Kingdom as a percentage of that in all EC countries

	United States	*Japan*
1985	39·4	31·7
1986	35·9	31·2
1987	35·9	33·9
1988	37·7	38·0
1989	41·0	37·7
1990	38·4	40·5
1991	36·2	40·9

Sources:
1. United States Department of Commerce: "Survey of Current Business".
2. Japanese Ministry of Finance: "MITI News".

High Street Banks

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he intends to take as a result of his meeting with representatives of the high street banks, on 11 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* My right hon. Friend the Chancellor did not meet with the representatives of the high street banks on 11 December, but he plans to do so over the next few days.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Recycling

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what progress is being made towards ensuring that all stationery of the House is produced on recycled paper.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: In June 1991, the Services Committee agreed that, in addition to stationery or archival quality, items of stationery made from recycled material should be made available to Members on a permanent basis. Since then the Serjeant at Arms has made arrangements to ensure Members are aware of the availability of this recycled range. For large orders it may be obtained from the Serjeant at Arms' stores, but where a particular local demand has been identified, it is also available from stationery cupboards. Although, for the forseeable future, there will continue to be a need for stationery of archival quality, recycled stationery is becoming increasingly popular with Members.

The Serjeant at Arms and HMSO have a continuing responsibility to monitor the development of this range of stationery and to report any significant change to the Administration Committee.

Select Committees (Travel Costs)

Mr. Hutton: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what was the total expenditure for travel by members of Select Committees, divided into fares and subsistence, for each parliamentary Session since 1987-88 in *(a)* cash and *(b)* 1991-92 prices.

Mr. Beith: The information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, for the year 1991-92, the expenditure for travel and subsistence by members of Select Committees was £462,883·68. Costs for visits by individual Committees are set out in the appropriate Sessional Returns.

Library Research Staff

Mr. Dafis: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, how many research staff have been employed by the Library in each of the last 10 years; and what plans he has to increase the numbers of Library research staff.

Mr. Beith: Numbers of research staff on the establishment of the Library in each of the last 10 years —that is, deputy assistant librarians and library clerks, including the international affairs and defence section, are set out in the table in full-time equivalents.

	Number
1983	22
1984	22
1985	22
1986	23
1987	23
1988	26
1989	27
1990	28
1991	29
1992	32

These figures exclude support staff. I understand that proposals for an increase in the establishment of the research division are in preparation, and will be considered by the House of Commons Commission in accordance with its usual practice.

Advisory Committee on Works of Art

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will set out the membership and terms of reference of the Advisory Committee on Works of Art.

Mr. Beith: I understand that Madam Speaker has appointed the following Members to the Advisory Committee on Works of Art: the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) and the hon. Members for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend).

The terms of reference of the committee, which have been approved by the House of Commons Commission, are:

> to advise the Speaker generally on matters relating to works of art, including acquisitions; and to advise the Accommodation and Works Committee on the policy on, conservation of, and curatorial management of the collections of pictures, statues, murals, historic furniture and furnishings and decorative interior of the Palace; and advise on the decorative interiors of other buildings in the Parliamentary Estate when requested by that Committee.

Early-day Motions

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Lord President of the Council what estimate he has made of the cost within Government Departments of preparing briefing on early-day motions for Session 1991-92 and for Session 1992-93 up to the summer adjournment.

Mr. Newton: No estimate has been made of the costs involved to Government Departments in preparing briefing on early-day motions.

Statutory Instruments

Mr. Beith: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will set out, for each Session since 1987-88 *(a)* the number of motions to annul statutory instruments tabled each year, *(b)* the number considered in Standing Committee, *(c)* the number considered on the Floor of the House and *(d)* the number which were not considered, broken down in each case into those standing in the name of (i) the leader of the Labour party, (ii) the leader of the Liberal Democrats or predecessor parties, (iii) Conservative Members, (iv) other Labour Members and (v) other hon. Members.

Mr. Newton: The information is set out in the table.

Prayers 1987-88 to Summer Adjournment 1992

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*[1]1992-93*
All	195	151	185	99	46	7
Leader of Labour Party						
Total	150	143	154	92	40	5
Floor of the House[2]	24	47	17	13	4	—
Committee	20	17	17	13	9	—
Not Considered	106	79	120	66	27	5
Leader of Liberal Democrats and predecessors						
Total	18	2	15	—	—	1
Floor of the House[2]	2	—	1	—	—	—
Committee	2	—	—	—	—	—
Not Considered	14	2	14	—	—	1
Conservative Members						
Total	21	3	5	4	3	1
Floor of the House[2]	—	—	1	—	—	—
Committee	—	—	—	—	—	—
Not Considered	21	3	4	4	3	1
Other Labour Members						
Total	6	3	7	1	2	—
Floor of the House[2]	2	1	—	—	—	—
Committee	—	—	—	—	—	—
Not Considered	4	2	7	1	2	—
Other Members						
Total	—	—	4	2	1	—
Floor of the House[2]	—	—	—	—	—	—
Committee	—	—	2	—	—	—
Not Considered	—	—	2	2	1	—

[1] Until Summer Adjournment.
[2] The number considered on the floor of the House includes those statutory instruments prayed against and considered on the floor concerning which no Question was ever put.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Lord President of the Council when was the last occasion on which a motion to approve a statutory instrument was defeated on a Division in the House; and when a prayer to annul a statutory instrument was last carried on a Division in the House.

Mr. Newton: The last occasion on which a motion to approve a statutory instrument was defeated on a Division in the House was 24 July 1978. The last occasion on which a prayer to annul a statutory instrument was carried on a Division in the House was 24 October 1979.

SCOTLAND

Water Privatisation

14. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received in support of privatising the water industry in Scotland; how many he has received opposing water privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

26. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many submissions he has received so far in the consultation on the future of Scottish water and sewerage.

31. **Mrs. Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the current consultation on water and sewerage in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: To date, we have received 366 responses to the consultation paper, 3,702 pre-printed postcards and 977 other representations, many of which arrived before the consultation paper was published. Detailed analysis of the responses will be completed only after the end of the consultation paper.

Agricultural Marketing Boards

15. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in Scotland has received about the agricultural industry marketing boards; and what steps he intends taking to ensure the future economic prospects of the sectors of the agricultural industry involved.

Sir Hector Monro: My Department received a number of comments both on the Scottish milk marketing boards' proposals for conversion to voluntary co-operatives and about the Potato Marketing Board.

The Government's policy is to ensure that these sectors can flourish within an open and competitive structure, while retaining the best features of the existing marketing schemes where appropriate.

Transport Infrastucture (Lanarkshire)

16. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to upgrade the transport infrastructure in Lanarkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Lanarkshire is a focal point in the central Scotland motorway network and is well served by the M8, M80 and M74. A £40 million extension of the M74 to Cambuslang is under construction and the M80 Stepps bypass opened to traffic earlier this year. My right hon. Friend was able to include in his recent plans major improvements to upgrade the A8/M8 route to serve new development in north Lanarkshire including the Mossend rail freight depot.

Homelessness

17. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate how many people in Scotland will be homeless on 25 December.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A forecast of the number of homeless would be very difficult to assess at any given time. The Government are devoting very substantial resources to local authorities whose responsibility it is to deal with this problem.

28. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for rehousing the homeless.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government provide resources to local authorities so that they can carry out their statutory duty of providing accommodation, or advice and help in finding accommodation, for those assessed as homeless. These resources have included extra allocations of nearly £23 million in 1991-93.

The Government also provide funding for Scottish Homes, which issued a policy statement on homelessness on 12 November. Scottish Homes' target for 1992-93 is to secure the provision of accommodation for 1,750 households assessed as homeless by local authorities.

Hospital Treatments

18. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* in-patients and *(b)* out-patients were treated in national health service hospitals in Scotland in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what the figures were in 1979.

Mr. Stewart: A total of 920,144 patients were treated as in-patients in national health service hospitals in Scotland in the year ending 31 March 1992 compared with 737,816 in 1979—a 25 per cent. increase. Out-patient numbers rose to 6,005,131 in 1992 from 5,206,078 in 1979.

Rent-to-Mortgage

20. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications are in the pipeline under the rent-to-mortgage scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At 30 November 1992, a total of 618 rent-to-mortgage sales had been completed in Scotland. A further 513 applications were being processed at that date.

Governance

21. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many public speeches he has made on the future government of Scotland since 9 April.

Mr. Lang: My concern that the future government of Scotland should reflect Scotland's needs has been a prominent theme in many speeches I have made since the general election.

22. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to complete his stocktaking exercise on the governance of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Our review of arrangements for the government of Scotland is progressing well and we will announce the outcome in the early part of next year.

Local Authorities (Competitive Tendering)

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received following publication of the Scottish Office evaluation of compulsory competitive tendering for Scottish local authority services.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has received no representations since the publication, on 19 November 1992, of the Scottish Office central research unit report "Evaluation of Compulsory Competitive Tendering for Scottish Local Authority Services".

Scottish Enterprise

23. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about Scottish Enterprise's budget.

Mr. Stewart: Details of the 1992-93 budget for Scottish Enterprise are published in the supply estimates. Last month my right hon. Friend announced an additional £6 million for Scottish Enterprise for 1992-93 as part of the Government's measures to help boost the economy. Details of the 1993-94 budget will be published later. My right hon. Friend announced on 2 December planned gross provision for Scottish Enterprise for 1993-94 of £441 million. In addition to that figure, local enterprise companies are expected to secure receipts from the European regional development fund next year of towards £20 million. Overall planned resources from public sources therefore exceed this year's plans.

Road Building

24. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he uses for deciding priorities in the road building programme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend's primary duty as roads authority for trunk roads is to cater for the needs of through traffic. Priorities are therefore to support economic activity with good, quick and reliable inter-urban road links and to provide good accessibility to all parts of Scotland.

Cancer Clusters

25. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, column 258, what information he has on cancer clusters within the west of Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: At present, there are several studies being carried out to investigate whether cancer clusters might exist in the west of Scotland, but data are not yet complete.

Water Industry

27. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further representations he has received on his consultation on water; and if he will place copies of all representations received on the water industry consultation document in the Library.

Sir Hector Monro: To date, 66 responses have been received to the consultation paper on water. Copies of responses will be placed in the Library following the end of the consultation period, unless respondents have specifically requested confidentiality.

Subsidiarity

29. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he had on the question of subsidiarity as it applies to Scotland with the representatives of member states during the EC summit in Edinburgh.

Mr. Lang: None. The principle of subsidiarity, as defined in article 3b of the new EC treaty agreed at Maastricht, and as discussed at the Edinburgh European Council, refers specifically to the relations between the Community as a whole and individual member states. It is up to individual member states to order their own constitutional affairs at the national and sub-national level.

34. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to apply to Scotland the principle of subsidiarity set out in the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Lang: Article 3b of the new EC treaty agreed at Maastricht, which sets out the principle of subsidiarity, refers specifically to the relations between the Community as a whole and individual member states. It is up to individual member states to order their own constitutional affairs at the national and sub-national level.

Rural Economy

30. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he is taking to revive the Scottish rural economy by creating new employment opportunities.

Mr. Stewart: The main instruments for promoting the full range of the Government's training, employment and economic development initiatives in rural areas as elsewhere in Scotland are Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and their associated networks of local enterprise companies. The Government have provided the Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise networks with a combined budget this year of some £540 million. A broadly similar level of resources is planned for 1993-94. In addition, the networks have at their disposal their own resources and European Community funding. All of this is available to encourage economic development, to help create new employment opportunities and to help people secure jobs.

All areas of Scotland benefit from having local enterprise companies which are able to tailor their activities to the needs of the local economy; and local enterprise companies are also able to plan better than in the past for the distinctive needs of rural communities, even where the area for which they are responsible is not predominantly rural.

Whisky Distillers

32. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many whisky distilleries are currently in operation in Scotand; and what was the number in operation in 1987 and in 1982.

Mr. Stewart: There are currently 103 distilleries operating in Scotland. The figures for 1982 and 1987 were 124 and 90 respectively.

Alcoholism

33. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the Scottish Council on Alcohol to discuss problems relating to alcoholism in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has had no recent meeting with the Scottish Council on Alcohol. Scottish Office officials regularly meet Council representatives to discuss matters relating to the work of the organisation and to the Government's response to alcohol misuse more generally. Our determination to tackle this serious problem is reflected in our policy statement "Scotland's Health: A Challenge To Us All", which was published in July and describes the initiatives we are taking on a broad front to make progress towards our target for the year 2000 of reducing by 20 per cent. the number of men and women whose alcohol consumption exceeds recommended sensible levels.

New Town Housing

36. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sums have been allocated for anticipated capital consents to be allocated to local authorities for the transfer of new town housing stocks.

Mr. Stewart: The additional capital consents required by the local authorities will be allocated when the extent of their successful bids for new towns housing stocks is known.

Health Spending

37. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on levels of health spending in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: Net expenditure on the health service in Scotland in 1993-94 is planned to be £3,766 million, up by £150·7 million—4·2 per cent. over the 1992-93 plans. The 1993-94 figure represents a real-terms increase of 1·4 per cent. above original 1992-93 plans. In 1993-94 the overall increase in health spending since 1979-80 will be 47 per cent. in real terms.

Scottish Charities (Eastern Europe)

38. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the work of Scottish charities in eastern Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has received no specific representations on this matter, but he is aware of the work undertaken by Scottish charities, including Scottish European Aid which recently announced plans to develop a refugee camp and field hospital in Bosnia.

Skye Bridge

39. **Mr. Charles Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on progress towards the construction of the bridge to Skye.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Severe weather conditions have caused some delay to the construction programme although in spite of this the contractor has made steady progress. Subject to a suitable weather and tidal window being available, it is now planned to float both caissons out from the Kishorn dry dock and attempt the positioning of the caisson for the north pier prior to the Christmas and new year holiday period.

Scottish Economy

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) to discuss the state of the Scottish economy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have regular contacts with the Scottish Council on matters concerning the Scottish economy and I look forward to a continuing exchange of views.

Training

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what budget for training he has made available in *(a)* 1991-92 and (b) 1992-93.

Mr. Stewart: Training provision for 1991-92 and 1992-93 for Scotland forms part of the budgets of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprises, details of which are published in the main supply estimates for 1992-93.

Local Authorities

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each Scottish local authority *(a)* its population, *(b)* its number of employees, *(c)* the number of employees per thousand population and *(d)* the political party in control.

Mr. Lang: The table lists for each Scottish local authority *(a)* its population, *(b)* its number of employees and *(c)* the number of employees per thousand population as at June 1991. These are the most up-to-date population figures available. The information concerning the political party in control of each local authority is at May 1992.

Local authority	*Population*	*Number of employees*	*Number of employees per thousand population*	*Political party in control*
Borders	104,100	4,320	41·5	Ind
Berwickshire	19,120	112	5·9	Con
Ettrick and Lauderdale	34,350	259	7·5	Ind
Roxburgh	35,350	319	9·0	NOC[1]
Tweeddale	15,280	128	8·4	Ind
Central	272,800	12,524	45·9	Lab
Clackmannan	48,430	794	16·4	Lab
Falkirk	143,090	1,686	11·8	NOC[1]
Stirling	81,280	1,230	15·1	Con
Dumfries and Galloway	147,800	6,976	47·2	Ind
Annandale and Eskdale	37,140	312	8·4	Lib Dem
Nithsdale	57,140	485	8·5	NOC[1]
Stewartry	23,550	192	8·2	Ind
Wigtown	29,970	299	10·0	Ind
Fife	346,500	17,309	50·0	Lab
Dunfermline	128,330	1,534	12·0	Lab
Kirkcaldy	148,240	1,724	11·6	Lab
North East Fife	69,930	682	9·8	Lib Dem
Grampian	514,400	23,159	45·0	NOC[1]
City of Aberdeen	213,910	2,924	13·7	Lab
Banff and Buchan	85,640	1,021	11·9	Ind
Gordon	77,130	442	5·7	Ind
Kincardine and Deeside	53,710	322	6·0	NOC[1]
Moray	84,010	879	10·5	NOC[1]
Highland	204,200	10,980	53·8	Ind
Badenoch and Strathspey	10,990	75	6·8	Ind
Caithness	26,710	230	8·6	Ind
Inverness	62,490	577	9·2	NOC[1]
Lochaber	19,320	194	10·0	Ind
Nairn	10,630	94	8·8	Ind
Ross and Cromarty	49,140	477	9·7	Ind

Local authority	Population	Number of employees	Number of employees per thousand population	Political party in control
Skye and Lochalsh	11,750	103	8·8	Ind
Sutherland	13,170	133	10·1	Ind
Lothian	750,500	34,644	46·2	Lab
East Lothian	85,300	1,010	11·8	Lab
City of Edinburgh	438,780	5,427	12·4	NOC[1]
Midlothian	79,990	801	10·0	Lab
West Lothian	146,430	1,539	10·5	NOC[1]
Strathclyde	2,296,300	105,119	45·8	Lab
Argyll and Bute	65,090	812	12·5	Ind
Bearsden and Milngavie	41,040	362	8·8	NOC[1]
Clydebank	46,380	634	13·7	Lab
Clydesdale	58,110	668	11·5	NOC[1]
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	63,470	570	9·0	Lab
Cumnock and Doon Valley	42,950	616	14·3	Lab
Cunninghame	139,100	1,668	12·0	Lab
Dumbarton	78,580	1,220	15·5	NOC[1]
East Kilbride	84,200	745	8·8	Lab
Eastwood	60,580	343	5·7	Con
City of Glasgow	687,590	12,998	18·9	Lab
Hamilton	106,780	1,198	11·2	Lab
Inverclyde	91,600	1,329	14·5	Lab
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	81,350	1,045	12·8	NOC[1]
Kyle and Carrick	113,400	1,762	15·5	Con
Monklands	103,990	1,580	15·2	Lab
Motherwell	144,750	1,813	12·5	Lab
Renfrew	200,930	2,572	12·8	Lab
Strathkelvin	86,410	904	10·5	Lab
Tayside	391,900	18,123	46·2	NOC[1]
Angus	94,820	890	9·4	SNP
City of Dundee	172,120	3,064	17·8	Lab
Perth and Kinross	124,960	1,047	8·4	Con
Orkney Islands Area	19, 580	1,654	84·5	Ind
Shetland Islands Area	22,500	2,519	112·0	Ind
Western Isles Islands Area	29,420	2,277	77·4	Ind

[1] No party in overall control.

Schools Inspectors

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the role of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The parents charter in Scotland underlined the central role of independent inspection in assuring the quality of school education.

In carrying forward the principles of the charter, therefore, it is appropriate to affirm the important role of Her Majesty's inspectors, which was last described in a policy statement issued in 1983 by the then Secretary of State.

Reports by Her Majesty's inspectors have been published in recent years on more than half the schools and colleges in Scotland and on most colleges of education. Reports have also been published on educational matters of national significance in all sectors of education, such as aspects of the curriculum and school management. These reports have provided a basis for assessing standards, identifying needs and formulating guidance to the system. Also, in response to public concern to raise educational standards in a highly competitive world and to increase accountability, the Government have promoted a number of measures to improve and strengthen the education system in Scotland, and have pursued new policies and new programmes to this end.

It is important that we have an inspection system that is independent of the providers of the education service. Education provision in Scotland is the responsibility of local education authorities or, in the case of independent and other schools, boards of governors, who also have responsibility for the allocation of resources. Her Majesty's inspectors will remain directly accountable to me. These arrangements will allow the inspectorate to continue to make and to publish independent and objective assessments of the standards and quality of education provision in Scotland. The effectiveness of their contribution rests firmly on their ability to offer such impartial judgments. Their appointment by royal warrant underscores their independent status.

The parents charter in Scotland undertakes that parents and the public will be kept fully informed of the state of the education service, the performance of individual schools and the progress of pupils. It commits the Government to ensuring that those responsible for providing education report regularly on their performance and on their standards. The approach to quality assurance in the charter envisages regular planning, internal review and public reporting every two years by each school to its school board. The inspectorate has recently published

guidance on how it assesses the quality of education in a school so as to assist authorities, teachers and parents to interpret how well a school is performing. Each school will be required to set out in a school development plan its educational achievements, including examination results, over the previous two years and its plans for a two year period ahead. This plan will be available to the parents of all existing and prospective pupils. It is an important objective that all those involved in education should be part of the total effort to maintain and improve quality.

I look to Her Majesty's inspectorate in Scotland to monitor and report on the implementation of these commitments, in the first instance through its inspection and audit of the school system. I look to its reports to provide frank and clear assessments of the strengths and weaknesses in schools and colleges, in teaching and learning, in attainment, in aspects of the curriculum and in management. The first priority of its reports will be to assess the standards being achieved and the arrangements made to monitor and improve these standards. They will identify good performance, and where performance is not good enough they will say what has been done; and they will assess value for money, in collaboration with the Accounts Commission as appropriate.

To further the aims of the charter the conduct and outcome of inspection will be made more public and more open. Henceforth, there will be discussion with the school board early in each inspection so that the views and concerns of parents are ascertained and can be taken fully into account in the inspection. Also, arrangements will be made to let local business men and women know through their local enterprise company and chamber of commerce of the intention to inspect a secondary school in their area and to give them an opportunity to offer the inspectors their views in advance; they will also receive copies of the relevant report. The practice of publishing a full report on each school inspection will be retained, but, in addition, a short summary of the report will be published for the convenience of parents. The action those responsible for provision intend to take in response to inspection recommendations and a report on the subsequent follow-up inspection visit will also be made available to parents and school board members. Steps are being taken to recruit as Her Majesty's inspectors people who have substantive, relevant experience gained beyond education and to involve lay people in inspections, with the objective of having lay participation in all inspection teams from school session 1994-95.

It will be a function of Her Majesty's inspectorate—through its newly formed audit unit—to monitor the performance of all schools and colleges through scrutiny of school and college development plans, examination results, attendance and truancy figures, the destination of leavers, costs and the findings of its inspections. I will expect it to identify elements requiring attention and improvement in individual institutions and in the system as a whole. These findings, which will be published, will also be used in structuring future inspection programmes. The first audit unit report "Examination Results in Scottish Schools 1990-92" was published on 16 November 1992.

Comprehensive revision and extension of evaluation and reporting arrangements in this way will improve the capacity of the inspectorate to observe performance and progress and to discern and publicise good practice and report weaknesses and omissions which need to be put right. I look for improvements of this type in monitoring and reporting generally to provide a better basis and sharper focus for institutional inspections, and thus a more efficient and effective use of Her Majesty's inspectors in the field. I will fix a target number of inspections of schools and colleges to be completed each year. In 1993-94 I expect to see reports published on around 150 full inspections and the same number of follow-up inspections.

The inspectorate will play a central role in ensuring that the Government's aim of strengthening and improving the education system in Scotland is realised. The senior chief inspector will have direct access to me enabling him to provide frank and objective advice independent of the Scottish Office Education Department. I will expect to receive his professional views about how the Government might best achieve their objectives for education in a sound, coherent and practicable manner, and I will look to the inspectorate to ensure that new initiatives are imple-mented effectively.

It will be important for the inspectorate to maintain close contact with those concerned with the products of the education system, for example, employers and parents, to ensure that their views are known and taken fully into account in the work of the inspectorate, and with those in the wider community who should contribute towards improvements.

The distinctive and central role of HM inspectorate in Scottish education and the value of its work to the education system in the past has been widely recognised. I endorse its role as primarily responsible for independent and objective evaluation of the standards of the education system.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provision he will make for the Government's proposals for limitation of fishing effort for fishing vessels which have already cut capacity through licence aggregation.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* A vessel whose licence entitlement stems from an aggregation entered into since 1991, and does not therefore have a track record of days at sea for that year, will have its days at sea entitlement calculated from the entitlements of the donor vessels.

Cleaning Contracts, Strathclyde

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will use his powers under the Local Government Act 1988 to intervene in respect of the procedures adopted by Strathclyde regional council in awarding cleaning contracts to its own direct labour organisation;

(2) what representations he has received from Initial Cleaning concerning the competitive tendering process operated by Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* It is not the Scottish Office Development Department's practice to reveal the identity of either individuals or companies who put forward complaints about the operation by local authorities of the compulsory competitive tendering process. However, my officials have received a complaint about the award by Strathclyde regional council of contracts for building cleaning to Cleaning Direct, the council's direct services organisation

and have written to the council seeking their comments on it. Once the council's response is received, my right hon. Friend will consider whether it would be appropriate to exercise his sanction powers under the Local Government Act 1988.

KS Properties Ltd

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what investigations he has made into grants and assistance given by the Scottish Development Agency to K S Properties Ltd.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* This involves what was an operational matter for the former Scottish Development Agency. I shall therefore ask the chairman of Scottish Enterprise, as the SDA's successor body, to write to my hon. Friend setting out the details.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sites of special scientific interest were *(a)* damaged and *(b)* destroyed in Scotland in each of the last five years to date.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* Figures are not yet available for the present year. The information for the five years to 1991-92 is as follows:

	Sites damaged
1987-88	25
1988-89	19
1989-90	23
1990-91	30
1991-92	20

No sites of special scientific interest were destroyed in Scotland during this period.

In 1991-92, the area damaged was 2,852 hectares which represents 0·35 per cent. of the total area of sites of special scientific interest in Scotland in that year.

Water Quality

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated level of capital investment required to meet the water supply quality regulations for *(a)* each of the next 15 years and *(b)* the next 15 years in total; and if he will provide a breakdown by each water authority.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* The capital expenditure to meet the requirements of the Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 1990 is estimated at over £1·5 billion. A breakdown in the form requested is not available. However, estimated capital expenditure by authority to meet the requirements of the regulations is given in the table. On top of this, it is estimated that additional works of renewal and refurbishment of cast-iron mains will add some £247 million and that a further £55 million capital expenditure will be incurred by the Central Scotland Water Development Board in connection with the regulations.

Authority	*£ million*
Borders	27·7
Central	77·2
Dumfries and Galloway	74·6
Fife	156·6
Grampian	48·4
Highland	39·6
Lothian	51·4
Strathclyde	719·0
Tayside	71·3
Orkney	8·0
Shetland	4·7
Western Isles	13·1
Total	1,291·6

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated level of capital investment required to refurbish, repair and maintain the infrastructure of *(a)* water supply, *(b)* sewerage and sewage treatment and *(c)* total water and sewerage in (i) each of the next 15 years and (ii) the next 15 years in total; and if he will provide a breakdown by water authority.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* Details of capital expenditure requirements are not available in the form requested. However, for 1992-93, renewal, renovation and replacement of water mains, sewers and treatment works and plant accounts for about 19 per cent. of authorities' planned expenditure on water supply; and for about 27 per cent. of planned expenditure on sewerage and sewage treatment.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated level of capital investment required to meet the water supply quality regulations for the years 1989-90 to 1992-93 inclusive at *(a)* current prices and *(b)* constant 1991-92 prices, using gross domestic product deflator; and if he will provide a breakdown by each water authority.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* The Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 1990 came into force on 1 May 1990. The estimated capital expenditure requirements in the period from 1990-91 to 1992-93 to meet the regulations are given in the table.

Estimated capital expenditure needs arising from Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 1990

£ million

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Borders			
Cash prices	0·9	1·3	2·5
1991-92[1] prices	1·0	1·3	2·4
Central			
Cash prices	0·6	1·4	1·6
1991-92 prices	0·6	1·4	1·5
Dumfries and Galloway			
Cash prices	2·1	1·0	1·6
1991-92 prices	2·2	1·0	1·5
Fife			
Cash prices	0·0	0·7	1·5
1991-92 prices	0·0	0·7	1·4
Grampian			
Cash prices	1·8	3·4	10·1
1991-92 prices	1·9	3·4	9·6
Highland			
Cash prices	2·3	4·3	3·3
1991-92 prices	2·5	4·3	3·2
Lothian			
Cash prices	1·1	2·1	4·0
1991-92 prices	1·2	2·1	3·8
Strathclyde			
Cash prices	20·0	31·3	40·4

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
1991-92 prices	21·4	31·3	38·6
Tayside			
Cash prices	0·5	0·4	1·8
1991-92 prices	0·5	0·4	1·7
Orkney			
Cash prices	0·4	1·1	0·9
1991-92 prices	0·4	1·1	0·9
Shetland			
Cash prices	0·8	0·8	0·6
1991-92 prices	0·9	0·8	0·6
Western Isles			
Cash prices	0·6	1·5	1·8
1991-92 prices	0·6	1·5	1·7
Scotland[2]			
Cash prices	31·1	49·5	71·4
1991-92 prices	33·3	49·5	68·3

[1]1991-92 prices based on the GDP deflator at market prices.
[2]Includes expenditure by Central Scotland Water Development Board.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated level of capital investment required which would allow *(a)* water supply, *(b)* sewerage and sewage treatment and *(c)* total water and sewerage to comply with EC directives in (i) each of the next 15 years and (ii) the next 15 years in total; and if he will provide a breakdown by water authority.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* Breakdowns of capital expenditure requirements are not available in the form requested. However, estimated capital expenditure needs to meet the requirements of the EC urban waste water treatment directive by the end of 2005 are given in the table. Information on investment in water supply is given in my answer to the hon. Member's earlier question.

Estimated capital expenditure needs arising from EC urban waste water treatment directive

	1999-00 £ thousand	2000-01 £ thousand	2001-02 £ thousand	2002-03 £ thousand	2003-04 £ thousand	2004-05 £ thousand	Total £ thousand
Borders	4,850	2,750	1,400	1,150	1,150	714	31,410
Central	850	550	350	300	300	205	13,299
Dumfries and Galloway	3,650	4,600	3,100	2,500	2,000	1,400	52,140
Fife	9,100	5,200	2,600	2,200	2,200	1,350	102,872
Grampian	28,000	12,000	5,000	6,000	9,000	14,500	219,330
Highland	2,379	1,795	1,750	2,475	1,775	605	81,053
Lothian	16,250	16,950	9,197	5,400	5,000	400	153,748
Strathclyde	59,745	35,500	17,000	15,550	16,550	15,300	421,704
Tayside	30,727	17,200	6,230	2,710	2,000	500	211,566
Orkney	1,530	900	450	360	360	270	17,550
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—	7,771
Western Isles	4,600	2,500	550	—	—	—	12,000
Total	161,681	99,945	47,627	38,645	40,335	35,244	1,324,443

Estimated capital expenditure needs arising from EC urban waste water treatment directive

	1992-93 £ thousand	1993-94 £ thousand	1994-95 £ thousand	1995-96 £ thousand	1996-97 £ thousand	1997-98 £ thousand	1998-99 £ thousand
Borders	1,318	1,833	1,492	1,528	2,175	5,300	5,750
Central	3,647	1,753	614	923	2,117	840	850
Dumfries and Galloway	920	3,215	4,265	4,165	7,285	7,940	7,100
Fife	5,045	9,190	12,962	16,475	15,700	10,000	10,850
Grampian	6,263	12,787	16,960	19,190	26,250	32,380	31,000
Highland	3,320	9,737	13,775	15,188	14,190	7,955	6,109
Lothian	5,436	6,973	14,877	19,084	19,031	17,650	17,500
Strathclyde	3,653	7,460	18,315	42,789	53,652	67,240	68,950
Tayside	4,438	7,623	7,618	26,420	25,500	33,500	47,100
Orkney	2,250	3,950	1,150	1,200	1,530	1,710	1,800
Shetland	1,545	5,695	520	11	—	—	—
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	50	4,300
Total	37,835	70,216	92,548	146,973	167,430	184,565	201,399

WALES

Earnings

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the average male earnings in Wales in each year since 1979 adjusted for inflation.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is given in the table. Earnings are expressed in real terms at April 1992 prices using the retail prices index.

Average weekly earnings—Full-time males[1]

April	£
[2]1979	246·6
[2]1980	247·2
[2]1981	245·7
[2]1982	248·8
1983	254·4
1984	259·7
1985	262·2
1986	270·6
1987	278·6
1988	285·7
1989	289·7
1990	286·9

April	£
1991	292·1
1992	299·2

Source: New Earnings Surveys.

[1] Whose pay for the survey period was not affected by absence.

[2] Since 1983, earnings are for all those on adult rates. Figures from earlier surveys were for over-18s only and have been converted to be comparable with current definitions.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the increase in average adult earnings in Wales *(a)* between April 1990 and April 1991, and *(b)* between April 1991 and April 1992.

Mr. David Hunt: The average earnings of all full-time employees on adult rates increased by 8·7 per cent. between April 1990 and April 1991. For the period from April 1991 to April 1992 the increase was 7·4 per cent. (Source: New Earnings Survey)

Breast Cancer

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the recorded number of breast cancer cases in Wales for each year since 1981.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest information on the recorded number of new breast cancer cases for Welsh residents is given in the following table:

Year	Female	Male	Total
1981	1,354	15	1,369
1982	1,483	11	1,494
1983	1,505	14	1,519
1984	1,572	21	1,593
1985	1,728	27	1,755
1986	1,595	17	1,612
1987	1,674	40	1,714
1988	1,856	12	1,868

Source: Welsh Cancer Registry.

AIDS

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to inform teenagers in Wales of the dangers posed by AIDS.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: At national level the Health Education Authority's UK HIV/AIDS mass media campaign, comprising TV and cinema productions together with radio advertising, continues to target amongst others, young people.

In Wales a wide range of health promotion literature about HIV/AIDS is made available by the Health Promotion Authority for Wales, which also specifically targets young people, through education projects undertaken from within its healthy sexuality programme.

The Welsh Office has made additional funds available to district health authorities for the appointment of health promotion officers dealing with the prevention of HIV/AIDS. These officers undertake a range of activities aimed specifically at young people, including the development of young persons clinics, visiting youth organisations, schools and higher education centres.

In schools, the national curriculum programme of study for science contains a requirement to teach secondary age pupils about HIV/AIDS. The Welsh Office makes grant available to fund teacher training and the appointment of county advisers in health education, including education and HIV/AIDS.

A guide for the education service on HIV and AIDS has been issued to all schools in Wales.

Foyer Hostel Schemes

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assistance his Department is giving directly or through Housing for Wales to the development of foyer hostel schemes in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The principal focus of attention as regards foyer-type schemes relates to the network project in Cardiff for which the Department is providing funding of £800,000 over a three-year period to support young single vulnerable homeless people with special or severe difficulties.

Document Costs

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the costs to his Department of (1) publication of the appropriate ring files and subsequent updating of the national curriculum folders (2) publishing, producing and distributing the parents charter booklet (3) reproducing the Welsh version of the national curriculum mathematics document, of correcting mistakes in the original version (4) producing and distributing the document to explain about schools opting out of local education authority control and (5) publishing information on the work of school governors to encourage parents to take up school governing duties.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not readily available. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Sheep Premium

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what response he has received from the European Commission to his representations concerning delays involving mistakes on claim forms for sheep annual premium payments.

Mr. David Hunt: The European Commission has agreed that errors can be corrected without penalty (i) where component figures on a claim form are correct but are added incorrectly (ii) when farmers themselves contact the Department to point out an error before the beginning of the relevant retention period, or during the retention period where the correct figures can be verified from a hill livestock compensatory allowance claim form and a flock count.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, column 9, whether he will publish a table by county of the disallowed claims for sheep annual premium for each of the years *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990, *(c)* 1991 and *(d)* 1992 to 30 October.

Mr. David Hunt: I will write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Higher Education

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to promote higher education among secondary school pupils.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Programmes of careers education and guidance in schools and the local education authority careers service offer pupils advice and opportunities to discuss options for school leavers, including higher education. In addition, there are a number of specific initiatives to encourage young people to consider careers in engineering, science and technology which may involve higher education. The teaching as a career—TASC—unit promotes and publicises teaching and teacher training to potential recruits. This year TASC has been specifically targeting sixth formers.

River Dee Crossing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will allocate extra moneys to Clwyd county council's transport supplementary grant to enable the third River Dee crossing project to start in 1993-94.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The transport grant settlement will allow the authority to spend over £2 million on preparation work in 1993-94. A main works start will be made in 1994-95.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his Department's policy on the proposed third River Dee crossing.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend announced on 14 December that funds would be made availalble to start the Dee crossing in 1994-95.

Vehicle Pollution

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will bring forward proposals for a new framework for vehicle nuisance control in Wales to include noise, smoke and gaseous pollution detection.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No. Regulations made under the Road Traffic Act 1988 on these matters are periodically updated in line with technical developments and usually in concert with our European Community partners.

Transport Supplementary Grant

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to announce transport supplementary grant for each of the counties of Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend announced the 1993-94 transport grant settlement on 14 December.

Garden Festival

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the prospective revenue, relative to budget, of sales of land for *(a)* housing and *(b)* commercial development arising from the ending of Garden Festival Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The joint venture partners of Blaenau Gwent borough council, Gwent county council and Welsh Development Agency estimate revenue from sales of land to be £5 million and £2 million for housing and commercial development respectively over the next six years.

Agricultural Training Board

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his plans for the future status of the Agricultural Training Board in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: My ministerial colleagues and I will be considering the role and status of the Agricultural Training Board in the light of the numerous responses we have received to our consultation paper.

Development Area Status

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of farm land in Wales has the status of development area or special development area.

Mr. David Hunt: Approximately 81 per cent. of agricultural land in Wales lies within the less favoured area —LFA. Approximately 57 per cent. is classed as LFA (severely disadvantaged) and 24 per cent. as LFA (disadvantaged).

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total cost of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments in Wales in the last financial year; what is his estimate for the current financial year; and what financial provision he has made for the forthcoming financial year.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

	£ million
1991-92	42·130
1992-93	[1]34·0
1993-94	[1]32·380

[1] estimate

Notes

1. Expenditure in 1991-92 was higher than normal because of a larger than usual carry over of claims from the previous year.
2. The 1992-93 forecast takes into account the changes in the 1993 HLCA payment rates announced on 10 December as far as the Department is able. Actual 1992-93 expenditure will be published in the 1992 Appropriation Accounts.
3. The 1993-94 provision will be published in the 1993-94 Main Supply Estimate Class XV, Vote 1. The actual amounts paid in 1993-94 will depend on the HLCA payment rates that will apply in that year. The HLCA payment rates and other scheme arrangements to apply from 1 January 1994 will be considered in the context of the 1993 autumn review of the economic conditions and prospects for LFA farmers.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to announce the new rates of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments which will apply in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) on 10 December 1992, *Official Report*, column 757, by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of farm stock in Wales

which qualify for hill livestock compensatory allowance payments in development areas and special development areas.

Mr. David Hunt: The total numbers of animals which attracted hill livestock compensatory allowance in 1991 were as follows:

	Cows	*Sheep*
Less favoured area (severely disadvantaged)	126,344	3,372,804
Less favoured area (disadvantaged)	43,902	764,156

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to maintain the real value of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments in development areas and special development areas in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: HLCA payment rates and other scheme arrangements are determined following the annual autumn review of the economic conditions and prospects for farmers in the less favoured areas. The outcome of this year's review and the HLCA payment rates to apply from 1 Janaury 1993 were announced on 10 December 1992.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for the last financial year *(a)* the total amount of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments, *(b)* the total number of claimants and *(c)* the proportion of these payments which were paid to farmers farming land with the status of special development area.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

1991-92
(a) £42·130 million
(b) 16,254
(c) 92 per cent.

Conservation Grant Scheme

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, column 9, whether he will publish a table by county of the disallowed claims under the farm and conservation grant scheme for each of the years *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990, *(c)* 1991 and *(d)* 1992 to 30 September.

Mr. David Hunt: I will write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Rural Initiative

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has under his rural initiative for 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: A total of £6·6 million has been allocated for the 1993-94 round of the rural initiative capital grants scheme, an increase of 10 per cent. on the current year. Applications have already been invited from local authorities and must be received by Friday 18 December 1992. These will be considered and assessed and an announcement of successful projects made in due course.

Provision has also been made which will enable the Department, its agencies and other organisations to continue to enhance the development of the economic, social and environmental fabric of rural Wales.

Tenant Participation

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funding his Department has provided for the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (Wales) in each year since its creation.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Funding provided each year by the Welsh Office for the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (Wales) since its inception is as follows:

	£
1992-93	157,878
1991-92	127,597
1990-91	83,282
1989-90	59,549
1988-89	47,375

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department will set up an inquiry into solvent abuse, its implications on vandalism and its criminalisation.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I receive advice from a number of individuals and bodies in relation to drug misuse. No evidence has been presented which would justify holding a separate inquiry into solvent abuse.

Radiotherapy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of women domiciled in Wales treated for *(a)* breast cancer and *(b)* cervical cancer who have suffered serious long-term side effects as a consequence of radiotherapy treatment undergone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet members of the Radiotherapy Action Group Exposure to discuss the consequences to women of long-term side effects of radiotherapy treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet this group. The treatment of cancers by radiotherapy is governed by clinical practice within a legislative framework. All patients discuss the implications of radiotherapy with the responsible consultant before the course of treatment begins.

GP Fund Holding

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the impact of general practitioner fund holding on district health authorities.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are 24 fund-holding practices —seven first wave, 17 second wave—and two smaller practices in the second wave are fund holding on a trial basis.

Only the first wave practices have completed a full year of fund holding and it is too early to quantify the impact of fund holding on district health authorities.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will itemise how general practitioner fund holders have spent the money saved on hospital budgets;

(2) what is his estimate of the financial consequences of general practitioner fund-holding savings upon *(a)* non-fund-holding general practitioner practices budgets and *(b)* the budgets of district health authorities; and if he will make a statement;

(3) which general practitioner fund holders in Wales have voluntarily returned savings made on hospital budgets to district health authorities.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Only the seven practices in the first wave in Wales have completed a full year of fund holding. Savings can only be identified when the accounts have been audited and the audit reports have not yet been received.

Until such time as savings are identified it is impossible to consider their disposition or estimate the financial consequences, if any, on non-fund-holding general practitioner services or district health authorities.

Drink Driving

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to combat drunken driving in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government's strategy is both to change people's attitudes so that drinking and driving is increasingly seen as socially unacceptable and to encourage tougher enforcement. To that end I plan to continue in Wales with the annual summer and Christmas/new year publicity campaigns. Carefully targeted publicity campaigns and enforcement have helped to reduce the numbers killed in drink-drive incidents over the last decade by more than half.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many fatalities resulting from drink-related driving accidents were recorded in Wales in 1992; what were the comparable figures for 1990 and 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The numbers of fatalities in accidents where at least one driver gave a positive breath test are given in the table.

Information is available only where the driver was breath-tested within 12 hours of the accident occurrence. Figures exclude cases where breath test results were not available for medical or other reasons and provide no more than an indication of changes in drinking and driving patterns.

	Number
1990	7
1991	4
[1]1992	3

[1] Available data for 1992: data to end of July for Dyfed-Powys and south Wales, to end of August for north Wales and to end of October for Gwent.

Free-range Turkeys

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what free-range turkey farms are licensed to operate in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: There is no legal requirement for free-range turkey farms to be licensed.

Flood Damage

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional resources have been made available by his Department to assist those affected by the recent flooding in Wales to restore their homes.

Mr. David Hunt: It is the responsibility of householders to ensure that they have adequate insurance for their homes and contents. I have already met the chief executive of the Association of British Insurers who has assured me that all claims submitted to members of the association will be dealt with expeditiously.

In addition, any homes so badly damaged that they now fail to meet the statutory fitness standard may qualify for mandatory home renovation grants. Discretionary assistance may also be available for certain works over and above that standard.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what issues his Advisory Committee for Wales on National Rivers Authority Functions has considered since the publication of its first annual report.

Mr. David Hunt: The committee's second annual report has been published today and I will arrange for copies to be placed in the Library of the House as soon as possible.

Valuation Tribunal Offices

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what decisions he has made on the future structure of valuation tribunal offices in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I have considered carefully the responses to my consultation paper, "Review of Valuation Tribunal Offices" and the representations made by the Valuation Tribunals Consultative Committee for Wales when my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State met the committee on 11 December. I have concluded that the valuation tribunal service in Wales must improve its efficiency and that this is best achieved by reorganising the present offices so that one office serves two county valuation tribunals. I propose that:

(a) the Mid and South Glamorgan valuation tribunals should continue to operate from their joint office in Cardiff;

(b) the Powys and Gwent valuation tribunals should be administered from a joint office in Newport;

(c) the West Glamorgan and Dyfed valuation tribunals should be administered from a joint office in Carmarthen;

(d) the Gwynedd and Clwyd valuation tribunal should be administered from a joint office in Prestatyn or another agreed location in north Wales.

I propose to set an overall staffing complement of 20 compared with the present complement of 24·6 staff. These arrangements are estimated to yield savings of £250,000 in a full year. The offices will provide a service in the Welsh language where required and tribunal hearings will continue to be held at locations convenient to appellants.

I am setting out my decisions in a letter to representatives of the valuation tribunal service. This letter and a list of those who responded to the consultation will be placed in the Library of the House.

I intend that the detailed timetable for establishing the new joint offices, arrangements for staff, and the office location in north Wales, should be settled through consultation with the valuation tribunals concerned.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will shortly meet the presidents of the tribunals affected to discuss implementation.

National Health Service Funding

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funding he proposes to make available to the national health service in Wales in 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: Subject to parliamentary approval, planned provision for the NHS in Wales will increase to £1,974 million net next year. Of this sum £1,465 million is earmarked for hospital and community health services—HCHS. This includes an increase in HCHS revenue expenditure of 3·9 per cent. compared to this year—well in excess of forecast inflation.

The new money that the Government are making available will provide the NHS in Wales with a increase of 5·2 per cent. on comparable expenditure plans for last year. In addition health authorities will keep an extra £17 million generated by cash-releasing cost improvements programmes and through income generation.

Over the lifetime of this Government, the resources made available for the NHS in Wales have grown by a staggering 71 per cent. over and above general inflation. Next year NHS net expenditure will increase to £684 per year for every man, woman and child in Wales—over £2,730 for an average family of four. That is a tremendous achievement.

Council Housing

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to extend competitive tendering to the management of council housing in the light of the representations received following the publication of the "Competing for Quality in Housing" consultation paper.

Mr. David Hunt: I have given very careful consideration to all the representations received. Two key issues emerged: timing relative to the proposed local government reorganisation in Wales and the apprehension that the consultation rights of tenants were not being improved.

With regard to local government reorganisation, I recognise the arguments that have been put forward for delaying the introduction of competitive tendering in housing management until reorganisation has taken place. I have therefore decided that the first contracts will be let from 1 April 1997. Nevertheless, it is my intention to charge the "shadow" unitary authorities in Wales with the task of preparing for the introduction of competitive tendering when they are established. I propose to issue further advice on timetabling, core housing management functions, contract size and the question of banding in due course.

As regards tenants' rights, over the last few years the Government have strongly promoted tenant consultation and participation. Provisions included in the Housing and Urban Development Bill would give tenants enhanced powers to influence the ways in which their homes are managed practically and continuously. The introduction of contractual and tendering arrangements will also dramatically increase the scope for tenant consultation and involvement. I look forward to responses on these issues in the light of the further consultation paper, "Tenant Involvement and the Right to Manage", shortly to be in circulation.

The issue of the client and contractor roles is a very important one. In resolving it, we shall in effect define what for many years to come may be the "core" housing functions of local authorities in respect of the homes they own. In due course, I shall publish a guidance note defining the core functions of local authority housing management not suitable for competitive tendering.

Car Leasing

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many non-departmental public bodies had fully expensed executive car-leasing schemes in the year 1991-92; how many have revised them since; if he will issue updated guidelines on such schemes to all such bodies in Wales; if he will list which bodies had schemes which involve *(a)* free petrol and oil to executives benefiting, *(b)* no contribution to the leasing costs and *(c)* contributions of less than two sevenths of the total lease costs to the executives in the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt *[pursuant to his answer, 15 December 1992, c. 116]:* I regret that the answer contained an error, the correct answer is as follows: One non-departmental public body, the Welsh Development Agency, had an executive car leasing scheme which in 1991-92 did not require repayments for personal mileage. Repayments for petrol and oil commenced from 1 April 1992. The Development Board for Rural Wales had a scheme which required no contribution to leasing costs for some executives, including the chief executive, and less than two sevenths from others. Details are given in the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on the DBRW's 1991-92 accounts, and this matter is being pursued by the Welsh Office. Guidance produced by the Treasury's central unit on purchasing on car contract hire or lease schemes was passed to Welsh non-departmental public bodies earlier this year.

ENVIRONMENT

Building Research Establishment

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 17 November, *Official Report*, column *119*, what was the cost to the Exchequer of the visits of the chief executive of the Building Research Establishment to *(a)* the USA and *(b)* Finland during the last 12 months.

Mr. Baldry: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to Mr. Roger Courtney as chief executive of the Building Research Establishment.

Letter from R. Courtney to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 14 December 1992:

COSTS OF OVERSEAS VISITS

The Secretary of State has asked me to respond to your further question asking the costs to the Exchequer of two recent fact-finding visits abroad.

The visit to the National Institute for Standards and Technology took place on the return journey from a Board meeting in Mexico City of the International Council for

Building Research Studies and Documentation (CIB). The two days that I spent in Washington entailed no extra air fare but cost £206·54 in subsistence and minor expenses.

The visit to the Technical Research Institute, Finland (VTT) was combined with attendance by invitation at a meeting of heads of national research institutes. The three day meeting cost a total of £881·09 in fares and other expenses.

Customs House, Dundee

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the contractors employed by the Government to carry out the recent refurbishment of the Customs house building in Dundee and the cost of each contract entered into.

Mr. Baldry: One contractor, Stewart McGlashen Ltd., was employed by the Property Services Agency in my Department. The total cost of the works, excluding fees and VAT, was £1·1 million.

Construction Subcontractors

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take to ensure that main contractors in the construction industry follow the Government's prompt payment policy with respect to payment to subcontractors.

Mr. Baldry: Contractual arrangements in the construction industry are particularly complex. The Government have announced their proposal for a general review of contracting and are seeking the co-operation of the industry. We are also seeking to develop improved provisions for Government contracts and already require companies, wishing to be added to the list of approved contractors for Government work, to give general undertakings on prompt payment.

Housing and Urban Development Bill

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each consultation exercise which his Department is currently engaged in, in respect of the Housing and Urban Development Bill; and if he will in each case state the purpose of that consultation, the relevant clause of the Bill to which it relates, the bodies being consulted and the deadline for submissions to him.

Mr. Baldry: The various provisions in the Bill have been subject to extensive consultation. In addition, my Department is consulting now on the detailed operation of the proposed new right, contained in clause 109 of the Bill, for local authority tenants to receive compensation for improvements they carry out to their homes. The consultation paper, "Compensation for Tenants' Improvements", was issued jointly by the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office on 4 December 1992. Responses are due by 22 January 1993.

My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Wales have today announced the publication of a further consultation paper entitled, "Tenant Involvement and the Right to Manage". This seeks views on arrangements for the proposed greater involvement of local authority tenants in housing management delegations—clause 114—and the proposed new right to manage for tenants who wish to assume direct responsibility for the management of their estates—clause 115. Responses are due by 26 February 1993. We also intend issuing consultation papers on the implementation of the proposed right to repair—clause 108—and powers relating to the provision of welfare services for tenants in local authority accommodation—clauses 110 to 112.

In addition, we are consulting on proposals for changes in the arrangements for voluntary transfers of local authority owned housing to housing associations. Should my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State decide to proceed with these proposals, legislation would be required. One option would be to provide for the latter by means of amendment to the Housing and Urban Development Bill. A consultation paper on the proposals entitled, "Local Authority Housing in England: Voluntary Transfers", was issued on 18 November 1992. Responses are due by 8 January 1993.

Lists of the bodies being consulted for each of the three current consultation exercises mentioned above have been placed in the library.

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish a consultation paper on the new framework for tenant involvement and the right to manage in the Housing and Urban Development Bill.

Sir George Young: I have today, together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, published a consultation paper entitled "Tenant Involvement and the Right to Manage". The consultation paper seeks views from interested parties on the Government's proposals to increase tenant involvement as part of the process of delegation of housing management to other organisations —including delegations made as a result of extending CCT to housing management—and on the new right to manage. Both proposals are fully in line with the citizens charter and represent one of the most significant enhancements of tenants' rights seen in recent times.

The Government's proposal will for the first time establish a framework—first, by good practice, but later, if need be, through regulations—for the most extensive package of consultation rights ever put before Parliament. Tenants will now be involved, through the process of housing management CCT, in drawing up the specification for the management of their estate, helping to select the managing organisation and monitoring its performance. The cornerstone of these measures is a new statutory right for council tenants to manage their own estates, which removes at a stroke, the obstacles which some reluctant authorities continue to put in the path of tenants who wish to manage things themselves.

These proposals will be seen as a watershed in the history of tenant participation in this country, and will I am sure be widely welcomed by all who read and reflect on the consultation paper.

The powers which will give effect to these proposals are contained in clauses 114 and 115 of the Housing and Urban Development Bill.

Copies of the consultation paper will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Private Rented Housing

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what initiatives he has taken during the last five years to revive the privately rented housing sector; what progress has been made as a result of these initiatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: A number of initiatives have been taken during the past five years to revive the private rented sector.

Deregulation measures in the Housing Act 1988 were brought forward to stem the decline in the quality and supply of private rented accommodation. Landlords are now able to let property under new assured and assured shorthold tenancies at market rents. The 1990 private renters survey show that the number of new tenancies let increased by 50,000—4 per cent.—between 1988 and 1990.

The extension of the business expansion scheme to companies letting properties on assured tenancies has been very successful. It is estimated that over £1,200 million has been raised so far, providing about 20,000 additional homes to rent.

Under our housing associations as managing agents scheme—HAMA—funding over three years is being made available through the Housing Corporation's promotional and advisory grant regime, for at least 30 HAMA teams to be set up and running throughout England beginning early next year. This follows a successful pilot scheme with five associations during this year. Under HAMA a housing association provides a full management service for the property, encouraging landlords into the market by removing much of the hassle involved with lettings, and assisting local authorities in providing a good-quality, cost-effective means of executing their responsibilities to the statutory homeless. Selected housing associations were invited to put forward proposals in October. The successful housing associations will be informed in January 1993.

Our flats over shops scheme attracted bids from 210 local authorities in England applying for resources totalling £41 million in the year 1992-93, of which 57 received supplementary credit approvals totalling £5,047,500. Monitoring is now underway and the invitations to bid for a share of the £10 million available for 1993-94 have recently been issued. The Housing Corporation also provides resources in this area through its social housing over shops programme.

The "rent a room" scheme will encourage people to take in lodgers. The scheme applies to both owner occupiers and tenants who let rooms in their only or main house. Under the scheme, gross rental income of up to £3,250 a year from 1 April will be exempt from income tax.

Interim Development Orders

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department has on the number of applications for registration of interim development order permissions that have been received by each mineral planning authority in England and Wales; how many relate to sites in designated areas; what is the land area involved; and whether the permissions are active or dormant.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not held centrally. However, according to information supplied to my Department on 2 October 1992 by the County Planning Officers Society—CPOS—the national position in England and Wales is as follows.

Total applications, England	508
Total applications, Wales	86
Number of permissions dormant, England	198
Number of permissions dormant, Wales	43
Applications in designated areas, England	126
Applications in designated areas, Wales	39
Land area involved, England	[1]18,042
Land area involved, Wales	[1]2,651

[1] Hectares.

I have placed in the library of the House copies of tables supplied to my Department by the CPOS showing the above information in more detail and broken down by mineral planning authority.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department has on the number of applications for registration of interim development order permissions received by each mineral planning authority in England and Wales that have been accompanied by *(a)* an original, or certified true copy, certificate of interim development order permission, *(b)* an original, or certified true copy, plan of interim development order permission and *(c)* evidence of winning and working; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not held centrally.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the value of land presently held by each urban development corporation.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on Wednesday 8 July 1992, *Official Report*, column *253*.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to ensure that local authorities are able to access ERDF money available within the United Kingdom structural fund programmes.

Mr. Robin Squire: On 30 June 1992 my Department issued to local authorities details of the 1992-93 arrangements for the treatment of ERDF grants through the "other services" block, which covers the generality of ERDF grants for which this Department is responsible. These arrangements ensure that local authorities will receive up to 100 per cent. of supplementary credit capital approvals to provide public expenditure cover for ERDF receipts. From 1993-94 onwards public expenditure cover will be provided for all forecast ERDF receipts.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will release details of how town and parish councils may benefit from new grant cover arrangements for ERDF-eligible projects under the RECHAR programmes.

Mr. Robin Squire: This matter is being discussed with other Departments and it is hoped that advice will be issued in the new year.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish revised guidance for private sector contributions to ERDF eligible projects.

Mr. Robin Squire: My Department is advising applicants that contributions from private bodies to the

costs of schemes undertaken by public or semi-public sponsors may form part of the expenditure eligible for ERDF support to those schemes.

Coal Mining Areas

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how RECHAR 2 is expected to affect the level of central Government funding to those local authorities accountable to coal mining areas.

Mr. Robin Squire: No firm proposals have been received from the European Commission for a second series of RECHAR programmes.

Refugees

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial assistance will be given to local authorities who provide accommodation and other facilities to refugees from the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Robin Squire: As announced by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning on 16 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *54*, we propose to make available a special grant to assist the small number of local authorities worst affected by the recent influx of displaced persons from the former Yugoslav republic. My Department will be writing to local authorities shortly in order to obtain information on which to base the grant.

Charities

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his conclusions on his guidance to local authorities on discretionary rate relief to charities and non-profit making bodies following his survey of local authorities' practices in 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Robin Squire: My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) announced some of the results of our numerical analysis of the results of the survey on 5 November 1991, *Official Report*, column *17*, and 16 December 1991, *Official Report*, column *69*. They show that more relief was given to more recreational clubs in 1990-91 than in 1989-90. Although fewer other non-profit making bodies received relief, the class of property has reduced in size: in 1989-90 it included residential care, educational and welfare institutions which, on introduction of the community charge, lost eligibility for relief. For those still eligible, relief remained about the same level as in 1989-90.

We have no evidence from the survey that authorities are misusing, or indeed failing to use, their discretion. The objective is to give local authorities the chance to tailor the rates bills of a wide range of deserving ratepayers to the local services those organisations provide. These are matters that cannot be prescribed fairly at a national level and which are wholly suited to local decision.

Our guidance on discretionary rate relief appears to have been widely accepted and we have not been alerted to major flaws in it. We therefore do not feel that it needs to be amended. However, we are writing to all local authorities reminding them of the Department's guidance to treat each case on its merits.

Inner Cities

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the results of the recent external evaluation of the inner cities task forces programme.

Mr. Robin Squire: The evaluation of the task forces in Spitalfields, London, Chapeltown and Harehills, Leeds, and Hartlepool was undertaken by PA Cambridge Economic Consultants. Its report is published today. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

I am very pleased to see that this independent evaluation concludes

"In tackling severe people-related problems and deep-seated market failure in the worst part of our inner city areas, the task force programme has demonstrated imagination, flair and flexibility."

Edinburgh Summit

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he will be making concerning the siting of the European Environment Agency following the agreements made at the Edinburgh summit in relation to locations of other EC institutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have placed this subject on the agenda of the meeting of the Environment Council which is taking place in Brussels on 15 and 16 December. I will report on the outcome of that Council immediately thereafter.

Planning and Compensation Act 1991

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to implement proposals for extending environmental assessment to additional projects under the powers enacted in section 15 of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991.

Sir George Young: We received 142 responses to the consultation paper issued on 30 June 1992. A list of the responses has been sent to the Libraries of both Houses and copies of the responses have been placed in the Department of the Environment library at 2 Marsham street.

The proposals have been generally welcomed. There were no overall objections, and only seven objections to individual proposals. In the light of these responses my right hon. and learned Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales propose to amend the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 to incorporate the seven new categories of project proposed in the consultation paper. Amending regulations, which will place minimal demands upon local planning authorities, will be laid in the new year and an explanatory circular will be issued.

Under the new arrangements, the following categories of project will be added to those in schedule 2 to the regulations, the effect of which will be to require environmental assessment—EA—where a particular proposal is likely to have significant environmental effects:

—Trout farming
—Water treatment plant
—Wind generators
—Motorway service areas; and service areas on other roads providing fuelling and restaurant facilities
—Coast protection works
—Golf courses

It is also proposed to amend schedule 1 to the regulations to include privately financed toll roads; the effect of this will be to require environmental assessment for all projects of this kind.

A number of comments were received on the indicative criteria to be included in accompanying guidance, to help authorities in determining whether to require EA for a particular schedule 2 project. These comments will be taken into account in preparing guidance to accompany the amending regulations. The guidance will stress, however, that the test of whether a schedule 2 project requires EA is, in all cases, whether the proposed development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

In addition to extending the scope of environmental assessment, we intend to make some technical amendments to clarify the application of the existing requirements of directive 85/337/EEC on environmental impact assessment, EIA. First, as proposed in the consultation paper, the developer will be required to deposit additional copies of the environmental statement with the Secretary of State; and a provision will require information supplementary to the environmental statement provided by the developer, in response to a formal request from the decision-making authority, to be advertised and forwarded to statutory consultees. Other changes will make clear the precise requirements of article 2(3) of the directive apply concerning exemptions; and require the competent authority to confirm in writing when notifying its decision that it has taken the environmental information into consideration.

Similar amendments are planned by other Government Departments in their regulations implementing directive 85/337, together with amendments to clarify the extent of the competent authority's discretion to require EIA for annex II projects. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland will bring forward their own proposals in due course.

Inland Revenue Rents

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the annual rents paid by the Inland Revenue to Property Holdings in respect of *(a)* Overgate house, Marketgait, Dundee, for Dundee 3 tax district, *(b)* 2 Court House square, Dundee for Dundee 1 tax district, *(c)* Overgate house, Marketgait, Dundee, for Dundee collection offices and *(d)* 2 Court House square, Dundee, for the Dundee tax inquiry centre and the total annual loss incurred by Property Holdings following the surrender of these properties by the Inland Revenue; to which new tenants the properties have been relet; and at what annual rents.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* The rent charges made by Property Holdings on Inland Revenue are as follows:

Overgate house, Dundee
Dundee 3 tax district—£54,936 per annum
Dundee collection—£41,952 per annum
3 Court House square, Dundee
Dundee tax district—£62,088 per annum
Dundee tax enquiry—£21,072 per annum

Negotiations are at an advanced stage on the reallocation of some 418m² of the space to be vacated at Court House square to the Benefits Agency, which will pay the same rent.

Consideration is still being given to the most cost effective options for disposal of the remaining space.

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish all changes to the contracts between British Nuclear Fuels plc and overseas countries made since the original signing in relation to withdrawal from the thermal oxide reprocessing plant programme.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

Details of reprocessing contracts are a matter for the parties concerned. I understand from British Nuclear Fuels plc that none of its overseas customers has sought a change in its contracts to enable it to withdraw from reprocessing in the thermal oxide reprocessing plant.

NORTHERN IRELAND

University of Ulster

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been Government expenditure on buildings at each campus of the university of Ulster since 1984; and what is the number and value of the university capital projects projected from each campus between now and 1995-96.

Mr. Hanley: Government capital expenditure on buildings at each campus of the university of Ulster since 1984 is as follows:

	£ million
Magee	9·96
Jordanstown	0·15
Coleraine	—
Belfast	1·25

In addition, work has recently started on a £6 million extension at the Jordanstown campus, of which the Government, with EC assistance, are funding £5·34 million.

University estimates of capital requirements for each campus between now and 1995-96 are as follows:

	Magee	*Jordanstown*	*Coleraine*	*Belfast*	*Total*
A. New build[1]					
Number of projects	3	4	—	1	8
Total value (£ million)	6·14	5·71	—	2·33	14·18
B. Restructuring[2]					
Number of projects	—	2	1	1	4

	Magee	Jordanstown	Coleraine	Belfast	Total
Total value (£ million)	—	2·69	0·87	2·67	6·23

[1] Additional accommodation.
[2] Space adaptation.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he wil list for each of the four campuses of the university of Ulster the increment of student number increase betwen 1984-85 and 1990-91 and the projected increment of student number increase between 1990-91 and 1995-96.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Campus	Increase in full time equivalent student numbers 1984-85 to 1990-91	Projected[1] increase in full time equivalent student numbers 1990-91 to 1995-96
Belfast	207	106
Coleraine	761	1,189
Jordanstown	34	1,571
Magee	842	661

[1] University of Ulster planning figures.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland show many faculty, department and administrative department headquarters are currently located on each of the four campuses of the university of Ulster.

Mr. Hanley: The university is administered as a unitary institution with its administrative headquarters on the Coleraine campus. Departments and faculties do not have specified campus headquarters. There is one exception, the faculty of art and design, which has a campus base in Belfast.

Privatisations

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to undertake public share flotation when privatising water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: It is too early to say how the sale of water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland will take place. Following my announcement on 15 July of the Government's privatisation plans, the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has commissioned a feasibility study to consider a number of major issues in relation to privatisation, including the options for the method of sale.

Housing Grants

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how long it takes to process, at the Newry and Lisburn Housing Executive grant offices, an application under the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, for *(a)* an improvement grant, *(b)* a replacement grant and *(c)* a repair grant.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but the chief executive has advised me that, because the scheme is in its infancy, processing times have only been identified for two stages of the procedures. The time taken from the date a preliminary inquiry form is received until the applicant is told of his possible contribution to the work is about two weeks in both the Newry and Lisburn grant offices. If an applicant decides to proceed, the time taken for the inspection of his property to determine what work needs to be done and what work qualifies for grant aid is about four weeks in each office. A further four weeks is likely to be required to issue a schedule of works and a formal application form at which stage further progress rests with the applicant to complete the necessary documentation and return the application.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people made application for improvement, replacement and repair grant since 1 October under the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 at the Newry and Lisburn grant offices; and of these how many were refused and what were the reasons for refusals.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Executive, but the chief executive has advised me that 495 and 426 preliminary inquiry forms have been received in the Newry and Lisburn grant offices respectively. He has also advised me that it is not possible at this time to establish which grants have been claimed, as categories of grant can only be established after a property had been inspected. Precise numbers of cases refused are not yet available, but a refusal would only be issued at the preliminary inquiry stage where a property meets the statutory fitness standard.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were refused application forms for improvement grant and repair under the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 from 28 February to 30 September at the Newry and Lisburn grant offices.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Executive, but the chief executive has advised me that during the period 28 February to 30 September 1992 preliminary inquiries were refused by the executive in all offices throughout Northern Ireland. A record of inquiries refused was not kept.

RUC Road Crashes

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many RUC officers died in road crashes in each year since 1980, on duty and off duty; and how many were wearing seat belts.

Mr. Mates: The information for 1980 to 1985 is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information for the years 1986 onwards is as follows:

Year	Killed	On duty	Off duty	Seatbelt usage: Not in use	Seatbelt usage: In use	Seatbelt usage: Not known
1986	7	—	7	7	—	—
1987	3	—	3	3	—	—
1988	8	—	8	7	1	—

Year	Killed	Seatbelt usage: On duty	Off duty	Not in use	In use	Not known
1989	6	2	4	4	—	2
1990	4	1	3	2	1	1
1991	5	—	5	5	—	—
1992[1]	2	—	2	1	—	1

[1] To 10 December.

Holding Centres

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to announce the appointment of an independent commissioner for the holding centres.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am pleased to announce that I have today appointed Sir Louis Blom-Cooper QC as independent commissioner for the holding centres. Sir Louis is a highly respected legal figure who will bring considerable experience to the post. The principal role of the commissioner will be to provide further reassurance that persons suspected of involvement in terrorism who are detained in the holding centres are fairly treated and that the wide-ranging statutory and administrative safeguards already in place are being properly applied. A copy of the commissioner's terms of reference will be placed in the Library. Sir Louis' appointment as commissioner will be for three years in the first instance. He will take up his duties early in the new year.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the cumulative amount of extra spending over and above ordinary uprating on *(a)* supplementary benefit and income support child rates, *(b)* the family premium and *(c)* family credit in gross and net terms since 1979.

Mr. Burt: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the sum total of extra help given to low-income families since the 1988 reforms will, from next April, be worth around £1 billion a year.

Personal Pensions

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the average annual earnings of those who have contracted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme to take out personal pensions.

Miss Widdecombe: The mean annual earnings of United Kingdom personal pension holders in the tax year 1990-91, the latest year for which figures are available, was about £10,500.

Note: The estimate is based on a sample of Inland Revenue end of year returns.

Mothers

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy towards encouraging mothers to stay at home.

Mr. Burt: The Government's policy is that mothers should generally be treated equally, whether they decide to stay at home or not.

Retirement Incomes

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) of 6 November, *Official Report*, columns *462-65*, if he will break down the figures in order to distinguish between the retirement incomes of husbands and wives, single men and single women respectively.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is in the table:

Receipt of occupational pensions

Group	Percentage with an occupational pension	Mean amount of occupational pension for those in receipt (£ per week)	Median amount of occupational pension for those in receipt (£ per week)
Single men aged 65+	63	44·80	26·40
Single women aged 60+	46	38·00	21·00
Men in pensioner couples	67	65·00	31·60
Women in pensioner couples	15	28·20	16·20

Notes:
1. Estimates are based on data from "Occupational Pension Schemes 1987", a survey by the Government Actuary (HMSO) and the 1988 Family Expenditure Survey.
2. Pension amounts at 1988 levels.
3. Pensioner couples are defined as couples in which the husband is over state pension age. The figures will therefore include some women aged under 60 and exclude some women who have reached state pension age.

Family Credit

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest take-up figure for family credit in *(a)* Strathclyde, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* England and Wales and *(d)* the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Recent research by the Policy Studies Institute, commissioned by the Department, has estimated family credit take-up in Great Britain 1991 as 70 per cent. by expenditure and 64 per cent. by caseload. Figures broken down by region are not available.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the number of families claiming family credit in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland as a whole which are (i) one-parent families and (ii) two-parent families; what is the number of children in each category of families; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The number of families claiming family credit, as at the end of April 1992, the latest date for which information is available, is as follows:

	Two-parent families	One-parent families	Total
Strathclyde			
With 1 child	2,500	6,600	9,100
With 2 children	3,680	3,640	7,320

	Two-parent families	*One-parent families*	*Total*
With 3 children	2,500	1,200	3,700
With 4 children	1,060	180	1,240
Total	9,740	11,620	21,360
Scotland			
With 1 child	5,220	13,940	19,160
With 2 children	8,500	7,340	15,840
With 3 children	5,280	2,460	7,740
With 4 children	2,700	500	3,200
Total	21,700	24,240	45,940

Note:
Source: 5 per cent sample of family credit recipients on 30 April 1992. Some values may be based on a small number of observations.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of families claiming family credit in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* the most recent date for the current year in (i) Strathclyde and (ii) Scotland.

Mr. Burt: The number of families receiving family credit at the end of April 1990, April 1991 and April 1992, the latest date for which information is available, is as follows:

	April 1990	*April 1991*	*April 1992*
Strathclyde	16,840	18,900	21,360
Scotland	37,160	41,060	45,940

Note:
Source: 5 per cent sample of family credit recipients. Some values may be based on a small number of observations.

Family Support

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many two-parent families are in receipt of *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit and *(c)* disability working allowance; and for each benefit how many two-parent families are estimated to include a qualifying child for the purposes of the Child Support Act 1991.

Mr. Burt: The number of two-parent families in receipt of the specified benefits is contained in the table.

	Number
Income support	403,000
Family credit	215,000
Disability working allowance	478

On the best information available, the number of two-parent families in receipt of the specified benefits who are estimated to include a qualifying child for the purposes of the Child Support Act 1991 are contained in the table.

	Number
Income support	34,000
Family credit	17,000
Disability working allowance	38

Notes:
1. The figures for the numbers of two-parent families in receipt of income support and family credit are taken from the income support statistics annual inquiry 1991.
2. Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate *(a)* the savings in income support expenditure which will be achieved as a result of increased payments of child support maintenance and *(b)* the savings if a disregard were to be introduced into income support for child maintenance at the rate of (i) £5 and (ii) £15, in the first year of implementation and the following three years.

Mr. Burt: Best available estimates are for the long run. As stated in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) on 30 November at columns *4-5*, we expect that as a result of the child support initiative absent parents will, in the long run, contribute around £600 million to the maintenance of their children in families on income supprt. Latest estimates of the long-run costs of a maintenance disregard in income support are £115 million for a £5 disregard and £335 million for a £15 disregard.

Severe Hardship Payments

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many 16 and 17-year-olds awaiting a youth training place are in receipt of severe hardship payments.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available in the form requested.

The average length of award of severe hardship provision is eight weeks, but it is possible for more than one claim to be made in this period. The total number of claims in any eight week period may therefore be greater than the total number of people claiming.

During the eight-week period ending 4 December 1992, 13,000 successful claims have been made.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when Miss Ayesha Weeks of 11 Champernowne, Modbury, Ivybridge, South Devon, will know the result of her application for disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 15 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking when Miss Ayesha Weeks will know the result of her application for Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

A decision has been made on Miss Weeks' latest claim for DLA. I have replied separately, and in greater detail, about the case.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy is also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to start paying disability living allowance and personal carer's allowance to Mrs. Patricia Allen awarded to her from 8 August and 6 April, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write shortly to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Bob Cryer, dated 15 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking when Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and personal carer's allowance will be paid to Mrs. Patricia Allen.

I can confirm that action has now been completed on Mrs. Allen's case. I have replied to you separately, and in greater detail, about the case.

Clearly Mrs. Allen's claim has not been handled with the efficiency I would expect and I offer my sincere apologies to her for the inconvenience this must have caused. My letter of 19 October 1992 to all MPs explained the problems the Agency has faced since the successful launch of DLA and the positive steps taken to improve the situation.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Adriatic Sea

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the co-operation between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Western European Union naval forces in the Adriatic.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO and WEU naval forces are operating in the Adriatic to monitor and enforce compliance with the arms embargo against the whole of the former Yugoslavia and the trade sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro. There is full-co-operation and co-ordination between the two forces, including communication links between the two commanders at sea and daily contact between the staffs of the two organisations ashore.

Research and Technology Development

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what examination his Department has made of the implications of articles 130f to 130p, proposed to be added to the treaty of Rome under the treaty on European union, on research and technology development in the military sector.

Mr. Aitken: The Ministry of Defence has made a thorough examination of articles 130f to 130p and is fully aware of their implications on military research and technology development.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what outstanding debts his Department has with British Nuclear Fuels in regard to the storage and treatment of radioactive waste, and decommissioning of nuclear plant, as a result of contracts carried out for his Department by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has no such debts.

Historic Buildings

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the historic buildings in England, Wales and Scotland in armed forces use.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are 1,020 buildings listed as of historical or architectural interest on the Defence estate, or which are occupied by the Ministry of Defence through arrangements with Department of Environment, property holdings.

Information about which are occupied and by whom is not held centrally, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Prisoners-of-War

Mr. Stevenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what documents his Department holds regarding experiments conducted upon prisoners-of-war of the Japanese of a biological and chemical nature.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: After a number of thorough searches during the last seven years, no documents which include evidence of Japanese biological or chemical experiments on British prisoners-of-war have been found within the Ministry of Defence archives.

Hong Kong

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to increase the number of service personnel in Hong Kong.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Force levels in Hong Kong, and contingency plans for the reinforcement of the garrison, are kept under regular review.

Maintenance Work, Harrogate

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of maintenance and improvement works to his Department's establishment at St. George's road, Harrogate, in each of the last three years; what current expenditure is to be undertaken; and for what purpose.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cost of maintenance and improvement works to the Ministry of Defence establishment at St. George's road, Harrogate, over the years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 was £1·076 million, £2·227 million and £1·140 million respectively. For 1992-93 the cost of maintenance is expected to be £0·741 million.

War Widows

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has instituted a study into the practicality of allowing war widows who remarry to have an automatic right to the restoration of war widow's pension if they are widowed a second time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: War widow's pensions are a matter for the Department of Social Security. In addition, the occupational pension scheme for the armed forces includes corresponding provision for those widows who are eligible to be awarded a pension which, if the husband's death is accepted as being attributable to his

service, is known as an attributable forces family pension. The widow's entitlement to that pension, or any other type of widow's pension payable under the scheme, ceases in the event of remarriage except to the extent that there is any residual entitlement to a guaranteed minimum pension.

The scheme rules do, however, permit a widow's pension to be restored to payment, as a matter of discretion, if the subsequent marriage comes to an end. Normal practice is that restoration would be agreed if a widow is considered to be worse off on second widowhood, without her previous pension, than when she was originally widowed and received that pension.

These arrangements have reecently been reviewed, to consider whether it would be approprite to make restoration of payment automatic upon second widowhood or other termination of the further marriage. It has, however, been concluded that the existing discretionary arrangements, under which service widows can have a reasonable degree of assurance that their pension will be restored if there is a need, but which do not commit the Department to payments from public funds where there is no demonstrable need, should continue to apply.

Bosnia

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether ZB298 mortar locating radar and artillery sound ranging equipment has been made available to the British forces in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The ZB298 was a ground surveillance radar and did not have a mortar locating capability; it is no longer in service with the British Army. Mortar locating radars and artillery sound ranging equipment have not been deployed to Bosnia. Given the terrain and mobile nature of the tasks undertaken by UNPROFOR troops, such equipment would be of negligible utility.

Special Safety Organisation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the role and function of his Department's special safety organisation.

Mr. Aitken: The title "Special Safety Organisation" was formerly used to refer to elements of what is now the Ministry of Defence's Nuclear Accident Response Organisation, the role and function of which were detailed in the answer given to the hon. Gentleman on 6 November at column *534*.

Heavy Duty Vehicles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the truck cargo heavy duty vehicles recently delivered to his Department have fulfilled the requirements of their design specification.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The vehicles have met the specification in all essential respects and have been accepted into service.

Waste Materials (Burning)

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *798*, if he will give details of the strictly controlled conditions under which fire fighting training is carried out, under the exemptions granted to his Department from the statutory nuisance provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Aitken: The defence fire services (Def FS) are required under the terms of the Health and Safety at Work etc., Act to provide MOD's firefighters with realistic training on real fires in a controlled environment. In line with MOD's policy on the protection of the environment, the Def FS have issued strict policy guidelines to limit the numbers of fires conducted for training purposes as well as stating that only uncontaminated fuels should be used in such exercises. The level of pollutants released by such fires, both at the central training establishment and at unit level is minimal, and is covered under MOD's exemptions to the Environmental Protection Act 1990. New practices, such as fuel efficient training aids, and fuel separators are further improving the situation. Nevertheless, it remains essential that actual aircraft carcass fires are tackled in training, since there is no acceptable substitute for this practice.

Low Flying

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints he has received concerning low-flying military aircraft in the county of Powys in each of the last three years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The numbers of inquiries or complaints about low flying training which my Department received in each of the last three years from addresses in the county of Powys are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1990	223
1991	108
[1]1992	195

[1] Up to 30 November 1992.

Devonport Management Ltd

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why he has instructed Devonport Management Ltd to provide a copy of its detailed development plans to his Department for onward transmission to Mott MacDonald Ltd.

Mr. Aitken: Plans for the proposed development of nuclear support facilities at both royal dockyards have been made available to Mott MacDonald in its capacity as the Ministry of Defence's independent civil engineering consultants on this matter.

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the detailed plans of Devonport Management Ltd for the redevelopment of docks at Devonport to refit Trident submarines have been passed by his Department to the management of Babcock Thorn Ltd or their agents.

Mr. Aitken: No.

Rosyth and Devonport Dockyards

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what work is being carried out by Mott MacDonald for his Department in relation to submarine refitting at the Rosyth and Devonport dockyards.

Mr. Aitken: The Ministry of Defence has engaged Mott MacDonald, a firm of civil engineering consultants, to provide independent professional advice in relation to the design and build stages of Babcock Thorn Ltd's proposal for a modification of the nuclear submarine refitting facility at Rosyth, and Devonport Management Ltd's proposal for the redevelopment of existing docks at Devonport.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions his Department has requested Devonport and Rosyth to submit best and final offers for the refit of Britain's nuclear submarines.

Mr. Aitken: Both dockyard management companies have, at their own initiative, made revisions to the proposals which they originally submitted to the Ministry of Defence in November last year. They have both been given equal treatment including a recent and final opportunity to revise their respective proposals if they so wish.

Gleneagles Nuclear Planning Meeting

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the items discussed at the Gleneagles nuclear planning meeting on 20 and 21 October;

(2) whether he discussed *(a)* the first use of nuclear weapons and *(b)* ballistic missile defences at the Gleneagles nuclear planning group meeting on 20 and 21 October.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the final communiqué of the NATO nuclear planning group meeting, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the total costs incurred by hosting the NATO nuclear planning group meetings at Gleneagles on 20 and 21 October; and which Department are meeting this cost.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Although it is too early to provide a precise final figure, we estimate the cost to Ministry of Defence votes of hosting the NATO nuclear planning group meeting at Gleneagles at some £1·5 million.

Helicopters

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *61*, which aircraft carrier will receive the Merlin EH101 helicopter first and when; which helicopters will be deployed on the aircraft carrier not due to receive the Merlin EH101 helicopter from the batch ordered last year; and what assessment he has made of the operational consequences.

Mr. Aitken: Plans are not yet finalised as to which aircraft carrier will be the first to receive the Merlin EH101 helicopter. Sea King helicopters will continue to be deployed on aircraft carriers until they are replaced by the Merlins. The operational consequences of the sequential introduction of the Merlin EH101 were taken into account in deciding how to introduce Merlin into Royal Navy service.

Refit and Repair Contracts

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *59*, if he will set out the measurements used by his Department of total naval production load; what proportion of this load and of total Royal Navy refit, repair and maintenance of expenditure was accounted for in 1991-92 by nuclear refit, repair and maintenance; and what proportion of load and of expenditure arose from contracts awarded overseas.

Mr. Aitken: The total naval production load comprises the estimated industrial work required to complete each project in the planned refit and docking programme expressed as man weeks. In 1991-92, the proportions of the total naval production load and of total expenditure attributed to nuclear refit, repair and maintenance work were 17·1 and 26·1 per cent., respectively. The programme attributed to contracts awarded overseas were 0·8 and 0·28 per cent., respectively. The overseas expenditure arose from work carried out on vessels deployed overseas, for which it would have been operationally impossible or uneconomic to bring the vessels to the United Kingdom.

Indonesian Nationals

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Indonesian nationals are or have been training in British military establishments *(a)* currently and *(b)* in the last three years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Indonesian nationals are attending, and have attended, a range of developmental and technical training courses in British military establishments. Details of the training, including numbers involved, are confidential between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Indonesia.

Christmas Parties

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what authorisation he has given for expenditure on Christmas party festivities in his Department and in other parts of the armed services based in Great Britain.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Department has clear guidelines covering the use of official funds on hospitality which is required to be in the direct defence interest. These rules are not relaxed at Christmas time or at any other time of the year.

Bill Payments

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to improve his Ministry's bill payment service for defence contractors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I am pleased to report that last month the Ministry of Defence accounts office in Liverpool introduced an improved bill payment service for defence contractors. This marks the achievement of one of the targets which was set when the Directorate General of Defence Accounts was launched as a defence support agency in April last year.

Under the new system, defence contractors have the opportunity to present their claims to the Liverpool office

every fortnight and payment is made directly to their bank accounts. Previously contractors were paid by cheque every four weeks.

Fortnightly billing started on 2 November, and already a total of almost 10,000 payments worth £750 million have been paid to 5,000 companies under the new arrangements. Next year the Ministry of Defence expects to pay over £12 billion to nearly 20,000 contractors.

The Government recognise the importance of healthy cash flow and have declared their intention to improve payment standards. I am sure that the new payment arrangements will be welcomed by the many thousands of contractors, including all those small businesses, who provide services to the Ministry of Defence, and who will no longer suffer the risk of delays in payment by cheque through the post.

Army Training

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further progress has been made in restructuring the Army's training base in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Plans for the rationalisation of the Army training organisation were outlined in Cmnd 1595. I announced on 10 March at column *500* our proposals to improve basic training for adults and young soldiers, juniors and apprentices at a reduced number of larger, more efficient establishments. Consultation with the trades unions is now complete and I can confirm that all adult and young soldier training will be undertaken in five new Army training regiments to be formed at Glencorse, Lichfield, Bassingbourn, Pirbright and Winchester.

To enable these changes, specialist infantry training will move to interim locations at Ouston, Strensall and Catterick. It is also our intention that Royal Signals training should in due course be concentrated at Blandford and this will permit specialist infantry training to be concentrated at Catterick in the long term. As a result of the reorganisation of infantry training, we shall not now need to use Crickhowell for this purpose in the interim, but it will continue to provide training facilities for the TA as at present. Infantry training at Brecon will also be increased with the formation of a new tactics and skill at arms wing. This will result in an increase of one third in student numbers; some additional civilian staff will also be required. This will require substantial new investment on student accommodation over the next few years.

Having examined further a pilot scheme for the training of juniors, we have concluded that in the light of the introduction of the single school-leaving point in 1995, the junior entry no longer justifies the very substantial investment involved. The Army must, however, retain access to the school-leaver market and we therefore now propose to introduce a single entry for the Army, subsuming all those who would previously have been recruited as juniors, young soldiers and adults. They will undertake their basic training at one of the five Army training regiments. As a result, the establishments at Bramcote and Harrogate need not now be converted to Army junior leader regiments. We will be examining the potential for alternative defence uses for these establishments although none has yet been found. It is not therefore possible to say what might be the detailed implications for civilian staff. There will be smaller changes at Winchester, although that establishment will continue with its main role as an Army training regiment.

The introduction of the single school-leaving point also has implications for the concept of a single Army technical college, which I announced on 5 June at column *672*. We now propose that apprentices will undertake their military leadership and technical training at their respective arm and service centres. It will, therefore, not now be necessary to establish the Army technical college at Arborfield and Aldershot, but REME and Army catering corps apprentices will continue to be trained at these sites. I am pleased to say that since announcing the end of apprentice training at Chepstow, further study has identified the barracks there as a suitable location for an infantry battalion returning to the United Kingdom. With some 650 men, up to half of whom will have families, the positive economic impact will be considerable. The necessary building work will begin on the cessation of apprentice training in 1994, allowing occupation in 1996.

Full consultation with the trades unions on these proposals will take place in the normal way before final decisions are taken.

We have also laid down the principles for further restructuring the training organisation and improving special provision to arm and service and career training. Where possible, such training will be concentrated in single centres with any further training done at the minimum number of wings. We shall also examine the content of specialist and career training to identify the potential for market testing and contractorisation; areas of commonality; and the scope for savings between arms and services, as well as between the Army and other services. Until detailed plans are brought forward, it will not be possible to say what will be the precise implications for either civilian staff or training establishments. We shall invite the trades unions to contribute to specific areas of study and shall, of course, undertake formal consultation in the normal way when appropriate.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 17 December 1992

TRANSPORT

River Services, London

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has held with private sector operators about commercial passenger river services in London; and if he will make a statement on the future of such services.

Mr. Norris: I have today announced the establishent of a River Thames working group which I will chair to undertake a thorough study of the use of the river for transport. The terms of reference for the study are:

1. Establish what present use is made of the tidal part of the River Thames upstream of Southend and Sheerness for transport purposes and by whom.
2. Establish what constraints presently deter or inhibit transport operators from developing those uses.
3. Establish the likely potential for the development of transport use of the river, taking into consideration the interests of other river users, the views of riparian boroughs, its linkage to the existing transport network and all relevant safety issues raised in the Hayes report on river safety.
4. Consider how far it is in the overall interest to develop the transport usage of the river taking into account the environmental, leisure, amenity and planning aspects of any such development.
5. Identify the scope for private sector development which would assist the achievement of the river's transport potential for freight and passenger traffic.

I have invited the Port of London Authority, London First, the London Docklands development corporation, the London planning advisory committee and London Transport to be members.

I will also be consulting a broad range of bodies with responsibility for or interests in the river. I would also like to hear from other people who have proposals for increased use of the river.

Kent Coast Line

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects orders to be placed for the construction of new trains to serve travellers on the Kent coast line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Chancellor's autumn statement enables BR to order on lease an additional £150 million of new rolling stock over the next three years. Only the lease payments—as opposed to the full cost of the rolling stock—will count against BR's external financing limit. BR is currently considering which rolling stock orders would be suitable for leasing. It is for it to decide priorities. However, the options include new rolling stock for Kent coast.

While the Government's preference is that the orders should be placed over the next three years, they are prepared to consider flexibility on this timing.

As part of their plans for the privatisation of British Rail, the Government wish to see the private sector becoming involved in the procurement of rolling stock as quickly as possible. A consultation document on this will be issued in the new year.

Royal Train

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions, and for how long, the royal train has been used by members of the royal family in each of the last three years.

Mr. Freeman: The royal train has been used by members of the royal family as follows, in the last three years:

1990

6 journeys	– daytime
27 journeys	– single overnight stay
2 journeys	– two overnight plus one day
1 journey	– single overnight plus 1 day
36 occasions	

1991

2 journeys	– daytime
39 journeys	– single overnight stay
2 journeys	– two overnight plus one day
7 journeys	– single overnight plus one day
50 occasions	

1992

2 journeys	– daytime
33 journeys	– single overnight stay
2 journeys	– single overnight plus one day
37 occasions	

Airlines

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the criteria on which take off or landing slots are awarded between airlines; and whether he will seek an agreement on slots which will ensure that the allocation of take off and landing rights at airports is such as to promote fair opportunities for smaller and newer airlines as well as larger and older ones.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 9 December 1992]:* Slots are allocated between airlines by airport co-ordinators, according to guidelines laid down by the International Air Transport Association and used world wide. With regard to the regulation on slot allocation recently agreed by the Council of Ministers, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on Thursday 10 December, at column *784*. The regulation strikes a balance between protecting the legitimate interests of established carriers and providing opportunities for new entrants.

Marine Salvage

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what grounds a load time exemption certificate was issued to the Golden Eye salvage vessel.

Mr. Norris: The Golden Eye was issued with a United Kingdom load line exemption certificate after being satisfactorily surveyed in accordance with the Merchant Shipping (Load Line) Rules 1968.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. MacGregor: We are already promoting private sector investment in transport through:

—privatisation in several transport areas:
—turning over complete projects to the private sector (as in the case of the channel tunnel and the Queen Elizabeth II bridge at Dartford);
—developer contributions (such as I am negotiating for the Jubilee line extension).

I very much welcome the changes relating to the use of private finance announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement. I have recently been developing plans to encourage more private sector involvement in joint ventures and other initiatives, particularly in relation to major road and rail schemes. I am also keen to encourage the private sector to come forward with its own proposals.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Green Issues

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who in his Department has been appointed to oversee and develop green issues; how many civil servants have been allocated new or additional responsibilities to deal with the management and development of green issues; and what additional allocation of resources has been made to support programmes related to green issues in his Department.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend the Minister is the Department's green Minister and has overall responsibility for environmental aspects of all the Department's policies. All staff are expected to have regard to environmental considerations in discharging their duties. Forecasts of the numbers of staff and resources allocated to the programmes comprising the Ministry's aim

"To enhance the rural and marine environment"

are set out in the "Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Intervention Board Departmental Report on the Government's Expenditure Plans 1992-93 to 1994-95" Cm 1903, February 1992. A copy is in the Library of the House.

Agricultural Land

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what study he has made of the restrictions on agricultural land ownership, farm size maximum restrictions, agricultural land sales and inheritance, in each of the member states of the European Community.

Mr. Curry: None.

Winston Grange

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which companies sponsored the agriculture and environment exhibition held at Winston Grange on 28 September.

Mr. Gummer: More than 70 companies and other organisations assisted with or sponsored exhibits at the show which demonstrated the best of the British agricultural and food industries.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what date instructions were given to the Agricultural Development Advisory Service to carry out an assessment of works to be carried out on land at Winston Grange.

Mr. Gummer: The Agricultural Development Advisory Service was asked on 15 May 1992 to carry out the assessment and supervision of a conservation area exhibit.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contribution was made to the cost of the assessment of works carried out at Winston Grange in September by the owner of those premises; and on what date.

Mr. Gummer: None. The assessment and supervision work contributed to creating a conservation area exhibit which demonstrated the central theme of the informal Council.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment work, and at what value, was carried out on land at Winston Grange in the period prior to 28 September at public expense.

Mr. Gummer: The assessment work related to a conservation area exhibit. The cost in staff time was covered by existing arrangements under which the Agricultural Development Advisory Service provides services in support of the Ministry's policies on the environment and conservation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contribution was made by Hillsdown Holdings plc to the cost of works on land at the Winston show organised by his Department in September.

Mr. Gummer: Hillsdown Holdings plc sponsored the conservation area exhibit at the show. Their contribution amounted to £2,615·91 which included the cost of hiring a marquee.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for what purposes the agriculture and environment exhibition sponsored by independent companies was arranged at Winston Grange in September.

Mr. Gummer: The theme of the informal Council of Agriculture Ministers was the importance of integrating conservation and environmental protection into agricultural policy. It contributed to a constructive discussion at Cambridge of ways of moving to a fuller integration of environmental protection into the common agricultural policy.

Bee-keeping

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many bee officers there were in *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1988, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* at the latest available date.

Mr. Curry: The information is as follows:

	Number
1986	64
1988	30
1990	34
1992	37

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the reasons for the closure of the bee-keeping department at Sparsholt agricultural college.

Mr. Boswell: I have been asked to reply.

The decision to close the bee-keeping unit at Sparsholt agricultural college with effect from 31 December 1992 was taken in June 1992 by the governors of the college because the courses had ceased to be financially viable. The decision was reached following consultation with bee-keeping associations, which failed to identify any other sources of financial support.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much funding has been allocated to action in relation to bee-keeping problems in the current year and each of the next three years; and if he will give a breakdown of the applications to which the amount injected into bee-keeping problems has put in the current year.

Mr. Curry: The expenditure necessary depends on the incidence of bee disease and may vary considerably from budget. We had the first recorded incident of Varroa in the United Kingdom in April 1992 and its effect has been as follows:

	Budget 1992-93 £	*Estimated Expenditure 1992-93* £
Central Science Laboratory	350,000	565,000
Regions (including bees officers)	510,000	610,000
HQ (including medicines and printing)	50,000	155,000
Research and Development	136,000	186,000

Expenditure in future years will depend on the level of bee disease and decisions on how directive 92/65/EEC legislating on animals not covered by specific requirements under directive 90/425/EEC will be implemented in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what expert advice is available to him on the spread of the parasitic mite Varroa Jacobsoni.

Mr. Curry: Our principal source of expert advice is the Central Science Laboratory and in particular the national bee unit at Luddington.

Bacteria Collections

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on transitional funding for the National Collections of Marine and Industrial Bacteria.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry has agreed to provide a further £140,000 in support of the work of the National Collections of Industrial and Marine Bacteria Ltd for 1993-94. This will provide the opportunity for an assessment to be made of the wider long-term value of the collections as a national scientific resource.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. Curry: Following the announcement of the private finance initiative by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the autumn statement, the Department is considering how the initiative could be applied within its area of responsibility, on the basis of the guidance which has been published by HM Treasury.

Net Limitation Order

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has taken a decision on the National Rivers Authority's north-east coast net limitation order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: After careful consideration, I have decided that the new order restricting the number of licences which may be issued for netting for salmon off the Northumbrian and Yorkshire coasts should be confirmed with minor drafting amendments. It will take effect from 22 January 1993.

In reaching this decision, I took into account the representations made about the future of the north-east coast drift net fishery and the formal objections to the order that had been sent to me. Many of these argued that the fishery should be phased out over a much shorter time scale than that which would result from natural wastage. However, the order proposed by the NRA was consistent with the conclusions of the report on salmon net fisheries presented to Parliament in October 1991. In that report, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I noted that the review on which it was based had not produced any evidence that the drift net fishery posed an immediate threat to salmon stocks and thus any justification for depriving existing licence holders of their licences at a stroke. We concluded, however, that it would aid and improve the management of individual east coast salmon stocks if the fishery were to come to an end. And we recommended that, in order to avoid hardship, this should be done gradually by reducing the number of drift net licences as the licence holders left the fishery. The NRA's order provides for this.

The Government remain firmly committed to the phasing out of the drift net fishery. The effect of the new order will be monitored and the levels of drift net catches kept under close review.

Single Market

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in completing the single market in the areas for which his Department has responsibility.

Mr. Curry: Considerable progress has been made to complete the single market within the agriculture, fisheries

and food sectors. Most internal frontier controls will be removed from 1 January 1993 and there will be some substantial changes in the way trade between member states is carried out.

For trade in live animals, regulations will be made implementing in Great Britain the live animals veterinary checks directives—90/425/EEC and 91/496/EEC—from 1 January 1993. Under these arrangements, veterinary checks on intra-Community trade will be eliminated at internal EC frontiers on certain live animals and genetic material. A system of intensified checks at points of origin and spot checks at points of destination will be substituted for the present border controls. All consignments, when entering intra-EC trade, should be accompanied by health certificates or other documentation as required under the EC rules. Live animals entering the Community from third countries may only enter through an approved border inspection post and must be subject to documentary, identity and physical checks before entering free circulation within the Community.

In order to protect the health of the United Kingdom bee population, imports of bees are limited to countries of high bee health status free from varroasis. Ministers will be reviewing these controls in the light of agreement on EC bee health controls under directive 92/65/EEC, legislation on animals not covered by specific requirements under directive 90/425/EEC, due to come into operation on 1 January 1994. Until alternative measures are approved by the Commission under this directive, existing United Kingdom health measures will remain in force.

On the protection of animals in transport, further Community rules remain to be adopted to supplement those in directive 91/628/EEC which applies from 1 January 1993. As announced in the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) on 10 December at columns *762-63*, existing national measures will be maintained in the areas concerned pending further decisions in the Community. Our controls on trade in horses will remain in place.

Our existing measures of protection against the introduction of rabies will continue unchanged, as my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food made clear in a written answer to a parliamentary question on 16 June at columns *455-56*.

Border checks for animal health and public health purposes on meat and animal products will cease at the internal borders of the Community on 1 January 1993. Under directive 89/662/EEC, as amended, they will be replaced by a system of checks on the products at their origin, backed up with non-discriminatory checks when the products reach their destination. Under directive 90/675/EEC, as amended, imports of meat and animal products from outside the Community will be checked at the first point of entry into the Community. Where animal health and public health rules are still unharmonised, member states will retain their own trade rules. The United Kingdom will continue to retain its high standards of protection against the introduction of exotic animal diseases pending full harmonisation. New regulations to implement two directives on the hygiene conditions for production and placing on the market of fishery—directive 91/493/EEC—and shellfish—directive 91/492/EEC—products come into effect on 1 January 1993. The directives set common standards of handling and quality, eliminating trade barriers and providing assurance to the consumer.

Regulations to implement directive 91/67/EEC on the animal health conditions governing the placing on the market of farmed fish and shellfish will be laid before Parliament shortly. These will contain measures designed to prevent the introduction and spread of serious diseases and will provide important safeguards for the future health and well-being of our fish and shellfish stocks.

All major decisions necessary for the introduction of the single market on plant health, including a plant passport, have now been taken and published. Implementation is planned from 1 June 1993. This gives growers a short breathing-space to prepare a smooth introduction of the new regime, which represents a significant reduction in the burdens of intra-Community trade.

The introduction of the single market will not, however, fundamentally affect the veterinary medicines sector. Under Community law, a United Kingdom product licence will still be required before any veterinary medicinal product can be imported and marketed in the United Kingdom, whether from an EC member state or not. Detailed arrangements will shortly be published by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate.

The Community's food law harmonisation programme removes barriers to trade, sets high standards of food safety and improves food labelling, thus offering important benefits to industry and consumers. The foundations of the single market in foodstuffs are firmly in place. The main framework directives on labelling, additives, flavourings, contact materials, special dietary foods and food inspection have already been adopted. The Council agreed a common position on contaminants in September and is expected to do the same with the food hygiene directive, the key United Kingdom priority in this area, on 17 and 18 December. A common position is also expected on additional enforcement measures which I regard as particularly important for the achievement of a level playing field. Although some issues remain to be resolved, the harmonisation programme is well established and the single market in foodstuffs will operate effectively from the start of 1993.

Interim measures for the banana market will be necessary from 1 January 1993 to ensure that the United Kingdom can continue to fulfil its obligations under the Lomé convention to our traditional suppliers in the Commonwealth Caribbean. These measures will in due course be superseded by Community-wide arrangements for the banana market.

Under our interim measures, a DTI import licence will still be required for dollar bananas, including those in free circulation in another member state, after 1 January 1993. It will continue to be an offence to import dollar fruit into the United Kingdom without a licence. Her Majesty's Customs and Excise will enhance its intelligence-led, anti-smuggling actions on bananas. In addition, there will be a new regulatory framework for banana ripeners. They will be required to register their ripening rooms by 14 January 1993, and keep records of all consignments of dollar bananas handled. They will have to allow authorised officers access to inspect their ripening rooms and records. This new regulatory framework will be operated by my officials and those from the other Agriculture Departments. I shall soon be laying before the House the necessary regulations to bring this new framework into force.

Other single market issues, including agrimonetary arrangements, are on the agenda of this week's Agriculture Council which is continuing in Brussels this morning.

Agriculture Council

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Agriculture Council held on 14 to 17 December.

Mr. Soames: Discussions were continuing at the Agriculture Council in Brussels this morning.

Meat Products

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has had from small firms in the retail food industry about the EC directive on meat products.

Mr. Soames: The Department consulted widely during the negotiations on the EC directive and consultation has also taken place on our proposals for regulations to implement it in Great Britain.

Although the directive and our proposed regulations do not apply to retail outlets, I am aware that small producers of meat products supplying their own retail shops are concerned about the effect of these regulations on their businesses. We do not intend to impose any unnecessary burdens on these small businesses, and I will consider very carefully the comments made during consultation before the regulations are finalised.

EDUCATION

Sensory Impairments

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the number of teachers of the hearing impaired who have to be trained annually in order to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of such teachers.

Mr. Forth: Identification of the numbers and the training needs of teachers of the hearing impaired is best done locally. It is for this Department to make support funds available. Those funds have been increased from £7·2 million in 1992-93 to £10 million in 1993-94, and the previous restrictions on what the grant could cover have been relaxed. Special educational needs teacher training is now very generously funded.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he intends to undertake any action to ensure that there is sufficient funding allocated for the training of teachers of hearing-impaired and visually-impaired children when their funding ceases to be ring fenced in April 1993.

Mr. Forth: Sufficient training funds are being made available by the Department through its grants for education support and training—GEST—programme. Decisions on the distribution of teacher training funds between the various special educational needs specialisms are best taken locally.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to base the indicative allocation system for the training of specialist teachers on the number of children with sensory impairment and severe learning difficulties in a local education authority area rather than the total number of pupils in that area.

Mr. Forth: The indicative allocation system is used in the majority of grants in the grants for education support and training programme. It is a neutral formula based upon the number of pupils in full-time education in each local education authority. The effects of the application of this formula are being monitored.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what further measures he intends to take in concert with the changes he plans in school education to ensure adequate funding for the training of a sufficient supply of teachers for children with *(a)* hearing impairment and *(b)* visual impairment.

Mr. Forth: For 1993-94, the Department is making available to local education authorities £10 million of supported expenditure for training teachers in special educational needs specialisms through the GEST programme. Funding for the in-service training of teachers in grant-maintained schools is available through special purpose grants. The responsibility for special educational needs and for training teachers in appropriate specialisms will thus remain a local one.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that money allocated to local education authorities for the training of specialist teachers for children with sensory impairment is used for this purpose.

Mr. Forth: Grant allocated to a local education authority for this purpose through the grants for education support and training programme is paid only on receipt from the LEA of a claim indicating the amount of expenditure it incurred or expected to incur on the purpose during a specified period. Claims must be certified by a responsible financial officer of the LEA. The claim covering expenditure incurred during the whole year is additionally subject to audit verification.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he will make it his policy to extend the mandatory training requirement for full-time teachers of hearing-impaired children to peripatetic teachers of deaf children.

Mr. Forth: No. It would not be appropriate to impose new mandatory training burdens upon local education authorities.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement outlining the extent to which local education authorities have been given extra resources to cover the 5 per cent. reduction in his support for the training of teachers of hearing-impaired children.

Mr. Forth: The amount of expenditure supported under the grants for education support and training programme for training for special educational needs will increase from £7·2 million in 1992-93 to £10 million in 1993-94. In increasing the amount supported by almost 40 per cent., the Government are seeking to expand the amount of supported training. Payment of grant in 1993-94 at 60 per cent. of expenditure incurred brings this grant into line with most other GEST grants.

Capital Expenditure, Lancashire

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what response his Department has made to Lancashire county council's capital expenditure bid for 1993-94, in cash and percentage terms.

Mr. Forth: I announced yesterday that Lancashire county council has been allocated a total annual capital guideline for schools for 1993-94 of £11·129 million, representing 30 per cent. of its total bid. They will also be eligible for up to £1·152 million of additional resources, issued as supplementary credit approvals, subject to our decisions on undecided statutory proposals and on the progress made on two projects at voluntary-aided schools.

They will receive an allocation in 1993-94 of £5·642 million for minor and major projects at voluntary-aided and special agreement schools.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. Forth: Private finance already plays an important part in many areas of education. Thus, the introduction of private finance into inner city education, in partnership with the Government, is integral to the programme of city technology colleges. Private sector sponsors commit an agreed proportion of the initial and continuing capital costs of CTCs, while the Department meets the balance of capital costs and makes grants to meet running costs.

Building on the CTC programme, the Government have introduced legislation providing for voluntary-aided and grant-maintained schools to propose the appointment of representatives of private sector sponsors to their board of governors. Such sponsor governors will play a direct role in the school's management, in return for financial and other support. The involvement of sponsor governors may be particularly appropriate where the school is seeking to develop a special emphasis on teaching technology or some other area of the curriculum.

In addition, the Department supports a range of school-business links organisations and projects, and in many cases does so jointly with private sector sponsors. Our practice is to secure such joint funding whenever appropriate, through discussion with the organisation seeking our support.

Private finance has long been important in higher education. The Government believe that it is in the interests of higher education institutions to continue to look for increased levels of funding from private sources —in particular from industry and commerce, benefactors and alumni, and from present sources of fee income. We announced at the time of the autumn statement a relaxation of controls to enable higher education institutions to borrow on the security of Exchequer-funded assets as well as on the security of local authority-funded and private assets. It is for universities and colleges to approach commercial lenders for loans.

The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 provides specifically that there should be no discouragement to higher education institutions or to further education colleges from developing their funding from sources other than the relevant funding council.

Schools (Ballots)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools have held ballots to decide whether to seek grant-maintained status; how many of these ballots have resulted in a yes vote; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patten: As at 15 December, a total of 788 schools had held ballots on grant-maintained status, according to the Electoral Reform Society. Of these, 607—almost 80 per cent.—resulted in a vote in favour. This shows that enthusiasm among parents for seeking grant-maintained status continues at the level it has been over the last two years.

ATTORNY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General what estimate has been made of the cost to the Crown prosecution service and his Department of work done in relation to the recent cases involving Plasser, British Rail and the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway).

The Attorney-General: Detailed costs are not yet available, but it is presently estimated that the cost to the Crown prosecution service of the proceedings to date is about £750,000.

Staff within my legal secretariat have occasionally been engaged on work arising from this case as part of their general duties. The amount of time so involved cannot be separately identified and costed.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Race Relations

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) when the Lord Chancellor received a copy of the Commission for Racial Equality's research into discrimination and judicial sentencing in the midlands; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans the Lord Chancellor has to meet the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality;

(3) what guidance the Lord Chancellor has issued to judges on race relations and sentencing policy.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality wrote to the Lord Chancellor on 9 December, enclosing a copy of the summary of the research study "Race and Sentencing in the Crown Court". The Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice, in responding to the publication of the research, recognised the seriousness of the matters raised.

The Lord Chancellor agreed, in principle, earlier this year that there should be a regular annual meeting between our Department and the Commission for Racial Equality. The first of these meetings, which both the Lord Chancellor and I will attend, is to be on 25 January 1993.

The Lord Chancellor has issued no guidance to the judiciary on race relations and sentencing, nor is it his role to do so. A session on ethnic awareness is now a feature of every Judicial Studies Board course. Those present are given advice on how to handle issues which often arise when members of the ethnic minorities appear in court.

The board has also commission a consultant to produce an improved module for the board's existing criminal refresher seminars for judges and recorders. In addition, the Home Secretary published, in September, the booklet "Race and the Criminal Justice System", under section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, to facilitate the performance by people engaged in the administration of criminal justice of their duty to avoid discriminating against any person on grounds of race or sex or any other improper ground. Copies have been sent to all judges and Crown court recorders.

The sentence in any case is entirely a matter for the trial judge, within the statutory limits laid down by Parliament. General questions of sentencing policy are for the Court of Appeal, criminal division, which from time to time issues guidelines to the judiciary in particular types of case.

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what action the Lord Chancellor will take via the Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct to prevent racial discrimination at the Council of Legal Education; how many complaints on this subject he or the committee has received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct has a duty under the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 to have regard to the desirability of equal opportunity when fulfilling its duty of advising the Lord Chancellor on legal education and training. The independence of the committee precludes the Lord Chancellor from directing how it should discharge this duty. The advisory committee has received 14 representations concerning the allegations of racial discrimination in this year's Bar vocational examination, and the Lord Chancellor has received two.

As part of its statutory duties, the advisory committee on 25 November 1992 launched a major review of legal education and training, which will address this question among others. The Council for Legal Education intends to conduct its own review of its admission and assessment procedures, with the assistance of the Commission for Racial Equality, and hopes to publish the results early in the new year.

Legal Aid

Mr. George: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many people in the west midlands received legal aid in the year to 31 March; and how many would pay increased contributions under the Government's proposed changes.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The figures for criminal legal aid are not available for the year ending March 1992. In the 1991 calendar year almost 62,000 applications for legal aid were granted by magistrates courts and juvenile courts in the west midlands. For civil legal aid, in the year ending 31 March 1992 the No. 6 legal aid area office issued just under 20,000 certificates. The No. 6 legal aid area covers the west midlands, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and part of Staffordshire. It is not possible to estimate how many of those 20,000 would pay increased contributions under the proposed changes.

Self-Incrimination

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether the Lord Chancellor has considered the responses to the consultation paper on the privilege against self-incrimination in civil proceedings.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has given careful consideration to the views expressed in the responses to the consultation paper. A large majority of respondents have supported the proposal that the privilege against self-incrimination should be abolished in civil proceedings provided that appropriate provision is made to protect the witness in any subsequent criminal proceedings. This proposal does not seek to affect those cases where the privilege against self-incrimination is already unavailable under the present law.

The Government intend to introduce legislation on this matter when a suitable opportunity occurs, taking account of any related recommendations which may be made by the Royal Commission on criminal justice when it reports next year and the Government's response to them.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The private finance initiative is intended to apply to all services which are traditionally provided by Government Department. My Department is considering how to apply the initiative in its areas of responsibility on the basis of the guidance which has been published by the Treasury.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Research and Technological Development

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions the European Research Council has had during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council on the proposals set out in article 130f(2), proposed to be added to the treaty of Rome under the treaty on European union.

Mr. Robert Jackson: There has been no specific discussion in the Research Council during the United Kingdom presidency of article 130f(2) of the proposed treaty of European union, which is substantially the same as that in the treaty of Rome.

The main matters under discussion have been the Commission's proposal for a supplement to the third framework programme and the Commission's working document on the fourth framework programme.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department is considering how and where to apply the private finance initiative effectively

in its areas of responsibility, on the basis of the guidance published by the Treasury. We will be consulting as appropriate.

Bacteria Collections

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration he is giving to the takeover of the National Collections of Industrial and Marine Bacteria.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—MAFF—provides aid towards the costs of the National Collections of Industrial and Marine Bacteria—NCIMB). Following an approach from MAFF about the future of the NCIMB, the Office of Science and Technology has asked for an independent report from experts on the value of the collection as a national scientific resource.

Citizens Charters

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will amend citizens charters to allow citizens a general right of access to manual files about themselves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am currently considering ways of providing greater access to personal records held by government. I shall publish the results of my review on openness in the early part of next year.

PRIME MINISTER

Pit Closures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister when the Government first received the plans for pit closures from British Coal; and what consideration was given to publishing them immediately.

The Prime Minister: The Government had been aware for some time of British Coal's need to reduce capacity, because of the decline in the market for British coal. In addition, the Department of Trade and Industry and its advisers had made their own assessment of which pits might close, so that it could prepare measures to mitigate the impact, taking into account information from British Coal. British Coal informed my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 12 October of the final list of pits which it proposed to close. British Coal announced the names on 13 October.

European Council, Edinburgh

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what is his current estimate of the total cost to the Exchequer of the holding of the Edinburgh summit of the European Council.

The Prime Minister: The cost of the organisation of the European Council is of the order of £6·9 million. The policing costs, 51 per cent. of which are funded by central Government, are expected to amount to a further £2·5 million approximately.

China

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent visit by Lord Howe to discuss human rights in the People's Republic of China.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. noble and learned Friend Lord Howe led a delegation to China from 1 to 7 December. The delegation had detailed discussions with the Chinese authorities on human rights and related issues, including legal and religious issues, national minorities, and Chinese policies towards Tibet. They also met families of dissidents and visited foreign embassies, courts and places of detention. They were able to convey frankly to the Chinese the concerns of many in the west about China's human rights record. There was little meeting of minds with the Chinese authorities, but the basis has been laid for continuing exchanges on these issues.

My right hon. noble and learned Friend Lord Howe will in due course submit a formal report on the visit to me. That report will be placed in the Library of this House.

Constitutional Discussions

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 24 November 1992, *Official Report*, column 580, what communications he has had with the heads of Government of other Commonwealth countries of which the Queen is sovereign on matters relating to the common constitutional link of the Crown and his statement to the House of 9 December, since 24 November.

The Prime Minister: I have had no such communications.

Yalta Talks

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister how many documents relating to the Yalta talks have not yet been released under the 30-year rule.

The Prime Minister: Such an exercise could be carried out only at disproportionate cost.

Security Personnel

Mr. Cox: To ask the Prime Minister what is the Government's policy as to the cost of funding of security personnel who accompany former senior Government Ministers travelling for private purposes; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Decisions on the personal protection provided for former Government Ministers making official or private journeys are operational matters for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. The cost of providing such protection by police officers is met from the Metropolitan police fund.

Development Aid

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what representations Her Majesty's Government have received calling for increased United Kingdom and European Community development aid during the United Kingdom's presidency of the European Council.

The Prime Minister: The Government have received a number of representations about the future level of overseas aid provided by the United Kingdom and the European Community.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Gale: To ask the Prime Minister what is his policy on whether animal welfare should be a proper subject for European competence; what decisions on this subject were taken at Edinburgh; what effect the European Council conclusions at Edinburgh will have on animal welfare directives currently in force or under consideration throughout the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Community acts on animal welfare matters that fall within the common agricultural policy or trade policy; it also has discretion to act in other areas. At the Edinburgh European Council, the Commission made clear its intention to review Community legislation on animal welfare during 1993 in the context of subsidiarity. The United Kingdom remains committed to work for improvements in animal welfare throughout the Community, but this does not necessarily include Community legislation.

Homeless People

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to visit homeless people in *(a)* London and *(b)* Huntingdon during the Christmas period.

The Prime Minister: Ministers and officials in the Department of the Environment make regular visits to homelessness projects in different parts of England and keep me fully informed of the situation.

Security Risks

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions in each year since 21 November 1979, and so far in 1992, the Director-General of the Security Service has reported to him information about a present or former Minister or senior public servant indicating that he or she may be or may have been a security risk; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* It is not the Government's practice to comment on security matters.

President-elect Clinton

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with President-elect Clinton about the inquiries made by the Home Office concerning a possible application at some stage for United Kingdom citizenship; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* None. I have told the President-elect of my regret at some of the press reports.

Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy that Britain's efforts to help Somalia, whether through development aid or immediate financial aid and advice, shall be concentrated on the north (Republic of Somaliland).

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* Britain has pledged more than £31 million of humanitarian aid to Somalia this year, including our share of EC aid. All our assistance is channelled through United Nations agencies and British and international non-governmental organisations. In addition to food, we have funded transport and logistical support to the relief effort, medical supplies, water and sanitation equipment and agricultural supplies—seeds and tools. The EC has responded well and committed 206,000 tonnes of food aid of which two thirds has been shipped and one half delivered.

Aid is allocated where the need is greatest, where mechanisms and agencies are available to deliver it and where it reflects the requests for assistance which we receive from the United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations who are working on the ground.

Slovenia

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to continue to promote good relations between the United Kingdom and Slovenia, following the general election which took place there in December.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* Following President Kucan's victory in the Slovenian elections on 6 December, we wish him and his Government well as they continue their programme of political and economic reform.

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment was made by the Council of Europe observer team of the fairness of the recent general election in Slovenia; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* We have yet to receive the Council of Europe's definitive report on the Slovenian presidential and parliamentary elections. Preliminary press reports suggest that the elections were fair and free.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Sri Lanka

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Sri Lankan Government on the safety of Tamil refugees who have returned from India since January.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have regularly urged the Sri Lankans to ensure that all the refugees returning from India are well looked after until they can return to their homes.

The centre for returned refugees which I visited in October in northern Sri Lanka appeared to be well protected.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what preparations his Department is undertaking for the nuclear non-proliferation treaty first preparatory committee meeting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our preparations so far, with our co-depositaries the United States and the Russian

Federation, have concentrated on helping to draft and encouraging support for a United Nations General Assembly resolution which formally calls into being the preparatory committee for the 1995 conference on the review and extension of the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The resolution was approved by the General Assembly on 9 December by 168 votes to 0 with no abstentions. We have also had initial discussions with partners and allies, both bilaterally and in international fora, about the range of issues we expect to be raised at the first preparatory committee.

Nuclear Testing

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many discussions his Department has had in the last year with United States Senators Hatfield, Exon and Mitchell on the issue of nuclear testing; how many letters his Department has sent in the last year to these senators on the issue of nuclear testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Over the last year the embassy in Washington has had regular discussions on nuclear testing with the staff of a number of congressmen. The embassy wrote to Senators Hatfield, Exon and Mitchell on the subject during the consideration of the Energy and Water Appropriations Bill in August.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions his Department has held with representatives of the Clinton/Gore transition team; what discussions took place on the topic of nuclear testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The embassy in Washington keeps in regular touch with members of President-elect Clinton's transition team. The President-elect has made it clear that the responsibility for foreign policy until 20 January remains with the present administration. Our position on nuclear testing is well known to senior members of the Democratic party.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when instructions were received at the post in Islamabad to issue entry clearance to Mr. Syed Farhat Abbas—Ref. TH/16422/90 and B 020653—to join his wife in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the absence of any information about this case, we have asked the high commission in Islamabad for a full report. We shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when instructions were received at the post in Islamabad to issue entry clearance to Mr. Mohd Asif Gill—Ref. Imm/v 94835 and Imm (APP 320)—to join his wife in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the absence of any information about this case, we have asked the high commission in Islamabad for a full report. We shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when instructions were received at the post in Islamabad to issue entry clearance to Mr. Jahir Mahmood—Ref. TH/41452/91—to join his wife in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the absence of any information about this case, we have asked the High Commission in Islamabad for a full report. We shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. Goodlad: Our Department is considering how to apply the private finance initiative in its areas of responsibility on the basis of the guidance which has been published by the Treasury.

International Law

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the relationship between the decision in respect of Denmark taken by the European Council in Edinburgh on 11 and 12 December, and article 2 of the Vienna convention on the law of international treaties 1969; and what is the depository state in respect of that decision.

Mr. Goodlad: The decision concerning certain problems raised by Denmark is an international agreement binding on the parties to the treaty on European union. The decision does not require ratification and there is therefore no depositary state. The authentic text is held by the Council secretariat.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by what mechanism adherence by Her Majesty's Government to decisions taken by the European Council of the European Community are applicable in either international law or any treaty of the Community.

Mr. Goodlad: The decision concerning certain problems raised by Denmark on the treaty on European union was not taken by the Edinburgh European Council but by the Heads of State and Government meeting within the European Council. It is an agreement binding in international law between the parties to the treaty on European union. It constitutes an agreement, in the sense of article 31 of the Vienna convention on the law of treaties, for the purposes of interpretation of the treaty on European union.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the rules regulating the extent to which citizens of St. Helena paid partly or wholly out of Government of St. Helena funds may stand for election to the Legislative Council; and what discretion the Governor has in this respect.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Section 17 (2) of the St. Helena constitution provides that the Governor, acting in his discretion, may by notice published in the *Government Gazette* make provision for enabling any public officer or class of public officer to be qualified for election to the Legislative Council. This provision was given effect to by a *Government Gazette* notice dated 15 February 1989.

Iran

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from members of the Baha'i community regarding the persecution of their communities in Iran.

Mr. Douglas-Hogg: The Secretary-General of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United Kingdom informed us in October of the confiscation of the homes and property of Baha'is in Iran. Numerous local Baha'i assemblies subsequently made similar representations, and we were able to inform them of the strong representations which we, together with our EC partners, have in turn made to the Iranian authorities on this matter.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the Government plans to make to the Iranian Government regarding the persecution of the Baha'i communities in Iran.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The EC presidency made representations in May to the Iranian permanent representative in Geneva about the execution of Mr. Bahman Samandari. In October we made further representations on behalf of all EC member states to the Iranian authorities in both Geneva and Tehran over the death sentences passed on Mr. Kayvan Khalajabadi and Mr. Bihnam Mithaqi. The representations in Tehran also expressed our concern at the reports of the confiscation of homes and property of Baha'is in Iran. Together with EC partners, we have co-sponsored a resolution due to be adopted by the United Nations General Assembly this month on human rights in Iran, which expressed concern at the treatment of the Baha'i community.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visas have been issued to citizens from the former Yugoslavia since 6 November; how many have been refused; on what grounds; and how many appeals are pending.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: For the period 9 November to 4 December, the first month's operation of the visa requirement for nationals of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 663 visa applications for the United Kingdom, for both visits and settlement, were received at our posts in Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Rome, Milan, Düsseldorf, Paris and Sofia. One hundred and eighty-two applications were refused. This figure includes the 166 visa applicants in the convoy arranged by the ALERT group whose applications were refused by the Home Office.

The method of recording statistics at posts world wide does not allow us to give the precise detail which the hon. Member has requested without disproportionate expense.

Uganda

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Uganda.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since the present Government came to power in 1986, Uganda has taken commendable steps towards internal stability and economic rehabilitation after years of chaos. Progress with the economic recovery programme has been encouraging, but there are major structural weaknesses which still need to be overcome. We hope to see continued improvements including in the field of human rights, and a successful outcome to the constitutional reform process.

Angola

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contributions the British Government are making towards the peace process in Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: With our EC partners, we have been active in support of the efforts of the United Nations to consolidate the ceasefire negotiated by the United Nations Secretary General's special representative on 1 November, and to secure full implementation of the Bicesse peace agreement, including the holding of a second presidential election round.

Under our presidency, the European Council in Edinburgh urged both sides, particularly UNITA, to respect the peace agreement and ceasefire and to continue demobilisation and formation of the new unified armed forces. It called upon UNITA to accept unequivocally the September election results and on the Government to continue the democratic process with a view to the reconciliation of the people of Angola.

Mauritius

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last received representations from the Government of Mauritius relating to the sovereignty of the Chagos group of islands.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Following discussions at official level, we reaffirmed to the Government of the Republic of Mauritius on 1 July that if the latter has proposals which it wishes to put to us concerning future arrangements for the British Indian Ocean Territory, we remain ready to give these close consideration.

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many of the intermediate-level radioactive waste streams at Sellafield

arising from the reprocessing of foreign spent nuclear fuel have been specified in such a way to make them acceptable for return to country of origin under the framework agreements made by Her Majesty's Government with foreign Governments.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

It is not technically possible in the reprocessing operation to identify the precise wastes which arise from processing specific items of fuel. In such cases, it is necessary to apportion wastes among the customers concerned. Furthermore, there are some waste streams for which the precise form of conditioning for interim storage prior to disposal has not been finalised. It has not been possible to issue specifications for these streams, which amount to about 2 per cent. by radioactivity of the total.

British Nuclear Fuels plc has advised me that the thermal oxide reprocessing plant contracts which provide for return of waste specify that unspecified intermediate level waste—ILW—will be replaced by a radiologically equivalent amount of specified ILW. This will apply to some 40 per cent. by activity of returnable ILW from THORP.

The specifications which BNFL has issued to its overseas THORP customers are presently being approved by those customers and their relevant authorities. Approvals covering the majority of the overseas business have already been received.

The Government are considering BNFL's proposals to implement return of low and intermediate-level waste by substituting a radiologically equivalent amount of high-level waste—HLW—in addition to the customer's normal HLW allocation.

DEFENCE

AWE Aldermaston

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what operations were being carried out at the time of the accident at AWE Aldermaston on 8 December; what types of containers were involved in the accident; and what types of wastes were they storing.

Mr. Aitken: The incident involved a sealed metal storage container of plutonium metal, not waste material. A routine accounting audit of plutonium holdings was being undertaken at the time of the incident.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the accident that occurred at AWE Aldermaston on 8 December; how many persons were injured or contaminated; what was the extent of the injuries and contamination; what damage was caused to property; and what is the estimated cost of *(a)* repairing damage and *(b)* removing contamination following the accident at AWE Aldermaston on 8 December.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the accident at AWE Aldermaston on 8 December.

Mr. Aitken: The incident at AWE Aldermaston on 8 December involved the release of a small amount of radioactive material from a damaged container within a storage building. The cause is being investigated by an inquiry which is now under way. There was no release of radioactive material outside the building. A total of five individuals were involved with the incident, four of whom received minor contamination; subsequent monitoring has confirmed that none of them received a significant radiation dose. There were no injuries sustained in the incident. The interior of the building was contaminated in the vicinity of the incident, but is not otherwise damaged. Decontamination work has begun, but it is not possible to estimate at this stage what the effort involved in completing the work will be.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many accidents of the type that occurred at AWE Aldermaston on 8 December have occurred in the last 10 years.

Mr. Aitken: A previous incident involving a release of material in a plutonium storage building occurred at AWE Aldermaston in 1984. That case involved a different building and a different method of packaging of material. The then Under-Secretary of State for Defence gave the details to the House on 12 April 1984, *Official Report*, column *357*.

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to alter the numbers employed in AWE Aldermaston *(a)* currently and *(b)* after contractorisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The numbers employed at AWE Aldermaston depend on the programme of work placed on the establishment. After contractorisation, the exact number will be a matter for the contractor, but this Government are fully committed to maintaining the nuclear programme which will continue to support jobs at the establishment.

Reactor Cores

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment as to the length of time that a used reactor core may safely be left in a decommissioned submarine.

Mr. Aitken: Government policy is to remove such cores to Sellafield for long-term storage at the earliest practicable opportunity. However, with the application of my Department's current care and maintenance procedures, there is no formal limit to the length of time that a used reactor core may safely be left in a decommissioned submarine.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when used core transportation package flasks were first licensed for use in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Aitken: My Department's used core transportation packages were first licensed for use in the United Kingdom in 1968.

Waste Materials (Burning)

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what quantities of oil, tyres or other materials were burned at RAF Leeming on 28 November; how long the fire lasted; and how many fire fighters received training during that period.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A total of 13 firefighters from RAF Leeming and the North Yorkshire fire brigade took

part in this training exercise. The fires were burning for less than 10 minutes and only uncontaminated waste aviation fuel was used for this exercise.

Aerospace Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what meetings he or officials of his Department have held with the aerospace industry regional and local authority network in regard to diversification in production.

Mr. Aitken: I am not aware of any such meetings.

Investment Cuts

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the study recently released by the European Commission on the regional impact of cuts in defence investment.

Mr. Aitken: The report has not yet been received by Government Departments. The regional policy implications will be a matter for the President of the Board of Trade.

Defence Research Agency

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the rationalisation of the Defence Research Agency.

Mr. Aitken: The consultation period for the DRA's rationalisation plan ended on 14 November. Following further representations from hon. Members and the trade unions, I hope that an announcement will be made shortly.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what preparations his Department is undertaking for the nuclear non-proliferation treaty first preparatory committee meeting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department works closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on this subject, and will support the preparatory committee preparations as appropriate.

Nuclear Testing

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many discussions his Department has had in the last year with United States Senators Hatfield, Exon and Mitchell on the issue of nuclear testing; how many letters his Department has sent in the last year to these senators on the issue of nuclear testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: None. Such contacts would normally be made through the British embassy in Washington.

Cnewr Estate

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 27 November, *Official Report*, columns *892-93*, what action was taken or discussions undertaken with outside bodies by his Ministry about the proposed access agreement between the trustees of the Cnewr estate and the Brecon Beacons national park authority between May and July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry was informed in May of the proposed access agreement by the managing director of Cnewr Estate Ltd., but no action was taken. No discussions about this agreement took place with any other body between May and July.

Vacant Properties

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many houses of his Department are currently vacant.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 30 September, the latest date for which figures are available, 9,321 MOD-owned houses and flats were vacant out of a total stock of 72,946. Many of these properties were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation, some were already allotted to service families who were due to move in shortly and others were being considered for disposal. In addition, some 1,800 dwellings were in the process of being sold.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are to return vacant housing of his Department into civilian use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The majority of my Department's vacant housing is undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation, already allotted to service families due to move in shortly or in the process of sale. In addition, some vacant housing has been earmarked for service families returning from overseas as a result of "Options for Change". Wherever possible, surplus properties are sold to service personnel through the services discount scheme. Some 900 surplus properties which are not suitable for this scheme are currently in the process of being sold to housing associations at a discount in return for nomination rights on a proportion of the properties for personnel who will be leaving the services over the next few years.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The private finance initiative is intended to apply to all services which are traditionally provided by Government Departments. My Department will consider the introduction of private finance in cases where it represents value for money and the assumption of risk by the private sector, in accordance with the guidance which has been published by the Treasury. Some operating capital has been introduced into the royal dockyards under contractor operation and will be similarly used at the Atomic Weapons Establishment. Expressions of interest have been sought on the possible offer for sale of one or both dockyards. A proposal is being studied that a new non-profit-making organisation should take over the ownership and management of the married quarter estate.

Medical Discharges

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what compensation or other payments are available to a service man or woman discharged from the armed services for medical reasons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Financial provision in respect of those who are medically discharged from service is made under the armed forces pension scheme. Under current rules, members of the scheme are eligible for benefits, in the form of pensions and/or lump sums, which are payable in all cases except where medical discharge is due to causes which are not attributable to service and less than two years' reckonable service has been given. The amount and form of benefit depend on the circumstances of each case, such as the rank of the service man or woman, length of service, whether the injury or condition leading to the discharge is attributable to service and, where appropriate, degree of disability.

Where the condition or injury leading to medical discharge is attributable to service, provision is also made under the terms of the war pensions scheme administered by the Department of Social Security.

Royal Yacht

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions, and for how long, the royal yacht has been used by members of the royal family in each of the last three years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In each of the last three years, the royal yacht Britannia has been used by members of the royal family for state and official visits, and other functions, as follows:

	Number of occasions	*Total number of days*
1990	8	42
1991	6	31
[1]1992	6	27

[1] To date.

The royal yacht was undergoing maintenance from 12 November 1991 to 8 May 1992.

Trident

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many kneel-down transporters are being purchased by his Department for transporting Trident missiles within Royal Navy armaments depot, Coulport.

Mr. Aitken: Three.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when preliminary design work on the warhead for the Trident missile first started at Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: In 1980.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Trident warhead was declared one-point safe.

Mr. Aitken: The Secretary of State was advised on 13 March 1992 that the United Kingdom Trident warhead was one-point safe. Results of experiments which became available after that date have reinforced the same conclusion.

HMS Renown

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of the recent refit of HMS Renown.

Mr. Aitken: The final cost certificates for the refit of HMS Renown have not yet been presented, but the current estimate of cost is in the region of £200 million.

Amphibious Capability

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what Regular Army amphibious engineer capability is to be available in the United Kingdom after 1995; when the current M2 equipment will be replaced by M3 equipment, and at what cost; whether the bridging and ferry equipment currently in service can operate for a fully loaded Challenger main battle tank; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We intend that the Regular Army's amphibious engineering capability will remain in Germany; a Territorial Army capability will be provided in the United Kingdom.

We plan to replace the current M2 bridging equipment with M3 equipment from 1996. As we intend to hold a competition in the near future, the estimated cost is commercially confidential.

The current M2 equipment can carry a fully loaded Challenger I main battle tank. M3 has been designed with this and future tank requirements in mind.

Nuclear Warhead Containers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on which designs the nuclear warhead containers and transporters which his Department is supplying to the Russian Federation are to be based; and whether those designs are already in use in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Aitken: The nuclear warhead containers are being designed to meet the requirements of the Russian Federation. There is no similar container service in the United Kingdom.

The design of the transport vehicles will be based on the truck cargo heavy duty Mk 2 presently in service in the United Kingdom. The design will be adapted to suit the Russian environment.

Plymouth Urban Development Corporation

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 6 November, *Official Report*, column *536*, if he will set out the purpose of his Department's funding for the proposed Plymouth urban development corporation; when it was agreed; and what plans he has to make funding available to other urban development corporations or local authorities.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The proposed contribution of £20 million was agreed in March 1992 and will assist in the regeneration of surplus land, including Royal William yard. There are no plans to make funding available to other development corporations or local authorities.

Cyprus

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps will be taken to dispose of or recover to the United Kingdom those wheeled armoured and transport assets no longer required by British forces assigned to the United Nations force in Cyprus.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Consequent to planned reductions in the British contingent to UNFICYP, we will be withdrawing the ferret scout car squadron from UNFICYP, and the requirement for transport and logistic vehicles will also reduce. The long-term future of these vehicles is under consideration and final decisions have not yet been made.

Franco-German Corps

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the letter from the French and German Governments on the allocation in wartime of the proposed Franco-German Corps.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. The document in question is classified.

Plutonium

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether plutonium from military reactors has been exported by his Department to the United States of America since 1984.

Mr. Aitken: It would not be in the national interest to disclose details of nuclear materials transactions with the United States.

Atomic Weapons Establishments

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many glove boxes for use with radioactive materials have been decommissioned in each year since records began at *(a)* AWE Aldermaston, *(b)* AWE Burghfield and *(c)* AWE Cardiff.

Mr. Aitken: I will write to the hon. Member.

Croatia

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he proposes to replace the personnel currently serving in 24 Field Ambulance in Croatia as part of the United Nations protection force—UNPROFOR II; and how many patients have been treated by the unit in the course of its tour to date.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The 24 Field Ambulance will be replaced by 4 Armoured Field Ambulance, currently based in Munden, Germany. The handover started on 13 December and is expected to be complete today. To date 3,300 of the UN personnel who work in the UN protection areas in Croatia have been treated or transported by the unit.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Oral Questions

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will introduce proposals to review the system for tabling oral questions.

Mr. Newton: I have at present no plans to do so. This matter was recently considered by the Procedure Committee and changes were subsequently implemented. However, my hon. Friend may care to submit any proposals that he has direct to that Committee.

Select Committees

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) if he will make it his policy to designate a minimum of eight days per Session to discuss Commons Select Committee reports;

(2) what plans he has to grant further powers to Select Committees to call for papers and witnesses and receive information from civil servants;

(3) what plans he has to enlarge Select Committees of the House and to grant them the power to establish sub-committees;

(4) if he will make it his policy to establish a national office of policy analysis to back up the work of Select Committees of the House.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to amend the powers of Select Committees, to designate a minimum number of days for debate of their reports, or to establish a national office of policy analysis to back up their work. I refer the hon. Member to the conclusions of the Procedure Committee on these matters see the second report of the House of Commons Select Committee on Procedure, Session 1989-90 and the Government's response, Cm. 1532, and in particular recommendation x (Sub-committees) xi (orders of reference) xii (specialist advisers) xxvii (powers of Select Committees) and xxxvi (debates on Committees' reports)).

Private Bill Procedure

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make it his policy to prevent the use of the Private Bill procedure to bypass the planning channels in respect of developments which seriously affect designated sites of special scientific interest.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

Private Bills are an established part of our constitutional process and in some cases provide the only means of obtaining the necessary consent. The Parliamentary Committees considering these Bills perform a quasi-judicial function similar to that of an inspector at a public local inquiry. This ensures that the conservation aspects are thoroughly and properly scrutinised and a balanced decision reached.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants are currently waiting longer than two months for their application for disability living allowance to be processed; what is the average length of wait for a disability living allowance application to be processed; how many people had to resubmit their application because the disability living allowance office has lost their claim forms in the latest convenient period; and how many people are employed at the disability living allowance office to track down lost or mislaid claim forms.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. David Hanson, dated 16 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security. You asked how many claimants are currently waiting longer than two months for their application for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to be processed; what is the average length of wait for a DLA application to be processed; how many people had to resubmit their application because the DLA office has lost their claim forms; and how many people are employed at the DLA office to track down lost or mislaid claim forms.

Information about the number of people who have been waiting two months for their claim to DLA is not routinely gathered and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The same applies to the number of people who have submitted a duplicate DLA claim because the original had been mislaid. I explained in my letter of 19 October to all MPs the strenuous and successful efforts that have been made to clear the backlog of claims. Procedures are now running more smoothly and the number of occasions when papers cannot be found has been significantly reduced.

On the question of the average length of time taken to process a DLA claim I should explain that the Benefits Agency introduced a standard performance measure across benefits some time ago. This is expressed in terms of clearance targets instead of average clearance times as was previously the case. For information on the Agency's performance in this area I refer you to my reply of 11 December to the honourable Member for Newham North East (Mr. Leighton) at column 73 (Official Report 14 December 1992).

You also asked how many people are employed at the DLA Unit to track down lost or missing files. There are currently thirty staff at the office in Blackpool whose job it is to track down missing paperwork.

A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. A copy is also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what criteria are employed in the selection of medical practitioners to sit on disability appeals tribunals dealing with contested applications for disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: Responsibility for the administration of disability appeal tribunals lies with the president of the independent tribunal service, His Honour Judge Thorpe. The hon. Member may wish to contact his office direct to obtain this information.

Personal Pensions

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give a breakdown by age and gender of persons who have taken out personal pensions since 1988.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is in the table.

Estimated number of people with personal pensions, by age and gender, as at 5 April 1991, the latest date for which figures are available

Age	Men		Women	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
All ages	2,808,800	100·0	1,575,900	100·0
16 to 19	146,500	5·2	127,200	8·1
20 to 24	625,000	22·3	494,800	31·4
25 to 29	643,000	22·9	394,000	25·0
30 to 34	483,200	17·2	236,200	15·0
35 to 39	375,100	13·4	189,000	12·0
40 to 44	354,300	12·6	113,300	7·2
45 to 49	160,500	0·7	19,000	1·2
50+	21,200	6·5	2,600	0·1

Source: Based on a 1 per cent. sample of national insurance records. Because of the small sample size, some of the figures shown are subject to a wide margin of error.

One-parent Families

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many lone parent families are in receipt of *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit and *(c)* disability working allowance; and for each benefit how many lone parent families are estimated to include a qualifying child for the purposes of the Child Support Act 1991.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the table:

	Number of lone parent families	Number of lone parent families estimated to include a qualifying child
Income support	895,000	879,000
Family credit	132,000	130,000
Disability working allowance	169	2

Notes:

1. The figures estimated for the number of lone parent families in receipt of the specified benefits who are estimated to include a qualifying child for the purposes of the Child Support Act 1991 are based on the best information available.
2. The figures for the numbers of lone parent families in receipt of income support and family credit are taken from the Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry 1991.
3. Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand, with the exception of disability working allowance where actual figures are given as at September 1992.

Maxwell Pensions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money has now been collected by the trust fund set up to reclaim the money lost from the Maxwell pensions scheme; and what action the Government have taken to ensure that all the lost money is collected.

Miss Widdecombe: The Maxwell Pensioners Trust was set up to seek contributions from the private sector to help secure Maxwell pensions in the longer term. So far, the trust has collected almost £6 million.

Responsibility for recovering the missing pension scheme assets lies with the liquidators, administrators and pension scheme trustees. The Department's Maxwell pensions unit is actively assisting in this work wherever possible.

Income Support

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will amend the regulations so as to define the severe hardship which unemployed 16 to 17-year-olds need

to suffer in order to qualify for income support as being automatically met if they live in a household which is already in receipt of a means-tested benefit.

Mr. Burt: Any 16 or 17-year-old at risk of hardship can already receive help under the severe hardship provision if seeking work and youth training and living in a household which is in receipt of a means-tested benefit. The provision allows for a flexible response to particular circumstances. Legislation would reduce this flexibility.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what standardised testing procedures are employed in the process of assessing people applying for attendance allowance; and what percentage are referred to consultant clinicians.

Mr. Scott: There are no testing procedures employed in determining claims for attendance allowance. Entitlement rests on prescribed legislative conditions. Claims are decided by adjudication officers, normally on the basis of evidence provided by customers themselves. However, in some cases additional information is required which can be obtained from a variety of sources. Information is not available on the percentage of cases where information is requested from a consultant clinician.

Family Credit

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the numbers engaged in agriculture in Wales in receipt of family credit, giving figures separately for the *(a)* self-employed and *(b)* employed.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available in the form requested.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Miss Widdecombe: We are considering what opportunities there may be within the Department and its agencies to use private finance, following the announcement of the private finance initiative by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 at column 996. The principle in each case will be to seek to transfer risk to the private sector and gain value for money.

Child Benefit

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will extend child benefit entitlement for school leavers until they have been accepted on to youth training.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to do so. Any person aged 16 or 17 who reaches the end of the child benefit extension period can claim income support if seeking a youth training place or work and at risk of severe hardship.

War Pension Claims

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on claims of war pension in respect of noise-induced hearing loss.

Miss Widdecombe: On 12 November, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced proposals to make two changes to the war pensions scheme. These were to remove rank differentials in war disablement pensions and to introduce a minimum level of disablement for awards in respect of noise-induced hearing loss.

These proposals have been discussed with the central advisory committee on war pensions. After full and careful consideration of all the points, both for and against the proposals, we have concluded that the changes are in the best interests of war pensioners. The necessary legislative changes have therefore been made today. These will provide first, that for claims from 7 January 1993, no award will be made in respect of noise-induced sensorineural hearing loss unless the degree of disablement from that loss is assessed as being at least 20 per cent. Secondly, savings from that this change will be used to remove, from April 1993, rank differentials in war disablement pensions. This will be of greatest benefit to the most severely disabled war pensioners, the majority of whom will gain up to £5 a week.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. Brooke: The private finance initiative is intended to apply to all services which are traditionally provided by Government Departments. My Department is considering how to apply the initiative in its areas of responsibility on the basis of the guidance which has been published by the Treasury.

The Department of National Heritage operates largely through a network of public bodies and agencies which receive much of their support from public funds, but which are managed and operate at arm's length from the Government.

Where appropriate, my Department seeks to encourage and maximise private sector contributions. In arts and sport, for example, business sponsorship schemes provide pound-for-pound matching of funds by the Government and the private sector for particular projects. The scheme for arts has been in place for some time; that for sport was launched by me in November 1992.

English Heritage's forward strategy proposed new initiatives for private funding of the heritage, including private sponsorship of a major new visitor centre at Stonehenge. Nearly all the marketing and development activities undertaken by the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board attract significant funding from the tourism industry.

A further example is the museums and galleries improvement fund which is funded equally by the Government and the Wolfson Foundation and Family Charitable Trust.

At another level, private funding is achieved through admission charges to the many institutions supported by my Department.

The national lottery and the millennium fund will be established through the Bill which I am publishing today. There will be a presumption that national lottery projects should seek partnership funding where possible, bringing in significant contributions from the private sector. It is, however, important to recognise that these initiatives are not intended to replace public expenditure; they will provide valuable additional funds for particular projects.

Listed Building Control

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he has considered the responses to the consultation paper on ecclesiastical exemption from listed building control; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: In the light of the responses received, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I intend to introduce changes to the current provisions in broadly the form proposed in the consultation paper. In respect of England and Wales, the ecclesiastical exemption will be retained for those bodies that subscribe to a code of practice, and agree to bring their internal arrangements for control of works to listed ecclesiastical buildings into conformity with the code.

The main change we are making to the consultation proposals is that where religious bodies choose not to subscribe to the code of practice, the exemption will be withdrawn in respect of works to the interior as well as to the exterior of their ecclesiastical buildings. Guidance will be issued to local planning authorities on the importance of giving due weight to liturgical requirements in considering applications for consent to internal alterations.

We are satisfied in the light of the responses that it is right to pursue the consultation paper's proposals in respect of curtilage buildings. In future, therefore, the exemption will normally apply only to the principal place of worship on any site, and not to any other buildings within the curtilage. Special provision will, however, need to be made for cathedral complexes. The precise implications of the withdrawal of the exemption for curtilage buildings including such structures as tombstones and monuments will be discussed further with the churches, the local authority associations and the national amenity societies.

The new arrangements have been the subject of consultation with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, in view of his responsibility for listed building control in England.

Copies of the code of practice, incorporating these and other changes, and lists of those who responded to the consultation paper, have been placed in the Library.

Our Departments will be writing to the local authority associations and the national amenity societies about the new arrangements.

The Church of England occupies a special position in that it has its own system of control already embodied in legislation approved by the General Synod and by Parliament. There has been extensive consultation between the Church authorities and the relevant Departments over recent amendments to their legislation and its implementation. I am satisfied that, subject to the resolution of a few outstanding points, the Church's system of control will effectively embody the principles set out in the code of practice.

Our Departments will be writing to all other denominations to ask whether they wish to subscribe to the code of practice in its revised form, and discussions will be held with the Churches Main Committee on the various definitions involved and on arrangements for monitoring. When we have the churches' response we intend to make an order under section 60 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defining the new scope of the exemption.

We should also make it clear that we are prepared to take action under section 60 of the 1990 Act to bring within normal control any individual ecclesiastical building where a denomination subscribing to the code proposes to authorise potentially damaging alterations for which wider scrutiny seems appropriate.

Experience of the new arrangements will be carefully monitored, and their continuance will, of course, depend on our being satisfied that they provide adequate protection for buildings which constitute so invaluable a part of our architectural and cultural heritage.

Television Companies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has to amend the system of award of licences for channel 3 by the Independent Television Commission.

Mr. Brooke: None.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Lamont: The Economic and Finance Council of the European Community met in Brussels under my chairmanship on 14 December. The Paymaster General represented the United Kingdom.

Agreement was reached on the excise and value added tax simplification directives, which incorporate important provisions for the control of these taxes and amendments to the arrangements for operating indirect taxes in the single market after 1992. The simplification of the VAT requirements for so called "triangular" movements—involving traders in more than two member states—will be particularly welcomed by United Kingdom business.

There was a short discussion on the seventh VAT directive. The United Kingdom made it clear that we could not accept the provision in the draft directive on VAT for imports of works of art. Spain and Germany also had reservations on parts of the proposal which will now go forward to the Danish presidency.

Germany maintained its reservation on the increases in travellers' allowances for goods other than tobacco and alcohol. It is seeking progress in the discussions on the liberalisation of road transport before lifting its reserves. We shall be seeking to persuade Germany to lift this reservation.

Guidelines for the future control of duty-free sales in the Community were also agreed.

The Council considered again a package of measures concerning road transport taxation. It reached broad agreement on the minimum rates of vehicle exercise duty for lorries, subject to agreement on the related issues that are being considered by the Transport Council.

The Council also discussed a report on the Commission's proposal for a tax on carbon dioxide and energy. It agreed that before a decision could be taken on whether, and if so under what circumstances, such a tax should be introduced throughout the Community, further analysis would be required on the impact of the proposed tax, notably on energy consumption, economic activity and competitiveness.

Further work will also be needed on a number of important features of the Commission's proposal, such as the balance between the carbon and energy elements of the proposed tax, and the treatment of electricity. This work will take due account of the conclusions of the Edinburgh Council on the principle of subsidiarity.

The Council also agreed in principle that the derogation granted to Greece under the capital liberalisation directive should be extended for a further 18 months.

The Council also discussed the need to implement rapidly the national and Community measures agreed at the European Council in Edinburgh in order to promote growth. In particular, I urged that the new loan facility to be established by the European investment bank and the new European investment fund should be set up without delay.

NEDO (Redundancies)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about redundancy costs at the National Economic Development Office.

Mr. Nelson: It is proposed that the cost of redundancies at NEDO and other winding up costs should be met from the Treasury vote—class XVIII, vote 1. Parliamentary approval for this new service will be sought in a supplementary estimate for this vote. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £2 million will be met by a repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund.

Inflation

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the rate of inflation in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland for each year since March 1979.

Mr. Nelson: The table gives the annual average inflation rates for the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland from 1979 to 1991.

	United Kingdom	*Republic of Ireland*
1979	13·4	13·3
1980	18·0	18·2
1981	11·9	20·4
1982	8·6	17·1
1983	4·6	10·5
1984	5·0	8·7
1985	6·1	5·4
1986	3·4	3·8
1987	4·2	3·2
1988	4·9	2·1
1989	7·8	4·1
1990	9·5	3·2
1991	5·9	3·1

West Bromwich Building Society

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will refer the West Bromwich building society to the insurance ombudsman in relation to its role in home insurance plans.

Mr. Nelson: The Insurance Ombudsman Bureau provides a method of resolving disputes between insurers and individual policy holders. Some building societies have agreed to the voluntary extension of the building societies ombudsman's powers in resolving disputes over home income plans. Talks are continuing to try to agree an acceptable role for the ombudsman in cases concerning the West Bromwich building society.

EC States (Debt)

Mr. Peter Shore: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the level of Government borrowing as a percentage of gross domestic product; and what is the level of national debt as a percentage of gross domestic product for each EC member state from 1980 to the latest date.

Mr. Lamont: Data on EC member states' general government net borrowing and gross general government debt as a percentage of GDP are published in the European Commission's "European Economy".

Taxes

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures on the same basis as table 4, appendix 1, of "Economic Trends", January 1992, on the total percentage of gross income accounted for by taxes of all kinds paid by *(a)* the bottom decile of households and *(b)* the top decile giving comparable figures for households ranked by equivalised disposable income for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nelson: Figures on the basis of table 4, appendix 1, of "Economic Trends", January 1992 are only published for the years 1987 onwards. The results for 1987 were published in the May 1990 edition of "Economic Trends" and the 1988 results appeared in the March 1991 edition. The required ratios can be derived from these results.

Figures for earlier years are not published for decile groups of households ranked on an equivalised basis. In the March 1991 edition of "Economic Trends", table P shows estimates for direct taxes as a percentage of gross income and indirect taxes as a percentage of disposable income for alternative years back to 1977 for quintile groups ranked by equivalised disposable income. The required ratios for quintile groups can be derived from these figures.

Relocation

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress Departments and agencies are making under the Government's relocation policy.

Mr. Dorrell: Since March 1988, 14,300 civil service jobs have been located or relocated outside the south-east. A further 11,400 are to follow and a further 3,200 were under review at the end of June. This compares with a total of 6,000 posts which were moved or created outside the south-east under the centrally directed dispersal programme that operated between 1979 and 1988.

Until 1988, the dispersal programme was centrally directed. Since 1988, Departments have been required to review the location of their work systematically against a value-for-money test. This decentralised approach has resulted in the establishment outside the south-east of over twice as many civil service jobs in the last four years as in the previous eight. Details are given in the table.

Department	*Posts*
Posts already moved	
South West	
MOD	460
Charity Commission	160
Treasury Solicitor	125
Other departments	230
Total	975
Posts yet to move	
MOD	3,770
DSS	495
Other departments	85
Total	4,350
Posts already moved	
West Midlands	
Land Registry	790
MOD	250
DTI	135
Transport	105
Other departments	250
Total	1,530
Posts yet to move	
DSS	415
Other departments	110
Total	525
Posts already moved	
East Midlands	
Inland Revenue	770
Land Registry	180
Transport	120
Other departments	20
Total	1,090
Posts yet to move	
Inland Revenue	1,155
Other departments	80
Total	1,235
Posts already moved	
North West	
DSS	620
Inland Revenue	530
Customs	625
Employment	475
Home Office	250
Land Registry	240
OPCS	230
Other departments	95
Total	3,065
Posts yet to move	
Customs	1,005
DSS	495
Inland Revenue	110
Total	1,610
Posts already moved	
Northern	
DSS	845
Inland Revenue	420
Intervention Board	300
Land Registry	290
Education	100
Other departments	80
Total	2,035
Posts yet to move	
Education	45
Total	45
Posts already moved	
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Employment	850
DSS	585
Health	540
Land Registry	290
Other departments	120
Total	2,385
Posts yet to move	
Health	630
MAFF	1,000
DSS	50
CPS	50
Inland Revenue	15
Total	1,745
Posts already moved	
East Anglia	
All departments	65
Total	65
Posts yet to move	
MOD	390
Cabinet Office	200
Total	590
Posts already moved	
Scotland	
Inland Revenue	370
DSS	570
Other departments	200
Total	1,140
Posts yet to move	
DSS	490
Inland Revenue	125
Total	615
Posts already moved	
Wales	
DTI	1,010
Inland Revenue	320
MOD	50
Other departments	130
Total	1,510

Department	Posts
Posts yet to move	
MOD	95
Total	95
Posts already moved	
Northern Ireland	
DSS	435
Inland Revenue	100
Total	535
Posts yet to move	
DSS	485
Customs	100
Other departments	50
Total	635

More details of these moves and moves within the south-east are being placed in the House of Commons Library.

Departments and agencies also consider moving to sites within the south-east. Over the year to June 1992, 1,500 posts were identified for cost-effective transfer within the south-east and at 30 June 10,500 posts were under review for possible relocation within the south-east, a substantial increase on past years.

In addition, a number of Departments, notably the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Social Security, have moved or are moving civil servants between areas outside the south-east. The Ministry of Defence is also relocating service personnel throughout the country.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. Lamont: The Treasury does not undertake or sponsor large capital projects. It has, however, used leasing arrangements in the past. Decisions to lease or buy have been taken on value-for-money grounds. For the future, opportunities for further private finance will be considered in accordance with Treasury guidelines.

Council Tax

Mr. Straw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was *(a)* the total cost of the valuation of properties in (i) each local authority area in England and (ii) for all England, for the purposes of introducing the council tax and *(b)* the cost per property in (i) each local authority area in England and (ii) for all England.

Mr. Dorrell: The information in respect of each local authority in England is not readily available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The total cost of the valuation banding of domestic properties for all England was £39,409,635 and the average valuation banding cost per property for all England was £1·97.

National Lottery

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what account will be taken of revenue from the national lottery when planning public expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Government do not intend that the proceeds should be brought within the public spending control total, and the Government will not make any case-by-case reduction in conventional expenditure programmes to take account of awards from the lottery proceeds.

Alcohol

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to reduce the differences between the excise duty on Scotch whisky and on still wine.

Mr. Dorrell: The duty relativities between alcoholic drinks are reviewed each year, but I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget statement.

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the retail prices index currently relates to the cost of alcoholic drinks; how much of this is attributable to the price of Scotch whisky; and on what specific assumptions of whisky consumption by different income groups this is based.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* The weight for alcoholic drinks in the retail prices index for use in 1992 is 80 parts per thousand. Of this, the price indicators for Scotch and other types of whisky together account for 8·1 parts per thousand as part of the selection of indicators taken to represent wines and spirits generally.

The weights for the RPI are based mainly on the family expenditure survey. No specific assumptions are made concerning consumption by different income groups, although adjustments are made for known under-recording according to data on receipts of duty collected by HM Customs and Excise.

Single Market Regulations

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many of the top 30,000 European Community traders in Britain have received *(a)* a directory of commodity codes and *(b)* a visit by customs officials in preparation for the introduction of new customs and value added tax regulations from 1 January 1993.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* Distribution of the Intrastat classification nomenclature commenced on 23 November and is scheduled for completion by 15 December. Visits to the top 30,000 European Community traders have been carried out by Intrastat liaison officers based at local VAT offices, and have been primarily concerned with explaining how the new system for the collection of intra-EC trade statistics will operate. Approximately 28,000 visits have already taken place; it is expected that very few of the balance will be outstanding at the end of 1992 but all should be completed by February 1993 when the first returns are due.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the full-year cost to the Revenue of the introduction of the business reliefs for inheritance tax which he has announced to take effect from March 1993; and what public benefits he expects from these changes.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* The estimated reduction in the yield of inheritance tax for

transfers in 1992-93 resulting from the changes to business and agricultural relief made in the Finance (No. 2) Act 1992 is £45 million in a full year. The cost of the inheritance tax exchanges for the new London international financial futures and options exchange announced on 4 December 1992 is expected to be negligible. These changes, which took effect from March 1992, encourage the creation and development of small family businesses for the wider benefit of the national economy. There has been no announcement of changes to business reliefs for inheritance tax to take effect from March 1993.

Sales Lists

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 13 November, *Official Report*, column *1003*, whether the maximum penalty for misdeclaration for sales lists applies per incorrect form or per incorrect entry; if he will indicate the sections of the Finance Act 1992 which set out the penalty for failure to submit for sales lists; and, in respect of Intrastat, what is the maximum criminal penalty which will apply.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* The maximum penalty for misdeclaration for sales lists applies to each EC sales statement.

Authority to impose civil penalties for failure to submit EC sales statements is contained in section 82 of the Finance Act 1992.

As the Paymaster General stated in his earlier written reply, on 13 November, at column *1003*, the maximum criminal penalty in respect of Intrastat is £2,500.

In consultation with HM Customs and Excise, however, the Paymaster General has agreed that a sympathetic view will be taken of errors which arise as a result of genuine misunderstandings of any of the new procedures which it is introducing for the single market, in the initial phase of their operation. This approach will, of course, not extend to cases of fraud or gross negligence.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage they are of the total work force.

Sir John Cope: On 1 July 1992, the latest date for which this information is available, there were 26 Treasury staff who were registered disabled; of this total, seven are registered physically disabled and nine are registered sensorily disabled. The total number of staff in these two categories represents 0·7 per cent. of the Department's total work force; 1·1 per cent. of the Treasury work force are registered as disabled. The Department employs a number of people with disabilities who have chosen not to register as disabled.

Drug Smugglers

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures are taken by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to encourage and, where necessary, compensate members of the public who assist in the detection and capture of drug smugglers.

Sir John Cope Customs encourages the public to assist if in its efforts against drug smuggling through publicity campaigns such as that associated with the relaunch of their drugs hotline. Although inducements are not offered to the public, there is the facility to pay monetary, rewards for such assistance and it has been policy when appropriate to do so. When such public spiritedness has led to the success of a case at considerable commercial or financial disadvantage to the person or company responsible for the assistance, Customs seeks to ensure that no financial disadvantage is suffered and that there is suitable recompense or reward.

European Monetary System (Loans)

Mr. Shore: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what funds have been provided to the Bank of England under the community loan mechanism of the EMS; what were the terms of such loans; and what funds remain to be repaid.

Mr. Lamont: The Community loan mechanism of the EMS was combined with the medium term financial assistance facility to create a single facility for medium-term financial support—MTFS—in June 1988.

The United Kingdom has not made any applications for funds under the MTFS.

Mr. Shore: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what funds have been provided to the Bank of England under the very short-term funding facility of the European monetary system, since the United Kingdom joined the exchange rate mechanism; what were the terms of such facilities; and what funds are still to be repaid.

Mr. Lamont: The United Kingdom made use of the very short-term facility—VSTF—of the European monetary system to finance intervention in September 1992. VSTF transactions finance intervention in the foreign exchange markets and it has been the longstanding practice of successive Governments not to reveal details of such intervention.

The terms under which VSTF borrowing is undertaken are set out in the agreement of 13 March 1979 between the central banks of the member states of the European Economic Community which is published in the "Compendium of Community Monetary Texts 1989".

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the tax expenditure on mortgage interest tax relief in each year since 1982.

Mr. Dorrell: The cost of mortgage interest relief is provisionally estimated to be £5·2 billion in 1992-93 based on the standard assumption that interest rates remain at their current levels for the rest of 1992-93.

Estimates for the earlier years are published in table 5.2 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1992", a copy of which is in the Library.

Exempt Objects

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will announce the outcome of the review of the register of conditionally exempt objects.

Mr. Dorrell: The review of the register of conditionally exempt objects, usually known as the "V and A list", announced on 7 July 1992, *Official Report*, columns *226-27*

and 14 July 1992, *Official Report*, columns *524-25*, has now been completed. It has concluded that there is a need to make improvements to accessibility to the V and A list, the quality of entries on the list, and to publicity given to the list.

Improved accessibility will be achieved by computerising the V and A list. This is expected to be completed in the first half of 1993. Computerisation will allow inquirers to use database search and retrieval facilities to identify more easily objects of particular interest. This will meet the valid criticism that the V and A list is not properly indexed. Copies of the computerised V and A list will be given to the existing custodians of the V and A list. Further copies will also be available, at a reasonable cost, to any other institution or member of the public who requests a copy. This will meet the criticism that it is difficult to consult copies of the V and A list.

Publicity for the V and A list will be increased by the issue of quarterly press releases about recent additions to the list. These will start after computerisation has been completed. In addition, feature articles about the V and A list for publication in expert journals will be encouraged.

To improve the quality of entries, all individuals shown as contact points on the V and A list will be asked to confirm the information given in each entry on the list. At the same time, owners will be advised of the changes which will be made and given the opportunity to take new security precautions to guard against any increased risk of art theft arising from the greater publicity.

A number of related improvements are also planned or have now been implemented. There will be a selective audit of objects on the V and A list each year to confirm that undertakings on public access and preservation of the objects in the United Kingdom are being observed. Any breaches which cannot be put right will lead to an inheritance tax charge. Guidelines on what Inland Revenue considers to be reasonable public access to objects on the V and A list are being issues. Guidelines on access to the existing V and A list have also been provided to existing custodians of the V and A list and steps have been taken to ensure that the contact point shown on V and A list entries is as up to date as possible.

Owners of items on the V and A list have already agreed to provide public access and are not being asked to do more than they have already undertaken. The measures which I have described will make it easier for the public to enjoy the benefits which Parliament intended.

Capital Allowances

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements are being made to publish the draft legislation on enhanced capital allowances proposed in the autumn statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue will be making available on Monday 21 December 1992 the draft clauses which will implement the Chancellor's proposals on capital allowances announced in the autumn statement. These will introduce a new 40 per cent. first-time allowance for expenditure incurred on machinery and plant—excluding most cars—in the year ending 31 October 1993. They will also introduce a 20 per cent. initial allowance for the construction of new industrial and agricultural buildings which are contracted for in the 12 months ending 31 October 1993 and brought into use by the end of 1994.

In addition, the Chancellor proposes that, in one respect, the scope of the new relief for industrial and agricultural buildings will go further than previously announced. This is to be extended to include certain expenditure on existing and part-completed buildings which have not previously been used and which are bought from a person whose trade is the construction of buildings for sale. To qualify, such buildings must be purchased under a contract entered into the year ending 31 October 1993 and brought into use by the end of 1994.

The legislation for these measures will be included in the 1993 Finance Bill. A copy of the draft clauses, and the Inland Revenue press release announcing their publication, will be placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

Treasure Trove

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to change the procedures relating to treasure trove for England and Wales.

Mr. Lamont: The basis on which ex gratia rewards are paid to the finders of treasure trove were set out in a written answer on 26 April 1988, *Official Report*, columns *105-106*. Where a museum wishes to retain an item of treasure trove, the finder is paid an ex gratia reward equivalent to the estimated market value of the object, providing he or she has acted promptly and properly in reporting the find. Valuation is determined by the Treasure Trove Reviewing Committee, which is appointed by the Treasury and whose members are independent of the museum service. In reaching its estimate of market value, the committee considers advice from the museums, information from recent auctions of similar objects, and any other advice or information they consider to be relevant.

I believe that the present procedures work well and fairly, but I have concluded that the following changes are appropriate: finders will now be invited to submit any information about the possible valuation of their find which they wish the committee to consider; in cases where there is no recent evidence of market value from auctions of similar items, the committee will seek valuations from two independent sources to consider alongside the advice it receives from the museums; and a list of additional, named specialists will be drawn up on whose advice the committee may call when it thinks it appropriate, when it is considering particularly unusual items.

With the approval of the Prime Minister, I have also agreed with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage that responsibility for treasure trove will be transferred to his Department from 1 April 1993.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Irish Language

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the number of people who *(a)* speak Irish and *(b)* are learning Irish; what amount of Government funds were spent on (i) teaching the language and (ii) otherwise promoting it during the current financial year; how much this represents per capita in Northern Ireland; how much per Irish

speaker and student; what were the figures five and 10 years ago; and what are his projections for the next three years.

Mr. Hanley: In the 1991 census of population, 131,974 persons aged three or over were recorded as able to speak Irish. For estimates of the number of pupils learning Irish at school, I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) on 17 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *149-52*, where it was estimated that, based on a 10 per cent. sample survey relating to those schools which offered Irish as a subject in the 1988-89 academic year, some 26,210 pupils were studying Irish. The numbers learning Irish in other educational institutions are not available centrally.

The total costs of teaching Irish are not separately identified.

The total of central Government expenditure—excluding the funding of Irish medium education and of teaching Irish in English medium mainstream education—in the current financial year is estimated at £668,000. Based on information available from the 1991 census of population, this equates to some £0·42 per head of population, or £5·06 per Irish speaker. Since information on the costs of teaching Irish is not available, a per student figure cannot be provided.

The equivalent figure five years ago was approximately £210,000. A figure for 10 years ago is not available.

Projections for expenditure on the promotion of the language for the next three years are also unavailable.

Sinn Fein Councillors

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will published a table to show for each council in Northern Ireland the number of Sinn Fein councillors; and how many of those councillors in each of those council areas have *(a)* been charged with an offence scheduled in the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991, *(b)* been charged with membership of a terrorist organisation or *(c)* served a prison sentence for a scheduled offence.

Mr. Mates: The number of Sinn Fein councillors by council area is as follows:

	Number
Antrim	0
Ards	0
Armagh	1
Ballymena	0
Ballymoney	0
Banbridge	0
Belfast	9
Carrickfergus	0
Castlereagh	0
Coleraine	0
Cookstown	2
Craigavon	1
Derry	5
Down	0
Dungannon	3
Fermanagh	4
Larne	0
Limavady	1
Lisburn	2
Magherafelt	3
Moyle	1
Newry and Mourne	4
Newtownabbey	0
North Down	0
Omagh	6
Strabane	2
TOTAL	44

It would not be appropriate to supply the other information requested.

Transplants

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he has made of the number of organ or eye donations that could have been used for transplants and of the actual numbers of transplants in the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. Hanley: The information, which is based upon figures for 1991 supplied by the United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority, is as follows:

Organ	*Retrieved*	*Used*	*Unsuitable for use*	*Suitable but unused*
Kidneys	67	66	1	—
Pancreas	—	—	—	—
Heart	8	8	—	—
Heart/Lung	4	4	—	—
Lungs	5	2	3	—
Liver	15	14	1	—
Cornea	33	24	9	—

Notes:

1. All figures are for cadaveric organs.
2. Retrieved organs may prove unsuitable for use for a variety of reasons, for example anatomical defect, mismatch, or impaired function after transit.

University of Ulster

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each of the four campuses of the university of Ulster the current number of full-time equivalent students, the ratio of professorial staff to student numbers, the ratio of academic staff in post to student numbers and the ratio of non-academic staff in post to student numbers.

Mr. Hanley: In the 1992-93 academic year the figures for the university of Ulster are as follows:

Campus	*Number of full time equivalent students*	*Ratio of professorial staff[3] to students*	*Ratio of academic staff[3] in post to students*	*Ratio of non-academic staff[3] in post to students*
Belfast	677	0·009	0·087	0·114
Coleraine	3,716	0·008	0·051	0·156
Jordanstown	7,259	0·005	0·060	0·124
Magee	1,541	0·003	0·057	0·088

[1] Excludes Vice-Chancellor/Pro-Vice-Chancellor/Provosts.
[2] Excludes professorial and research staff.
[3] Includes administration, technical and research staff and Vice-Chancellor/Pro-Vice-Chancellor/Provosts—four of whom are professorss based at Coleraine and Magee campuses.
Note: Comparison of staff:student ratios between the various campuses is not valid because of the unitary structures of the university and the differing subject mixes at each campus.

Cardiac Services

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many coronary bypass operations were carried out in each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Hanley: The information available centrally is as follows:

Coronary by-pass operations

	Number
1988-89	245
1989-90	318
1990-91	330

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are on the waiting list for coronary bypass operations in each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: Information is not held centrally on the numbers waiting for specific operations. At September 1992, there were 874 people waiting for admission to the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast for cardiac surgery. Cardiac surgery is not carried out in any other hospital in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what steps he will take to reduce the waiting list for coronary bypass operations in each of the health and social boards; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when the chief medical officer will complete his review of cardiac services; and if the report will be published;

(3) if he will refer the report of the chief medical officer into the review of cardiac services in Northern Ireland for independent review by experts nominated by the European Society of Cardiology;

(4) if he will take measures to ensure that an immediate assessment of present and future needs for cardiac surgery is undertaken, involving cardiologists and cardiac surgeons.

Mr. Hanley: In May this year, a fourth cardiac surgeon was appointed to the Royal Victoria hospital, thereby increasing the yearly number of health service cardiac operations at that hospital from 630 to 840. In November, a sum of £800,000 was allocated to boards to allow them to continue buying cardiac operations in England and elsewhere for patients who would otherwise have to continue waiting. Prior to November, more than 120 patients had already had cardiac surgery in Great Britain.

On 8 December, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, in his announcement on the allocation of resources for the year ahead, indicated that the funds available for expenditure on health and social services in 1993-94 will amount to £1,318 million. Within this figure I am pleased to say that additional funds have been made available to meet charter guarantees on waiting times for hospital treatment and, in particular, cardiac surgery.

The Department's chief medical officer has recently undertaken a review of cardiac surgery, with the aim of improving the cardiac surgery service and thereby reducing the waiting list and times still further. His report was issued for consultation on 30 October. The views of a wide range of interested groups and individuals have been invited, including cardiologists and cardiac surgeons. Responses are still being received and when these have been fully considered, the Department intends to announce its conclusions and publish an action plan early in the new year. There are no plans to refer the chief medical officer's report for independent review by experts nominated by the European Society of Cardiology.

Orthopaedic Surgery

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what additional resources he will make available to ensure that the waiting lists for orthopaedic surgery are reduced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Through the Department of Health and Social Services' waiting list initiative, additional funding of £1·2 million was made available in 1991-92 to achieve reductions in long waiting lists, including that for orthopaedic surgery. Additional resources are being provided this year and next for the same purpose.

In addition, over £600,000 has been invested specifically in the development and enhancement of the orthopaedic service since 1989-90.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are on the waiting list for orthopaedic surgery in each of the four health and social services boards.

Mr. Hanley: At 30 September 1992, 3,324 people were waiting for admission to hospital in the trauma and orthopaedic speciality in the Eastern board and 623 in the Western board.

There are no consultants in trauma and orthopaedics in the Northern or Southern boards and hence no waiting lists.

Maedi Visna

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the last case of maedi visna was confirmed in sheep in Northern Ireland; what information he has on the equivalent information for neighbouring or other counties of the Republic of Ireland; and what plans he has to make Northern Ireland free of maedi visna.

Mr. Hanley: Maedi visna has never been detected in the indigenous Northern Ireland sheep flock. The disease was last confirmed in imported sheep in 1981 and the infected animals were slaughtered. I understand that maedi visna has not been detected in the Republic of Ireland sheep flock since 1982. A submission seeking recognition of Northern Ireland's claim to freedom from maedi visna was sent recently to the European Commission.

Education and Library Boards

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the total amount raised by each education and library board through the *(a)* sale and *(b)* rental of land, property or facilities, in each of the past two years; and what proportion of these amounts were (i) retained by each board for the provision of education and library services and (ii) retained by the Department;

(2) if he will take steps to ensure that all proceeds of the sale or rental of land, property, or facilities by each education and library board will be retained by that board for the provision of education and library services; and if he will return to the boards any such sums currently retained by the Department of Education.

Mr. Hanley: The total amount raised by each education and library board through the sale of land and property for the past two years is as follows:

Board	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £
Belfast	494,129	21,744
Western	185,515	201,673
North-eastern	22,804	270,524
South-eastern	680,970	44,000
Southern	40,432	110,582

Information on the amounts raised through the rental of land and property is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

All amounts in the past two years were reallocated to each board in addition to their capital baselines for the provision of education and library services. However, it must always remain open to the Secretary of State to decide how best to use receipts.

Health and Social Services Boards

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total amount raised by each health and social services board through the *(a)* sale and *(b)* rental of land, property or facilities, in each of the past two years; and what proportion of these amounts were (i) retained by each board for the provision of health and social services and (ii) retained by the DHSS management executive.

Mr. Hanley: The total amount realised from the disposal of property in each of the last two financial years was as follows:

Financial Year	*Eastern Board* £	*Southern Board* £	*Northern Board* £	*Western Board* £
1990-91	3,459,770	508,750	137,400	6,900
1991-92	639,475	70,600	13,000	221,550

Details of income received by health and social services boards from rentals of land, property or facilities is not held centrally but all such income is retained by boards.

In 1990-91, all moneys raised from the disposal of property were retained by boards, with the exception of some late receipts amounting to £180,000.

In 1991-1992, moneys raised from disposals were reallocated by the Secretary of State to meet financial pressures on Northern Ireland Departments, including increased expenditure on the family health services.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to ensure that all proceeds of the sale or rental of land, property or facilities by each health and social services board will be retained by that board for the provision of health and social services; and if he will return to the boards any such sums currently retained by the DHSS management executive.

Mr. Hanley: No. It must always remain open to the Secretary of State to decide how receipts should be used. In planning the level of public expenditure, including expenditure on health and personal social services, the Secretary of State takes into account anticipated receipts from sales of land or property. The DHSS management executive has reallocated the receipts for the current financial year to meet a number of high priority pressures within the health and personal social services.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. Mates: The private finance initiative is intended to apply to all services which are traditionally provided by Government Departments. Northern Ireland Departments have been asked to consider how they may most effectively take forward the initiative in their areas of responsibility on the basis of recently published Treasury guidelines.

Surplus Food

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what amount of EC surplus food was distributed in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years.

Mr. Hanley: The quantities of EEC surplus food distributed in Northern Ireland were as follows:

	Butter (tonnes)	*Beef (tonnes)*
1989-90	678	439
1990-91	680	536
1991-92	517	367

Chief Electoral Officer (Report)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the report of the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland for 1991-92 will be published.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have today laid the Chief Electoral Officer's report before Parliament—House of Commons No. 344. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Inward Investment

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on the number of visits made to Northern Ireland by potential inward investors in the years ended on 31 March 1990, 1991 and

1992; and how many of the potential investors were brought by the Industrial Development Board to South Down in each of the three years.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* The number of visits made to Northern Ireland by potential inward investors in the years ended 31 March 1990, 1991 and 1992 was 175, 231 and 240 respectively. Of these, a total of 15 included visits to South Down—four in 1989-90, five in 1990-91 and six in 1991-92.

EMPLOYMENT

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how the departmental green Minister has promoted protection of the ozone layer with specific policy measures; which possible measures have been considered and rejected; and on what grounds.

Mr. McLoughlin: In the Department's environmental policy statements we have made a specific commitment to reducing or limiting the procurement of substances which are pollutants. The Employment Department is not a major user of ozone-depleting substances. No specific policy measures have been rejected.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the quantity of ozone-depleting substances recycled within the Department and returned to the manufacturer.

Mr. McLoughlin: The use by the Department of ozone-depleting chemicals is minimal, but we pay due regard to proper disposal methods and are taking steps to ensure that all staff are aware of them. No records of quantities are held centrally and this information would be available only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much funding has been allocated or spent to specifically deal with measures to reduce her Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances.

Mr. McLoughlin: No specific funding has been allocated. The reduction in the use of ozone-depleting substances is being achieved by replacing equipment which uses such substances with alternatives which do not contain ozone-depleting chemicals, as and when they are due for replacement.

The Employer Department is not a major user of ozone-depleting substances.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which current uses of ozone-depleting chemicals by her Department are considered essential.

Mr. McLoughlin: Some fire extinguishers which use halons as a propellant are in place in departmental buildings. Fire-fighting equipment is essential for the protection of staff; however, these extinguishers are being phased out.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by what date her Department's use of ozone-depleting chemicals will conform to EC regulations on limits on these chemicals.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is the Department's policy to comply with the United Kingdom health and safety legislation. This policy will be applied to any legislation arising out of EC regulations on ozone-depleting chemicals.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give an undertaking to purchase only ozone-friendly fridges that do not contain chlorofluorocarbons or hydrochlorofluorocarbons for her Department.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department's purchasing policy includes a commitment to the buying of environmentally friendly goods wherever practical.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she will provide details from the maintenance servicing record of the quantity and type of ozone-destroying chemicals used annually in her Department's refrigeration and air conditioning equipment for servicing and in leakages; and what proportion is removed for recycling;

(2) how many CFC and HCFC installations are contained within her Department's buildings;

(3) how many refrigeration and air conditioning systems in her Department are equipped with automatic leak detection systems;

(4) how many CFC domestic fridges are contained within her Department's buildings.

Mr. McLoughlin: No records are held centrally and this information would be available only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidance has been sought and received on alternatives to the ozone-destroying chemicals in use by her Department.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department is not a major user of ozone-depleting chemicals. Where guidance is needed in specific circumstances, it is obtained in the first instance from the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many portable halon fire extinguishers are contained within departmental buildings; and what measures are being taken to ensure their recycling and replacement.

Mr. McLoughlin: No records of the number of halon fire extinguishers are held centrally. Halon fire extinguishers are being phased out as and when they are due for replacement.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many catastrophic leaks of ozone-depleting substances have occurred within her Department's buildings in the last five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department has no information to suggest that there have been any catastrophic leaks of ozone-depleting substances from Employment Department buildings in the last five years.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many cases were dealt with by industrial tribunals in each of the past five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of cases dealt with by industrial tribunals—at a hearing, by a settlement or by withdrawal—in the period 1 April 1987 to 31 March 1992 was as follows.

	Number
1987-88	34,233
1988-89	29,317
1989-90	31,913
1990-91	35,826
1991-92	41,977

Health and Safety

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average fine for health and safety offences involving serious injury during 1991-92.

Mr. McLoughlin: The average fine for all health and safety offences in 1991-92 was £1,134. The average fine for those convictions arising out of a serious injury is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will deposit in the Library the names of those attending and minutes of the recent meeting between insurance companies, other interested parties and the Health and Safety Executive regarding the possible tendering out of some of HSE's work.

Mr. McLoughlin: During the market-testing feasibility study referred to in my reply to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) 25 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *633-34*, the team under the direction of the director general of the Health and Safety Executive met representatives from a wide range of industry, the trade unions and other interested parties. the Association of British Insurers was one of those parties and its advice is reflected in the report my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently received. That report is still being considered and it would be inappropriate to release further details.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of factories and other workplaces for which the Health and Safety Executive is responsible for enforcing the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974; how many of these have been inspected by the factory inspectorate; and how many have received no inspection in the last five, seven, nine and 11 years.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are 650,999 workplaces registered with the Health and Safety Executive's agricultural, factory, quarries, mines, explosives and nuclear installations inspectorates and offshore safety division for which HSE is the enforcing authority for health and safety legislation.

It is not possible, without incurring disproportionate cost, to identify how many of these premises have been inspected by HSE's factory inspectorate—FI—of how many have received no inspection in the last five, seven, nine and 11 years.

However, on 31 March 1992, the latest date for which information is centrally available, 417,316 fixed premises were registered with FI.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees have been gaoled for offences under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 since 1974.

Mr. McLoughlin: To date, no employees have been jailed for offences under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement about the privatisation of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently received a report on the feasibility of market-testing those areas of the Health and Safety Executive's activities not covered by their existing programme. My right hon. Friend is considering the report and will issue a statement in due course.

Sickness

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of a standard enforceable procedure for notifying an employer of sickness;

(2) what plans she has to develop the use of a standard enforceable procedure for notifying an employer of sickness.

Mr. McLoughlin: None. Like most other terms and conditions of employment, this is a matter for discussion and agreement between employer and employee without Government intervention, subject to the requirements of the Statutory Sick Pay (General) Regulations.

Training

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give, in constant 1992-93 prices and cash terms, the total amount spent by her Department of the budget for training in each year since 1989-90, the expected outturn for 1992-93 and plans for 1993-94.

Mr. McLoughlin: The latest available figures are provided in the table.

Employment Department Expenditure

	Constant 1992-93 prices	*Cash terms*
1989-90 Outturn	3,077	2,557
1990-91 Outturn	2,667	2,393
1991-92 Outturn	2,053	1,969
1992-93 Estimated Outturn	1,794	1,794
1993-94 Plans	1,654	1,701

The figures in the table include:
The Department's training and vocational education programmes;
for 1989-90 and 1990-91 Great Britain figures;
for 1991-92 England and Wales figures;
for 1992-93 and 1993-94 England only figures:
The figures in the table exclude:
the Department's enterprise programmes;
administration and running costs associated with the programmes;
Employment action.
1992-93 figures exclude provision transferred to the Department of Trade and Industry with effect from 1 May 1992.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give for each of her Department's schemes for the unemployed, for each year since 1989-90 the expected outturn for 1992-93, and plans for 1993-94 of *(a)* the number of participants, *(b)* the average duration of the scheme and *(c)* the cost per participant in cash terms and in constant 1992-93.

Mr. McLoughlin: The table shows the outturn in Great Britain for each year since 1989-90, the expected outturn for 1992-93 and the plans for 1993-94 of *(a)* the number of participants, *(b)* the average length of stay and *(c)* the cost per participant in cash and constant prices.

	1989-90 [4]Outturn	*1990-91 [4]Outturn*	*1991-92 [4]Outturn*	*1992-93 [4]Forecast outturn*
Employment Training (ET)				
Number of participants (000s)	210	198	149	124
Average length of stay (weeks)	26	23	[1]—	[1]—
Cost per participant				
Cash (£)	5,404	5,384	6,014	6,234
Constant (£)	6,504	6,001	6,270	6,234
Employment Action (EA)				
Number of participants (000s)	[2]—	[2]—	14	24
Average length of stay (weeks)	[2]—	[2]—	[1]—	[1]—
Cost per participant				
Cash (£)	[2]—	[2]—	[3]2,833	6,167
Constant (£)	[2]—	[2]—	[3]2,953	6,167
Training for Work 1993-94 plans				
Number of participants (000s)	150	—	—	—
Average length of stay (weeks)	24	—	—	—
Cost per participant				
Cash (£)	6,241	—	—	—
Constant (£)	6,074	—	—	—

[1] Actual information later than 1990-91 is not available because average length of stay calculations are based on entrants to Employment Training and Employment Action in a given period and it is necessary to wait until all entrants in a period have left the programme.
[2] Employment Action began on 1 October 1991.
[3] The 1992-93 unit cost is for Employment Action in the programmes first six months of operation when the programme was building up.
[4] All figures are for Great Britain. These programmes are delivered in Scotland and Wales by Scottish Office and Welsh Office respectively.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate she makes of the number of 16 and 17-year-olds eligible for the youth training guarantee who were not on a youth training scheme for each month since January; how many of these received no financial assistance; and how many she expects will be in this position for each month in 1993.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested. The Government continue to be committed to the youth training guarantee and a range of financial support is available to young people while they are seeking suitable training.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of youth trainees have achieved national vocational qualifications, and how many at level 2, for each year since the qualification was available for youth training schemes; and what estimate she makes of the number and percentage for this year and the next.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not yet available. While there is some data on achievement of national vocational qualifications and their equivalents, further work is needed to assess their reliability.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what were the average figures and percentage rates in each year since and including 1987 of those who have been out of work for more than a year for *(a)* Dundee, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* the United Kingdom for (i) all unemployed and (ii) 18 to 25-year-olds;

(2) what were the monthly unemployment figures and percentage rates in each month of 1992 for *(a)* Dundee, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* the United Kingdom for (i) all unemployed and (ii) for 18 to 25-year-olds;

(3) what were the average unemployment figures and percentage rates in each year since and including 1987 for *(a)* Dundee, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* the United Kingdom for (i) all unemployed and (ii) 18 to 25-year-olds.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested for total claimant unemployment for Dundee travel-to-work area, Scotland and the United Kingdom is available from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Claimant unemployment rates by both age and duration are not available. However, United Kingdom unemployment rates by age, expressed as a percentage of the work force in that age band, are available on a quarterly basis, but for standard age bands only. Although these data are not available from NOMIS, they are published in *Employment Gazette*, table 2.15.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the numbers of men and women in employment, both full time and part time in each quarter since January 1973.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the change in unemployment in *(a)* Eastleigh and *(b)* the average in other Hampshire districts in (i) the past 12 months and (ii) the past five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest percentage rate of unemployment for *(a)* the borough of Eastleigh and *(b)* the constituency of Eastleigh.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information on unemployment rates is not available below the level of travel-to-work areas. In October 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, the unadjusted claimant unemployment rate for Winchester and Eastleigh travel-to-work area was 4·8 per cent.

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the annual budget for the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate.

Mr. McLoughlin: Estimates provide for gross expenditure of £18,541,000 for 1992-93.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in what areas of her Department's responsibilities she has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if she will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Important elements of the private finance initiative include capital projects or the provision of services where the greater part of the cost involves capital expenditure. Although the majority of the Department's spending is not in this area, we are considering how to apply the initiative on the basis of the guidance which has been published by the Treasury.

National Training Task Force

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many members of the national training task force are *(a)* women, *(b)* from an ethnic minority and *(c)* people with disabilities, in numbers and as a percentage of the group.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are two—10·9 per cent.—women members of the national training task force and one—5·3 per cent.—member from an ethnic minority group. There are no members who have registered or non-registered disabilities.

Betting Shops

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she will introduce safeguards and protection for betting shop employees who do not wish to change contracts in the event of a relaxation of betting shop hours;

(2) if she will introduce regulations to prevent exploitation of betting shop employees by employers who refuse to allow a choice between new contracts of employment and existing ones.

Mr. McLoughlin: Terms and conditions of employment are in general a matter for employers and employees, and it is always open to either party to a contract of employment to seek to renegotiate its terms.

All employees have protection against unilateral changes being made to their contracts of employment.

Chlorine Storage

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what account is taken by the emergency off-site plan of each site, designated under the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 because of the quality of chlorine which they store, of the possibility of catastrophic failure of the site's chlorine storage facilities.

Mr. McLoughlin: In preparing off-site emergency plans for all those sites subject to regulation 11 of the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984, as amended, the emergency planners have to take account of the full range of possible events, in accordance with the official guidance published by the Health and Safety Executive—HS(G) 25—"The Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations: Further Guidance on Emergency Plans" and HS(R) 21—revised—"A guide to the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984".

Remploy

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Government's 1·5 per cent. pay norm will apply to low-paid and disabled employees of Remploy; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* Remploy, like other public sector employers, will need to ensure that the overall level of settlements for each of its negotiating groups is kept within the current zero to 1·5 per cent. pay limit.

Sellafield

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate she has made of the effect on the number of people employed at the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield of the delayed start-up; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

I am advised by British Nuclear Fuels plc that nearly 2,900 contracted and agency staff currently work at the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield. Delays to the start-up of the plant will result in premature reductions in this number, the timing of which will depend on the extent of such delays. BNFL has already announced that 100 jobs will be lost at the beginning of January 1993 and has written to contractor companies to remind them of their terms of employment and advise that further redundancies may be necessary. BNFL has estimated that some 3,000 permanent jobs in the company and its suppliers will be sustained by THORP.

WALES

Ambulance Services, Clwyd

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the status of the planned merger between Gwynedd and Clwyd health authorities' ambulance services; and what estimate he has made of the effect of the merger on services for the region.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Arrangements for the statutory provision of ambulance services is a matter for health authorities locally, which have decided that, as from 1 April 1993, the existing ambulance services of Gwynedd and Clwyd will combine to form a north Wales ambulance service.

The health authorities' decision followed a detailed examination by the NHS Wales value for money unit of the costs and benefits of amalgamating the two services which suggested that significant benefits could result.

Welsh Office guidance to health authorities issued on 17 June 1992 gave the view that provision of ambulance services in Wales is likely to be made more efficient and cost effective and, therefore, the standard of patient care is likely to be improved through service amalgamations on a multi-district basis. I would expect the effect of the merger in Gwynedd and Clwyd to accord with this.

Local Authority Debt

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the accumulated debt for each Welsh local authority in the last financial year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is given in the table.

Outstanding loan debt as at 31 March 1992

	£000
Alyn and Deeside	36,188
Colwyn	27,398
Delyn	29,452
Glyndwr	19,569
Rhuddlan	23,406
Wrexham Maelor	64,371
Carmarthen	51,289
Ceredigion	33,617
Dinefwr	26,124
Llanelli	45,201
Preseli Pembrokeshire	52,291
South Pembrokeshire	26,320
Blaenau Gwent	129,014
Islwyn	79,650
Monmouth	49,977
Newport	134,978
Torfaen	93,191
Aberconwy	13,628
Arfon	35,025
Dwyfor	12,435
Meirionnydd	16,156
Ynys Mon	59,678
Cynon Valley	63,909
Merthyr Tydfil	68,299
Ogwr	114,335
Rhondda	145,229
Rhymney Valley	90,599
Taff Ely	56,510
Brecknock	29,014
Montgomeryshire	24,370
Radnorshire	14,249
Cardiff	234,557
Vale of Glamorgan	62,243
Port Talbot	39,825
Lliw Valley	47,001
Neath	45,795
Swansea	159,989
Clwyd	112,133
Dyfed	103,198
Gwent	126,377
Gwynedd	64,897
Mid Glamorgan	76,475
Powys	48,329
South Glamorgan	143,525
West Glamorgan	143,307
Dyfed Powys Joint Police Authority	3,989
North Wales Joint Police Authority	2,714
South Wales Joint Police Authority	7,761
Total Wales	3,087,587

Local Government Finance

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he intends to review the guidance issued to local authorities by his Department on the operation of section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no plans to review the guidance issued to authorities on the circumstances in which relief might be offered to ratepayers. Decisions are entirely at the discretion of authorities. They have the freedom to help ratepayers if they believe the needs of an area justify such help and after taking into account the fact that 25 per cent. of the cost of any relief is borne by local community chargepayers.

Council Rents

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table of outstanding council rents by district council in Wales for each of the last three years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Local authorities' own estimates of both current and former tenants' rent arrears for the financial years 1989-90 to 1991-92 are shown in the following tables:

Local Authority	*Rent arrears (£'s) 1989-90*	*Rent arrears (£'s) 1990-91*	*Rent arrears (£'s) 1991-92*
Aberconwy BC	99,608	110,000	54,879
Alyn and Deeside DC	138,800	135,000	209,529
Arfon BC	139,678	105,000	106,471
Blaenau Gwent BC	147,876	156,012	101,265
Brecknock BC	58,444	61,000	65,428
Cardiff CC	911,439	1,100,000	955,970
Carmarthen DC	130,015	156,000	156,584
Ceredigion DC	110,718	121,000	114,000
Colwyn BC	156,968	145,000	99,468
Cynon Valley BC	159,430	165,000	90,500
Delyn BC	126,637	115,000	120,668
Dinefwr BC	140,665	143,309	117,366
Dwyfor DC	27,256	30,000	33,156
Glyndwr DC	189,304	216,540	231,081
Islwyn BC	92,683	103,000	105,991
Llanelli BC	120,520	120,000	249,977
Lliw Valley BC	262,727	220,000	167,436
Meirionnydd DC	60,780	53,000	42,393
Merthyr Tydfil BC	125,830	115,000	78,010
Monmouth BC	210,419	210,418	197,396
Montgomeryshire DC	129,713	148,350	89,152
Neath BC	246,004	264,500	273,439
Newport BC	530,000	400,000	591,000
Ogwr BC	1,009,779	896,260	636,770
Port Talbot BC	141,600	143,000	158,707
Preseli Pembs DC	239,992	264,000	250,000
Radnorshire DC	17,000	18,500	25,456
Rhondda BC	313,814	240,000	305,997
Rhuddlan BC	66,800	54,470	115,000
Rhymney Valley DC	381,000	381,000	488,877
South Pembs DC	99,975	100,000	78,027
Swansea CC	893,319	821,800	1,242,265
Taff Ely BC	359,325	370,000	398,611
Torfaen BC	466,200	467,000	530,258
Vale of Glamorgan BC	150,500	170,000	149,097
Wrexham Maelor BC	356,210	365,000	280,926
Ynys Mon BC	159,259	178,000	164,018

Renewable Energy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 18 November, *Official Report*, column *219*, what is the projected cost of generation for each individual renewable project and in total; and what contribution the generated energy will make towards the United Kingdom-wide energy supply.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The generation costs of individual projects are commercially confidential. Should all 22 renewable energy projects approved so far in Wales under the non fossil-fuel obligation proceed as planned, they will have a rated capacity totalling 102·42 MW.

Education Bill

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to meet the Welsh Joint Education Committee to discuss the impact of the Education Bill on education in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I met the Welsh Joint Education Committee to discuss the Education Bill on 2 December 1992.

Dentists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dentists have given written notice to each family health services authority to remove their names from the dental list in each week since 8 July; and what is the total for this period.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not available centrally in the form requested. Fortnightly returns from family health services authorities in Wales indicate that, as a direct result of the new fee scale introduced on 8 July, 21 general dental practitioners gave written notice to have their names removed from dental lists from 1 August 1992 to 4 December 1992, while 26 new dentists joined the dental lists during that period. The figures on a fortnightly basis are as follows:

Fortnight ending	*Number of Dentists leaving Dental list*	*Number of Dentists joining Dental list*
14 August 1992	1	5
28 August	0	1
11 September	5	3
25 September	7	4
9 October	1	1
23 October	2	1
6 November	3	4
20 November	1	3
4 December	1	4
Totals	21	26

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients have reported to each family health services authority that they have been unable to arrange national health service dental treatment in each week since 8 July.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not held centrally. The family health service authorities are responsible for directing patients to the community dental service in its "safety net" capacity.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many family health services authorities have been unable to provide emergency dental services in each week since 8 July.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is the responsibility of general dental practitioners to ensure that emergency treatment is available for those patients registered with them. Fortnightly returns submitted by family health services authorities in Wales for the period from 1 August to date indicate that only Gwynedd FHSA has been unable to provide out-of-hours emergency dental services for unregistered patients in each fortnight since 1 August 1992. The community dental services act as a safety net for unregistered patients needing emergency dental treatment within normal hours. Discussions are now taking place between Gwynedd family health services authority and Gwynedd health authority with a view to providing a weekend emergency service in Bangor for those patients not registered with a general dental practitioner.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dentists who have not given notice to leave the dental list have given written notice to each family health services authority to terminate or deregister some or all of their capitation arrangements for child patients in each week since 8 July; how many dentists have deregistered patients; and how many patients have been deregistered.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not available in the form requested. Fortnightly returns submitted by family health services authorities in Wales can be summarised as in the tables for the period 1 August 1992 to 4 December 1992.

Fortnight ending	*Number of capitation patients de-registered*	*Number of dentists*
14 August 1992	3	2
28 August 1992	3	1
11 September 1992	—	—
25 September 1992	—	—
9 October 1992	—	
23 October 1992	2	1
6 November 1992	6	2
20 November 1992	1	1
4 December 1992	—	—

The information given in these fortnightly returns was intended for general managerial purposes and is not statistically validated.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many family health services authorities have referred patients who have been unable to obtain treatment from a general dental practitioner, to *(a)* the community dental service, *(b)* the hospital dental service and *(c)* a salaried dentist in each week since July.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not available in the form requested. Fortnightly returns from family health services authorities indicate that all FHSAs in Wales have referred patients to either the community or hospital dental services at some stage between 1 August 1992 and 4 December 1992.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the family health services authorities which have *(a)* held no dental services committee meeting and *(b)* cancelled a meeting in each months since July.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Dental services committee meetings are only held when there are sufficient cases to be considered. Meetings may not therefore be required on a regular monthly basis. Information as to the frequency of FHSA service committee meetings is not held centrally.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients have contacted each family health services authority asking for help in finding a dentist in each week since 8 July.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Accordingly to the fortnightly returns submitted by family health services authorities in Wales the information requested is as follows:

Fortnight ending	*Patients*
14 August 1992	742
28 August 1992	754
11 September 1992	715
25 September 1992	644
9 October 1992	681
23 October 1992	673
6 November 1992	714
20 November 1992	632
4 December 1992	569

The information given in these fortnightly returns was intended for general managerial purposes and is not statistically validated.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dentists who have not given notice to leave the dental list have given written notice to each family health services authority to deregister some or all of their continuing care arrangements for adult patients in each week since 8 July; how many dentists have deregistered patients; and how many patients have been deregistered.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not available in the form requested. Fortnightly returns submitted by family health services authorities can be summarised as in the following table for the period 1 August 1992 to 4 December 1992.

Fortnight ending	*Number of continuing care patients de-registered*	*Number of dentists de-registering continuing care patients*
14 August 1992	3	4
28 August 1992	4,003	5
11 September 1992	1,781	6
25 September 1992	238	8
9 October 1992	212	7
23 October 1992	1,112	9
6 November 1992	183	9
20 November 1992	42	2
4 December 1992	438	8

The information given in these fortnightly returns was intended for general managerial purposes and is not statistically validated.

Pre-school Playgroups

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet the Clwyd Pre-school Playgroups Association committee to discuss the assisted places scheme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Secretary of State currently has no plans to meet with the Clwyd Pre-School Playgroups Association committee.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will increase the Wales Pre-School Playgroups Association grant; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Grant awarded to Wales Pre-School Playgroups Association in 1992-93 to support the organisation's core costs was £158,023, compared with £143,657 in each of the previous three financial years.

Wales Pre-School Playgroups Association has applied for grant in 1993-94. The application is under consideration. It is hoped to announce a decision by the end of January 1993.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the moneys given to each of the county social services departments which is earmarked for pre-school playgroup assisted places;

(2) if he will make extra funds available to county authorities to enable them to expand their assisted places schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Earmarked special funds are allocated to counties under the all-Wales mental handicap strategy, to provide a comprehensive pattern of new services including developments for children with a mental handicap. The specific amount allocated to pre-school playgroup assisted places for such children is for decision each year by county joint planning teams who are best placed to decide on local needs and priorities.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of times and dates when he has met the Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I meet representatives of the Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association informally from time to time and attended the launch of Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association "Plymouth" in Newport on 5 June 1992.

Homelessness

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of people who will be homeless in Wales over the Christmas period; and what policies he has to provide homes to accommodate those without a fixed place to live.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Data are collected only with respect to the last day of each quarter. Figures for 31 December 1992 will be available in April 1993. Local housing authorities secure permanent accommodation and other support for all homeless people under part III of the Housing Act 1985.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many homeless households are currently living in temporary accommodation in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of households accepted as homeless and accommodated temporarily by local authorities was 1,205 at the end of September 1992.

Christmas Trees

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the effect of acid rain deposition on Christmas tree plantations in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am not aware of any evidence that acid rain deposition has affected Christmas tree plantations in Wales.

Housing Revenue Account

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to make his housing revenue account subsidy determinations for 1993-94.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I expect to make the determinations very shortly and will place copies in the Library of the House.

I am proposing to confirm an average guideline rent increase of 4 per cent. in real terms with a minimum increase of £1·25 per week and a maximum of £2·75 per week. I estimate that the average guideline rent increase would be £1·84 per week and the resulting average weekly guideline rent £29·17.

For management and maintenance allowances, I propose to confirm an average increase of 1 per cent. in real terms. I estimate that this would raise the average allowance to £794 per annum per dwelling, an increase of £28.

I have placed estimates of the rent guidelines and management and maintenance allowances for each authority in the Library of the House.

The rent guidelines and management and maintenance allowances are the assumptions to be made for subsidy purposes. It is for councils themselves to set their rents and decide how much to spend on management and maintenance within their legal obligations.

Litigation (Health Authorities)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the source of the funds used to satisfy damages and costs awarded in litigation against district health authorities in Wales;

(2) what is to be the source of the funds used to satisfy damages and costs awarded in litigation against NHS trusts in Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if NHS trusts in Wales will be required to carry insurance against claims for medical negligence and other forms of public liability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Health authorities and NHS trusts in Wales meet the first £30,000 of any claim made under legal obligation from their own resources. The exess costs above this level are met from a centrally managed pool to which contributions are made by participating health authorities and trusts. The pool also covers risks of loss above this threshold arising from incidents of fire/arson, theft, subsidence, flooding and storm damage. In the case of medical negligence, 80 per cent. of any excess above a further threshold of £300,000 is met by the Medical Defence Organisation reserves while these remain.

Participation in these pooling arrangements is not compulsory. It is open to health authorities and trusts to take out commercial insurance for all risks other than medical negligence if they perceive this to be advantageous. Indeed, pool participants may choose to insure themselves against such risks where claims fall below the £30,000 threshold for access to the pool. However, in the case of medical negligence, any NHS bodies which decide to remain outside the pooling arrangements must bear their own risk for all costs other than the 80 per cent. above the £300,000 which may be claimed from the Medical Defence Organisation reserves. In such circumstances health authorities would be able to seek repayable temporary cash allocation increases from the Department, and NHS trusts would be able to seek increased loan finance from approved sources where necessary to meet large claims.

NHS trusts will not be expected to bear the cost of meeting any claims which have arisen prior to the date at which the trust concerned became operational. However, if they choose to participate in the pooling arrangements, their contributions will be geared to anticipated claims on the pool irrespective of the date at which the incident

giving rise to the claim occurred. The pool is a system of mutual risk sharing, and participants must accept all of the shared costs as well as all of the shared benefits of pool membership.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the effect upon Welsh farming incomes of changes in hill livestock compensatory allowances.

Mr. David Hunt: The rates of hill livestock compensatory allowances for 1993 recently announced will in themselves mean reduced receipts of about £6·8 million for sheep producers in the severely disadvantaged area—SDA—of Wales. This, however, will be more than offset by increased receipts from the sheep annual premium consequent upon green pound devaluations already announced. The HLCA rate payable on ewes in the disadvantaged area has not yet been determined.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ensure that hill livestock compensatory allowance payments are made by the end of February 1993.

Mr. David Hunt: Producers submit claims for hill livestock compensatory allowances throughout the period from January to the end of March, and some do so thereafter. My Department aims to pay 80 per cent. of claims received by the end of March.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table outlining the effect of the proposed reduction in hill livestock compensatory allowances in each Welsh county.

Mr. David Hunt: The effect on producer receipts of the proposed reduction in hill livestock compensatory allowances in each of the Welsh Counties is shown in the followng table. The figures are based on the number of hardy ewes and other ewes qualifying for SDA payments in 1991.

County	*Loss of HLCA receipts £*
Gwynedd	1,423,334
South and West Glamorgan	129,765
Mid Glamorgan	302,647
Gwent	160,123
Dyfed	1,144,185
Powys	2,780,774
Clwyd	868,182

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the value, at 1980 prices, of Welsh hill livestock compensatory allowances for each year since 1980.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Year	*Value in real terms £ million*
1980	19·8
1981	20·4
1982	19·3
1983	18·7
1984	17·9
1985	17·9
1986	18·9
1987	18·8
1988	18·4
1989	17·6
1990	17·6
1991	19·1

Sensory Impairments

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what assessment he has made of the number of teachers of the hearing impaired that have to be trained annually in order to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of such teachers;

(2) whether he intends to undertake any action to ensure that there is sufficient funding allocated for the training of teachers of hearing impaired and visually impaired children when their funding ceases to be ring fenced in April 1993;

(3) what steps he is taking to ensure that money allocated to local education authorities for the training of specialist teachers for children with sensory impairment is used for this purpose;

(4) if he will make a statement outlining the extent to which local education authorities have been given extra resources to cover the reduction in his support for the training of teachers of hearing impaired children.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There has been no ring fencing of funding for the training of teachers of children with special educational needs in Wales since April 1992. Under the education support and training programme grants, local education authorities have been invited to draw up proposals for special needs training, including the training of teachers of children with sensory impairment, against a pool of resources. This gives local education authorities flexibility in their training programmes to allocate resources according to their assessment of local needs and priorities. The proposed special needs training programme for 1993-94 represents an increase of 17 per cent. compared with the level of expenditure supported in 1992-93, which is itself an increase over the previous year.

In formulating their plans for training, local education authorities are asked to provide their assessment of needs. Their plans have also to meet the objectives and priorities of the overall programme and have to include measures for the monitoring and evaluation of authorities' performance.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy to extend the mandatory training requirement for full-time teachers of hearing impaired children to peripatetic teachers of deaf children.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to base the indicative allocation system for the training of specialist teachers on

the number of children with sensory impairment and severe learning difficulties in a local education authority area rather than the total number of pupils in that area.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Following consultation with Welsh local education authorities, funds for the in-service training of teachers of special needs are allocated to authorities mainly on the basis of teacher numbers. However, my right hon. Friend will bear this request in mind when allocation arrangements are reviewed.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he intends to take any further measures in concert with the changes he plans in school education to ensure adequate funding for the training of a sufficient supply of teachers for children with *(a)* hearing impairment and *(b)* visual impairment.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Under the grants for education support and training programme for 1993-94, we are making available to local education authorities more than £1 million of supported expenditure for the training of special needs specialist teachers. Funding for the training of such teachers in grant-maintained schools is available through special purpose grants. The responsibility for special educational needs and for the training of specialist teachers lies at local level.

Operation Wizard

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the initiating, funding and accounting of the Operation Wizard exercise carried out by the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. David Hunt: The rationale for, and functions of, all non-departmental public bodies, and where and by whom they are best carried out, are subject to regular review, both quinquenially as part of financial and management policy reviews and otherwise from time to time. Fees incurred on such studies in 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91 were included in the agency's audited accounts for those years.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency into the fees paid to Barclays de Zoete Wedd and 3i's for the Operation Wizard exercise.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will undertake and publish a study of the number of beds and locations needed for acute operations in Wales over *(a)* the next five years and *(b)* the next 10 years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: We have no such plans.

Hamilton Oil

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has yet received the inspector's recommendations as a result of the inquiry into proposals by Hamilton Oil at Point of Ayr; and when he now expects to announce his decision.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I hope to receive the inspector's report soon. A decision will be announced as soon as possible after the report has been considered.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice he has received from the chairman and members of the Welsh Language Board on the Welsh Language Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Secretary of State and I have had a number of meetings with the chairman and members of the Welsh Language Board and they have made a significant contribution to the Bill which we hope to introduce very soon.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will ensure that copies of the Welsh Language Bill are posted to everyone who made representations to the Welsh Office about the contents of such a Bill, as part of the Welsh Office's public consultation procedures as soon as the Bill is published;

(2) if he will ensure that the Welsh Language Bill is printed and available to *(a)* hon. Members, *(b)* the press and *(c)* the general public prior to 17 December.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Language Bill will be published following its presentation to Parliament. I will be arranging for copies to be sent to all Welsh constituency Members of Parliament. Copies of the Bill will also be made available through HMSO in the normal way.

Welsh Development Agency

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the Welsh Development Agency will acquire the derelict United Engineering Steels site at Brymbo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I understand that negotiations are proceeding.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he proposes to take to advertise the post of chairman of the Welsh Development Agency; and when he expects to make an announcement.

Mr. David Hunt: I am considering the matter.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall be considering the scope for private finance in Welsh Office programmes, in the light of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement.

Job Search Seminars

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of job search seminars held in 1991 and at the latest date in 1992; how many job clubs exist in Wales; and if he will make a statement concerning the future of job clubs and job search seminars.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Job search seminars began in August 1991 and during the period to March 1992 a total of 264 were held in Wales. Between April and November this year, there have been a further 376 seminars. Job search seminars have been successful and will continue next year.

There are currently 75 job clubs in the Principality. The provision of job clubs will expand next year as a result of the Chancellor's autumn statement. However, the number of additional job clubs has not yet been decided.

Transport Supplementary Allowance

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been made available to South Glamorgan county council through the transport supplementary grant since January.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In 1992-93 the council received more than £13 million. A further £14 million is to be provided in 1993-94.

Hill Farming

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the conclusions of the autumn review of hill farming in respect of the current level of farming income for livestock farmers in the less favoured areas of Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 10 December 1992 at columns *757-58* which outlines the findings of the review.

Farms

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the number of farm holdings in each Welsh county for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Farm holdings in Wales: at June

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Clwyd	3,851	3,887	3,899	3,786	3,793	3,866	3,927	3,975	4,036	3,837	3,829
Dyfed	11,188	11,338	11,399	11,268	11,347	11,398	11,386	11,441	11,514	11,095	11,107
Gwent	2,129	2,158	2,176	2,179	2,178	2,165	2,163	2,184	2,199	2,156	2,143
Gwynedd	4,860	4,844	4,832	4,864	4,851	4,851	4,831	4,848	4,873	4,792	4,822
Mid Glamorgan	927	937	941	935	941	939	949	960	961	930	934
Powys	5,288	5,309	5,349	5,348	5,325	5,327	5,338	5,405	5,506	5,454	5,506
South Glamorgan	504	511	510	510	508	501	506	515	516	504	495
West Glamorgan	820	838	851	862	868	877	885	903	903	878	874
Wales	29,567	29,822	29,957	[1]29,752	29,811	29,924	29,985	30,231	30,508	[1]29,646	29,710

Note: Figures exclude estimate for minor holdings.
[1] The decreases between 1983 and 1984, and 1989 and 1990 reflect the effect of reclassifying holdings in the light of the results of the 1983 and 1989 Minor Holdings Surveys.

Valleys Initiative

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the projects in *(a)* the Gwendraeth valley and *(b)* the Amman valley which have been funded through his Department's valleys initiative to date; and how much has been allocated to each project.

Mr. David Hunt: Information on the programme for the valleys is not collected in the form requested, as projects are funded through a wide range of departmental and agency programmes. I shall, however, write to the hon. Gentleman with more details on activity in the Amman and Gwendraeth valleys and place a copy of the reply in the Library of the House.

North East Wales TEC

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *29*, when he expects to place in the Library a copy of his letter to the hon. Member for Wrexham about operational surpluses accruing to North-East Wales training and enterprise council.

Mr. David Hunt: A copy of my letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

HEALTH

Waiting Lists (Psychologists)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration her Department and the national health service management executive have given to collecting and publishing figures on the waiting lists for NHS clinical psychologists; and what response she has made to the survey of the national health service clinical waiting lists by the British Psychological Society, a copy of which has been sent to her.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans to collect and publish figures on waiting lists for conditions requiring treatment by national health service clinical psychologists. A copy of the survey was sent to the Department on 24 November and is being considered. Decisions about the clinical psychologist services provided locally are for local purchasers to determine, based on the assessed health needs of their resident population.

Community Health Services, Camberwell

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new services have been provided in the community in Camberwell district health authority area since 1988.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for Camberwell health authority.

The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Derek Boorman, the chairman of Camberwell health authority, for details.

Clinical Psychology

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received on the proposal of the northern consortium of regional health authorities to change the funding of postgraduate clinical psychology; and what plans she has to alter the funding of training arrangements for any other NHS profession.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is a matter for regional health authorities to determine the funding arrangements for those non-medical staff groups covered by regional purchasing of education and training.

King's College Hospital

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what examination she has made of the reasons why implementation by Camberwell district health authority of the interim report of the inquiry panel into King's College hospital's accident and emergency procedures required the intervention of the regional general manager.

Dr. Mawhinney: There was no such intervention.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action was taken by her Department in response to *(a)* Camberwell community health council's annual report of 1990 and *(b)* other representations by the community health council, in respect of accident and emergency procedures at King's College hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: These representations were made to the Camberwell health authority, which considered both the report and other representations and met the Camberwell community health council.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what conclusions she has drawn from the report of the inquiry set up at her Department's request into accident and emergency procedures at King's College hospital about the impact of bed closures and bed management policy on the operation of accident and emergency departments;

(2) what consideration was given to the inclusion of bed cuts in the terms of reference of the inquiry set up at her Department's request into accident and emergency procedures at King's College hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: The terms of reference of the inquiry were to review procedures within the accident and emergency department at King's College hospital in the light of the recent deaths of two patients and to make recommendations as necessary and to report to the Secretary of State through the chairman of the South East Thames regional health authority.

The report has demonstrated that the main problem was not the number of beds but poor bed management.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the three hospitals at which beds are available in Camberwell indicated in the inquiry set up at the request of her Department into accident and emergency procedures at King's College hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: At the time of the commissioning of the inquiry, there were three hospital sites at which beds were available in Camberwell: King's College, Denmark Hill; King's College, Dulwich and Dulwich north.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the role of the chairman of Camberwell district health authority and the chief executive in the management of King's College hospital's accident and emergency procedures.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Leeds University

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the annual expenditure on servicing the medicines resource centre, the medical advisers support centre and the general practice research centre at Leeds university.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is in the table.

	1991-92 (£)
Medicines Resource Centre	275,000
Medical Advisers Support Centre	365,000
Prescribing Research Unit at Leeds University	377,984

Pharmacists

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many drug information pharmacists are employed by regional, district and family health services authorities; and at what annual cost.

Dr. Mawhinney: Two hundred and twenty-eight drug information pharmacists are employed by regional and district health authorities and by national health service trusts. This includes those working part time. Information on costs is not collected centrally. Pharmacists employed by family health service authorities generally hold the post of pharmaceutical adviser rather than drug information pharmacist.

Source: "Directory of Hospital Pharmacists Engaged in Information Work"—1992 edition. Compiled by North West Thames regional drug information centre.

Medical Advisers

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much public money has been spent on the appointment of medical advisers to family health service authorities resulting from the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1991; and how many medical advisers are currently employed by health authorities.

Mr. Mawhinney: The information is not held centrally. All family health services authorities are expected to have medical advisers.

Prescriptions

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the annual expenditure on establishing, and maintaining, the indicative prescribing scheme for NHS doctors.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information is held centrally only on the cost of issuing monthly expenditure statements to

general practitioners, family health services authorities and regional health authorities. The figures do not distinguish between the costs of issuing statements in relation to the indicative prescribing scheme and the prescribing element of fund holders' budgets. The total cost to the Prescription Pricing Agency of issuing these statements is as in the table:

	1990-91 £'000	*1991-92 £'000*
Capital	6,905	359
Revenue	2,499	3,311

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the expenditure on the prescription analysis and cost scheme in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The prescription analysis and cost scheme—PACT—is an operational system of the Prescription Pricing Authority. The costs of PACT cannot be identified separately.

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the annual expenditure on supporting the publication and distribution of *(a)* the *Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin*, *(b)* the "Prescribers' Journal", *(c)* the *British National Formulary* and *(d)* bulletins from the Medicines Resource Centre in each of the past five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

(a) The Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin[1]

	Expenditure (£)
1987-88	608,625
1988-89	660,642
1989-90	723,482
1990-91	[2]750,863
1991-92	827,305

[1] Includes subscription and distribution on costs only.
[2] Figures for the years to 1990-91 include expenditure for the Adverse Drugs Reactions Bulletin which was issued quarterly with the Drugs and Therapeutics Bulletin. This was discontinued in June 1990.

(b) The Prescribers' Journal[1]

	Expenditure (£)
1990-91[2]	[3]146,977
1991-92	183,510

[1] Includes subscription and distribution costs only.
[2] October 1990 to March 1991.
[3] Information is not held centrally prior to October 1990.

(c) The British National Formulary[1]

	Expenditure (£)
1987-88	958,996
1988-89	1,022,731
1989-90	1,058,204
1990-91	1,191,169
1991-92	1,296,320

[1] Includes subscription and distribution costs only.

(d) Medicines Resource Centre (MeReC) Bulletin[4]

	Expenditure (£)
1990-91	250,000
1991-92	275,000

[4] Includes total running costs.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the terms of reference and membership of the prescribing task force.

Dr. Mawhinney: The prescribing task force is a multi-disciplinary group of officials within the Department charged with examining a range of issues relating to general practitioner prescribing. There are no formal terms of reference.

Child Sex Abuse

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the definition of a psychiatric nursing establishment for the purpose of receiving regular inspections by a health authority; and how many clinics for the treatment of child sex abuse fall within it.

Mr. Yeo: The Registered Homes Act 1984 defines a mental nursing home as

"any premises used, or intended to be used, for the reception of, and the provision of nursing or other medical treatment (including care, habilitation and rehabilitation under medical supervision) for, one or more mentally disordered patients (meaning persons suffering or appearing to be suffering from mental disorder), whether exclusively or in common with other persons."

The Act specifically excludes premises operated by health authorities, local authorities and Government Departments from this definition. Information on the number of clinics for child sex abusers is not collected centrally.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many clinics in England and Wales specialise in the treatment of offenders involved in child sex abuse and in which towns they are located; and how many other clinics there are which are prepared to treat offenders involved in child sex abuse.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not held centrally.

Radiation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy towards the provision of potassium iodate tablets as prophylactics against radiation damage to populations threatened by civil nuclear emergencies.

Mr. Sackville: Stable iodine prophylaxis is a countermeasure intended to block the uptake of radio-iodine to the thyroid in certain radiological incident scenarios. The Government's policy in this area was principally determined by advice contained in a report from the ad hoc United Kingdom working group on Iodine Prophylaxis[1], a copy of which is in the Library.

[1]Department of Health Report on Health and Social Subjects 39: Nuclear Accident Countermeasures: Iodine Prophylaxis. HMSO.

Care Homes

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who has responsibility for the funding of patients requiring terminal care in private or charitable nursing homes from April 1993.

Mr. Yeo: Support from public funds for hospice care is the responsibility of district health authorities. DHAs are also responsible for placements for equivalent care in nursing homes.

Feeding Tubes

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration she is giving to making naso-gastric feeding tubes and gastrostomy tubes available for general practitioner prescription on form EC10.

Dr. Mawhinney: The addition of naso-gastric feeding tubes and gastrostomy tubes to the prescribable list must, like other new additions to the list, be subject to the availability of resources.

Hospital Admission Policies

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidance has been given to trust hospitals in relation to the treatment of heart disease patients over the age of 65 years; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if her Department has any plans to issue guidance to national health service trust hospitals regarding the imposition of age-related admissions policies; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Decisions concerning the assessment and treatment of national health service patients are matters for the professional judgment of the clinicians involved in the individual case.

Freedom of Speech

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will meet the Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union to discuss local procedures for handling freedom of speech issues within the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have already offered a meeting with departmental officials to discuss these matters.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the responses she has received to her Department's draft guidance on freedom of speech; and if she will place a copy of the responses in the Library.

Dr. Mawhinney: Responses have been received from:

Royal College of Psychiatrists
Joint Consultants Committee
British Medical Association
National Association of Health Service Public Relations Officers
Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union
Royal College of Nursing
Royal College of Midwives
General Whitley Council
COHSE/NALGO/NUPE
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
Guild of Hospital Pharmacists
National Health Service Consultants Association
General Medical Council
Mental Health Act Commission
National Consumer Council
Public Concern at Work
North Western Regional Health Authority
Office of the Health Service Commissioner
MCB University Press
University of Wales College of Medicine
Association for Community Health Councils
National Association of Health Authorities and NHS Trusts
Regional Health Authority Chairmen and Regional General Managers Inter-Regional Secretariat
Department of Employment
Patients Association
Institute of Health Service Management
NHS Support Federation
MENCAP
Weston Park Hospital
Prince Charles Hospital—Mid Glamorgan
Cheshire FHSA
Walsall FHSA
Gloucestershire FHSA
North Tyneside FHSA
Tameside FHSA
Cumbria FHSA
Wiltshire FHSA
Surrey FHSA
Devon FHSA
Cleveland FHSA
Dyfed FHSA
West Glamorgan FHSA
Bethlem Royal Hospital and The Maudsley Hospital SHA
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's SHA
Hospital for Sick Children: Great Ormond Street SHA
North Western RHA
West Midlands RHA
East Birmingham HA
Dorset HA
South Warwickshire HA
Cambridge HA
West Glamorgan HA
Glamorgan HA
Mid Glamorgan HA
Gwynedd HA
Health Manpower Division—South Glamorgan HA
Gwynedd Community Health Unit
Gateshead Community Health NHS Trust
Newham HA
West Birmingham CHC
Powys Health Authority
Rhondda Health Unit
Hounslow and Spelthorne CHC
Kidderminster District Health Authority
Middlesbrough General Hospital
East Gloucestershire NHS Trust
South Yorkshire Met. Ambulance and Paramedic Service
North East Essex Mental Health Service NHS Trust
West Dorset General Hospital NHS Trust
New Possibilities: Services for People with Learning Disabilities NHS Trust
South Downs Health NHS Trust
Sheffield Children's Hospital
United Medical and Dental Schools of Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospital
Frimley Park Hospital
Mid Cheshire Hospital
St. Helens and Knowsley Community Health NHS Trust
Airedale General Hospital
Walton Centre for Neurology and Neurosurgery
Community Team for Mental Health in the Elderly
Mersey Regional Ambulance Service
Weston Park Hospital
Guy's and Lewisham NHS Trust
Airedale NHS Trust
Croydon Community Health NHS Trust
Kingston Hospital NHS Trust
St. Helier NHS Trust
The North Middlesex Hospital
Devon Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Burnley Health Care NHS Trust
North Tees Health NHS Trust
Hastings and Rother NHS Trust

Eastbourne Hospitals NHS Trust
Frenchay Healthcare NHS Trust
Bath and West Community NHS Trust
The Royal Oldham Hospital and Community Services NHS Trust
Weston Area Health NHS Trust
Wiltshire Health Care NHS Trust
South Tees Health NHS Trust
Lincolnshire Ambulance and Health Transport Service NHS Trust
West Lambeth Community Care NHS Trust
Exeter Community Health Service NHS Trust
Lancaster Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
Horizons NHS Trust
Nottingham City Hospital NHS Trust
Northern General Hospital NHS Trust
Pembrokeshire NHS Trust
Broadgreen Hospital NHS Trust
Parkside Health NHS Trust
The Hillingdon Hospital NHS Trust
United Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
Royal London NHS Trust
Ravensbourne NHS Trust
First Community Health NHS Trust
Rochdale Healthcare NHS Trust
South West Thames Renal Unit—St. Helier Hospital
Epsom Health Care NHS Trust
Staffordshire Neurosurgical Service
Hither Green Hospital
Beacon Medical Care (Private Family Doctor Service)
Royal Bournemouth Hospital NHS Trust
Doncaster Healthcare NHS Trust

Comments have also been submitted by a number of individuals.

It would not be appropriate to place copies of comments in the Library without the specific consent of the bodies or individuals concerned.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to issue revised guidelines on freedom of speech in the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: The extensive comments received on the draft guidance merit full and careful consideration. Final guidance will be issued as soon as possible.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will consider inserting a reference to the duty of care of NHS staff in the draft guidance on freedom of speech.

Dr. Mawhinney: This will be considered in conjunction with other comments received on the draft guidance.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what areas of her Department's responsibilities she has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if she will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. Sackville: The private finance initiative is intended to apply to all services which are traditionally provided by Government Departments. The measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will increase the scope for using private finance in the national health service to improve and extend both patient and support services. The Department is urgently considering how best to apply the initiative on the basis of the guidance which has been published by the Treasury. My officials will send out a letter to all NHS directors of finance inviting them to take full advantage of this initiative. I shall place a copy in the Library.

Joint Consultative Committees

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will allow non-executive directors of health trusts to serve on joint collaborative committees set up under National Health Act 1973.

Dr. Mawhinney: Joint consultative committees are constituted under section 22 of the National Health Service Act 1977. Members of such committees are appointed by health authorities, local authorities and voluntary organisations. A person who is a director of a national health service trust is not precluded from appointment as a member of a joint consultative committee. There is no provision for "joint collaborative committees" in national health service legislation.

Mental Illness

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many social workers there were in England and Wales in each financial year since 1981-82; and how many of these were employed wholly or mainly in caring for the severely mentally ill in the community.

Mr. Yeo: Data on the number of whole-time equivalent social services staff in local authorities in England at September in each year from 1978 are given in "Local Authority Social Services Statistics: staff of Local Authority Social Services Departments at 30 September 1991; England", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to preserve the service available at Henderson hospital, Sutton, Surrey, for personality-disordered clients; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: From 1 April 1993 the Henderson hospital will become part of South West Thames regional psychiatry service. This will ensure funding for the hospital to maintain and develop its services for those patients with special psychiatric needs.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will create a special hospitals authority to cover Henderson hospital, Sutton, Surrey.

Mr. Yeo: No.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the names of hospitals for the mentally ill in England, by districts, which were closed in each of the financial years 1981-82 to 1991-92, and the numbers of beds in those hospitals five years previously; (2) what amount of money was made available for other purposes in each of the financial years 1981-82 to 1991-92 as a result of the closure of mental hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which relevant local bodies, besides community health councils, health authorities are required to consult before recommending her to authorise the closure of hospitals for the mentally ill.

Mr. Yeo: Most substantial changes in hospital services —such as the opening or closing of facilities—are agreed locally and only where there is no local agreement are they

referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Health authorities are encouraged to consult widely in the community, including with community health councils.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ring fence departmental funding for Henderson hospital, Sutton, Surrey.

Mr. Yeo: This is a matter for South West Thames regional health authority.

The hon. Member may wish to contact Professor Marian Hicks, the chairman of South West Thames regional health authority, for details.

St. Bartholomew's Hospital

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what account she is taking in her consideration of the Tomlinson report of the document issued by the North East Thames regional health authority entitled, "A Consultation Document on the Dissolution of the Bart's NHS Trust" published on 22 November; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The consultation document proposing dissolution of the St. Bartholomew's shadow trust was issued by North East Thames regional health authority with Ministers' agreement on the ground that it would be inappropriate for the trust to become operational on 1 April 1993 in the form originally proposed in direct conflict with the recommendations of the Tomlinson report. Moreover, there would have been serious doubts about St. Bartholomew's hospital's fitness for trust status on financial grounds. The consultation document relates solely to the proposed management arrangements for the hospital next year. Full account will be taken of the views expressed in response to it before a decision is reached.

Community Care

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to give directions as to the manner in which assessment under section 47(4) of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 is to be carried out; and what form the directions will take.

Mr. Yeo: We have already issued extensive policy and practice guidance on assessment. There are no current plans to issue directions on this matter.

Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the membership and terms of reference of the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances.

Dr. Mawhinney: The members of the advisory committee are:

Chairman

Professor Harry A. Lee
Professor of Renal Medicine (University of Southampton), Consultant Physician (St. Mary's Hospital, Portsmouth)

Members

Dr. Charles L. M. Beardmore
General Practitioner (Walton-On-the-Naze, Essex)

Professor Ian W. Booth
Senior Lecturer in Paediatrics and Child Health, Professor of Paediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition (University of Birmingham)

Ms. Julie Fenton
Senior Dietitian (Normansfield, Teddington)

Dr. Anne Kobza Black
Consultant Dermatologist (St. John's Hospital for Diseases of the Skin), (Royal Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital, London)

Professor Andrew H. G. Love
Professor of Medicine (Queen's University, Belfast); Consultant Physician (Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast).

Mrs. Anita MacDonald
Chief Paediatric Dietitian (Children's Hospital, Birmingham).

Mr. Graeme Millar
Community Pharmacist (Edinburgh).

Dr. Gwyn W. Phillips
General Practitioner (Pencoed, Mid-Glamorgan).

Professor Alan Shenkin
Professor of Clinical Chemistry (Royal Liverpool Hospital).

Dr. Richard S. Tiner
General Practitioner (Taunton, Somerset)

The committee's current terms of reference are:

"To keep under review the principles for determining whether preparations should properly be regarded as drugs, foods, toilet preparations or disinfectants, and to give advice on the classifications of particular preparations in these categories submitted to the Committee."

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 12 November that the committee's remit is extended to have regard to comparative cost as well as therapeutic use when considering whether an item should be treated as a drug appropriate for prescription by general practitioners under the national health service. Revised terms of reference, to reflect this change, will be announced shortly.

Food Hygiene

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for the training, instruction and supervision of food handlers in food hygiene.

Mr. Sackville: The Government will introduce a sole and simple requirement for all food handlers to be trained, instructed and supervised in food hygiene according to the work they do. Copies of a statement of intent and related documents issued to all interested parties have been placed in the Library.

Folic Acid Report

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects the chief medical officer's expert advisory group on folic acid to report its findings; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We are pleased to announce the publication today of the group's report, "Folic Acid and the Prevention of Neural Tube Defects".

The report endorses existing advice that women who have already had a baby with a neural tube defect should take a diet supplement of 5 mg of folic acid daily—or 4 mg if such a preparation becomes available—from the time when they wish to become pregnant until the end of the

third month of pregnancy. Additionally, the expert group has recommended that, to reduce the risk of having a first baby with a neural tube defect, all women who are likely to become pregnant should increase their intake of folic acid/folate throughout this same period. This particular B vitamin is available from certain foods in the form of folate. In addition, some foods are fortified with folic acid. Such women are also advised to take a 0·4 mg folic acid food supplement daily until the 12th week of pregnancy.

We welcome this opportunity to reduce the risk of women giving birth to babies with a neural tube defect. The United Kingdom chief medical and nursing officers are ensuring that the advice reaches all doctors, senior nurses, midwives and health visitors. However, all women need to be aware of these recommendations as, in most cases, they will need to consider taking extra folic acid/folate before they have become pregnant.

We are arranging for copies of the report to be placed in the Library.

Doctors and Dentists

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the numbers of doctors and dentists by grade employed in the hospital and community health services in each English region for 1990 and 1991.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My Department conducts a census each September of doctors and dentists employed in the hospital and community health service—HCHS—in England. Copies have been placed in the Library. Checks on the data for September 1991 suggested that the national health service had omitted a significant number of doctors and dentists from the census for that year. A recent survey of all 14 regions, designed to produce reliable data on the numbers of HCHS doctors and dentists by grade in each region, confirmed that the NHS had omitted the whole-time equivalent—WTE—of about 2,000 HCHS doctors and dentists from the original September 1991 census. The survey also indicated that the NHS had omitted about 500 WTEs from the September 1990 census. I regret that some of the published figures for 1990 are therefore incorrect.

The Department's best estimates of WTEs by grade for England as a whole and in each region for September 1990 and 1991 are shown in the table. More detailed estimates —for example—by specialty group—will be published in due course.

NHS Staff

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of *(a)* administrative staff, *(b)* managerial staff, *(c)* nurses, *(d)* junior doctors and *(e)* other medical staff employed in each region for each of the last three years.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend gave my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) today.

The remainder of the information requested is in the tables.

Nursing and Midwifery Staff in each RHA, for 30 September of each year, excludes agency staff.

	1989	1990	1991
Northern	27,800	27,310	27,270
Yorkshire	30,120	30,020	29,460
Trent	38,100	38,210	37,950
East Anglia	16,150	16,140	15,730
North West Thames	26,810	26,480	26,480
North East Thames	32,890	32,980	32,750
South East Thames	29,350	29,110	28,280
South West Thames	22,940	22,120	21,590
Wessex	23,360	23,690	23,570
Oxford	16,950	17,080	16,820
South Western	27,150	27,340	27,030
West Midlands	42,130	42,070	41,300
Mersey	21,960	21,090	20,100
North Western	37,510	36,990	36,480
SHAs	4,820	4,650	7,370
Others	40	80	30
England	398,050	395,360	392,200

Managerial Staff in each RHA, for 30 September of each year

	1989	1990	1991
Northern	120	550	720
Yorkshire	520	930	1,130
Trent	300	600	810
East Anglia	250	480	560
North West Thames	90	80	680
North East Thames	540	1,030	1,310
South East Thames	290	780	980
South West Thames	260	520	650
Wessex	410	610	850
Oxford	200	420	520
South Western	390	610	780
West Midlands	530	1,060	1,440
Mersey	290	500	730
North Western	350	690	990
SHAs	40	130	290
Others	40	680	910
England	4,610	9,680	13,340

Administrative and Clerical Staff in each RHA, for 30 September of each year

	1989	1990	1991
Northern	6,810	6,940	7,240
Yorkshire	7,500	7,880	8,090
Trent	9,740	10,120	10,540
East Anglia	3,990	4,070	4,550
North West Thames	8,260	8,160	8,660
North East Thames	10,150	10,450	11,050
South East Thames	9,760	10,030	10,800
South West Thames	6,290	6,340	6,590
Wessex	5,540	5,840	6,190
Oxford	4,860	5,150	4,930
South Western	6,600	6,990	7,680
West Midlands	11,800	11,950	12,740
Mersey	5,790	5,820	6,160
North Western	9,850	10,070	11,220
SHAs	1,700	1,840	2,390
Others	8,190	8,400	8,560
England	116,840	120,040	127,370

The figures for 1991 for SHAs include figures for the Special Hospital Services Authority

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the administration costs of each regional health authority for each year since 1989-90; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* Figures of expenditure on headquarters administration for each regional health authority and region as a whole, for the financial years 1989-90 and 1990-91, are shown in the tables. Regions are managed in an integrated way and it would be misleading to interpret regional health authority data in isolation from those for the district health authorities they manage. The region totals provide a more valid picture. Information for 1991-92—derivable primarily from annual financial returns—is not as yet available.

Expenditure on headquarters administration—1989-90

Region	*Regional Health Authority*	*District Health Authorities*	*Region Total*	*Region Total as a proportion of total expenditure*
	£000 (cash)	*£000 (cash)*	*£000 (cash)*	*Per cent.*
Northern	7,475	30,429	37,904	4·07
Yorkshire	10,706	35,213	45,919	4·34
Trent	11,498	35,111	46,609	3·54
East Anglian	8,140	16,761	24,901	4·37
North West Thames	9,119	38,050	47,169	4·09
North East Thames	13,065	47,480	60,545	4·33
South East Thames	15,044	42,846	57,890	4·74
South West Thames	13,720	30,713	44,433	4·45
Wessex	6,244	26,586	32,830	3·98
Oxford	4,704	22,511	27,215	4·22
South Western	8,000	30,223	38,223	4·01
West Midlands	18,019	46,946	64,965	4·32
Mersey	6,044	25,640	31,684	4·22
North Western	12,356	41,094	53,450	4·26

Expenditure on headquarters administration—1990-91

Region	*Regional Health Authority*	*District Health Authorities*	*Region Total*	*Region Total as a proportion of total expenditure*
	£000 (cash)	*£000 (cash)*	*£000 (cash)*	*Per cent.*
Northern	9,329	36,603	45,932	4·54
Yorkshire	13,158	45,205	58,363	5·01
Trent	11,797	44,113	55,910	3·85
East Anglian	11,487	19,730	31,217	4·91
North West Thames	12,110	47,386	59,496	4·81
North East Thames	15,335	54,770	70,105	4·69
South East Thames	16,516	55,852	72,368	5·51
South West Thames	15,234	36,958	52,192	5·02
Wessex	8,578	34,128	42,706	4·85
Oxford	6,266	26,101	32,367	4·66
South Western	10,556	36,621	47,177	4·52
West Midlands	27,353	54,661	82,014	4·89
Mersey	6,336	28,012	34,348	4·13
North Western	13,634	52,887	66,521	4·77

Source: Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in England.

Notes to the tables:

1. The figures for expenditure on headquarters administration include all current expenditure on the pay and pay related costs of staff of all disciplines—including general managers—employed at regional or district headquarters levels and their office costs and overheads. The costs of clerical and secretarial support staff employed in departments in hospitals and at other local levels are excluded: such costs are regarded as operational.
2. The expenditure by each regional health authority will be influenced by a number of factors such as the size of the total budgets managed, the population served, the extent to which services are directly managed, the balance of management between regional and district levels and the number of district health authorities involved all of which differ between regions.

Health and Personal Social Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will update table 3.1 of "Health and Personal Services Statistics for England 1992" by giving the total numbers of health services staff and practitioners, and local authority social services staff on 30 September 1991 and 30 September 1992.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 8 December 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend gave my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) today, at column *421*.

The remainder of the information requested is in the table.

Family Health Services and Local Authority Social Services Staff Summary England: 30 September 1991

	Number
Family Health Services:	
Practitioners: Total	49,841
General medical practitioners[1]: Total	27,888
Unrestricted principals	25,686
Restricted principals	138
Assistants	425
Trainees	1,639
General dental practitioners: Total	15,451
Principals[3]	14,978
Assistants	473
Opthalmic medical practitioners[2]	757
Ophthalmic opticians[2]	5,745
Dispensing opticians	
Local authority social services staff: Total[4]	236,043
Senior directing, managing, professional and advisory staff	7,148
Field social work staff	30,675
Other headquarters, area office and field staff	24,068
Home help service staff	57,354
Day care establishment staff for adults	20,220
Day care establishment staff for children	8,222
Residential care staff for adults	67,107
Residential care staff for children	15,894
Other staff	5,355

[1] At 1 October.
[2] Ophthalmic medical practitioners and ophthalmic opticians holding contracts to do General Ophthalmic Service sight tests. Figures relate to 31 December. Dispensing opticians' FHSA contracts terminated 30 June 1986.
[3] The number of assistants includes assistants plus vocational trainees.
[4] Whole time equivalent.

Sunderland Health Authority

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the amount spent by Sunderland health authority on the salaries of *(a)* administrative staff, *(b)* nursing staff and *(c)* other staff for each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Sunderland health authority—revenue expenditure on salaries and wages

	Administrative and clerical staff £000 (cash)	*Nursing and midwifery staff £000 (cash)*	*All other staff £000 (cash)*
1987-88	4,755	24,619	21,404
1988-89	5,161	28,883	22,674
1989-90	5,224	31,069	25,065
1990-91	6,169	32,935	27,274
1991-92[1]	6,899	35,711	30,730

[1] Provisional figures.

Source:
Annual accounts—and annual financial returns for 1991-92—of the Sunderland health authority.

Notes to the table
1. The figures are for gross pay costs and include employer's national insurance and superannuation contributions.
2. For each year 'all other staff' includes medical, dental, professional and technical; ancillary and maintenance staff, etc and the relevant annual costs of general and senior managers (£182,000 in 1987-88 and £1,841,000 in 1991-92).

Mental Health Act Commission

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will name the members of the Mental Health Act Commission who have held office at any time since 1983, giving their periods of office.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

Name in alphabetical order	*Period of office*	
	From	*To*
Adam, Mr. I. M.	14 July 1983	1 September 1986
Aiyegbusi, Ms. A.	1 October 1989	30 September 1993
Allam, Mr. J. M.	8 June 1987	31 August 1993
Allen, Dr. A. C.	12 January 1985	31 December 1988
Allott, Mr. P.	30 September 1986	30 September 1989
Ashcroft, Dr. J. B.	1 October 1989	30 September 1993
Badland, Mr. S. G.	1 September 1983	1 September 1988
Ball, Mr. A. G.	1 September 1989	31 August 1993
Barnes, Dr. M.	1 September 1989	31 August 1993
Barnett, Dr. B.	1 September 1985	30 September 1988
Barstead, Mr. A.	1 September 1983	30 August 1989
Bellau, Mrs. V.	1 October 1989	30 June 1992
Bennett, Mrs. C	1 October 1989	30 September 1993
Bennett, Mr. P.	1 September 1983	30 September 1985
Benyon, Mrs. O. J.	1 September 1983	30 September 1989
Bernstein, Miss I.	1 September 1983	30 September 1987
Bevan, Mr. R. G.	31 July 1992	31 July 1996
Black, Dr. D.	5 August 1991	31 August 1995

Name in alphabetical order	Period of office	
	From	To
Black, Mr. D. A.	30 September 1986	31 August 1990
Black, Mr. J.	1 September 1983	1 September 1986
Blackburn, Dr. J.	1 September 1983	30 September 1986
Blom-Cooper, QC, Sir. L.	8 January 1988	30 November 1993
Blowers, Dr. A. J.	9 November 1987	30 September 1995
Bluglass, Prof. R. S.	1 September 1983	20 July 1985
Bollinger, Miss C.	1 June 1987	1 June 1991
Bowyer, Mr. J. M.	30 September 1986	30 June 1991
Breach, Mrs. S. L.	1 July 1990	30 June 1994
Briscoe, Dr. O.	1 September 1985	31 August 1989
Broadhurst, Dr. A.	1 October 1989	30 September 1993
Bromley, Mr. E.	1 September 1983	16 August 1989
Brotherhood, Mr. P.	21 February 1985	28 February 1993
Brown, Mr. M. B.	1 October 1989	22 October 1992
Brownlie Mr. T.	1 September 1983	30 September 1986
Bury, Mr. J.	1 September 1985	31 August 1989
Butler, Mrs. B.	1 September 1983	1 September 1985
Bye, Mr. G.	10 September 1987	31 August 1993
Camp, Mr. J. E.	1 September 1983	31 December 1988
Carr, Dr. E. F.	1 September 1983	31 December 1988
Castell, Mr. D.	1 September 1983	1 September 1986
Cawthra, Mrs. S. H.	1 September 1983	30 September 1989
Chapman, Mr. R. H. D.	1 September 1983	6 October 1986
Chitty, Mr. E. A. R.	3 November 1986	31 October 1992
Lord Colville	1 September 1983	30 September 1987
Cope, Dr. R.	1 September 1985	31 August 1989
Cottrell, Dr. W. M.	1 September 1983	30 September 1986
Crane, Mr. M.	1 September 1985	3 June 1988
Crawshay Lady	1 September 1983	1 September 1987
Cushing, Miss P.	1 April 1991	31 March 1995
Dabbs, Mr. A. R.	1 October 1989	30 September 1993
Day, Dr. K. A.	31 January 1987	31 January 1995
Deeley, Mrs. J.	16 December 1986	30 September 1993
Dimond Professor B. C.	21 June 1989	31 August 1995
Dolan Dr. R.	1 September 1989	31 August 1993
Downham, Mr. D. J.	1 September 1983	30 September 1985
Drew, Miss C. Y. L.	1 September 1983	30 September 1987
Dunleavy Dr. D. L. F.	9 November 1987	30 September 1995
Dunn, Mr. L.	1 September 1985	31 March 1989
Eager T.	1 September 1987	30 September 1989
Edwards, Mr. P. C.	1 September 1983	31 December 1988
Eldergill, Mr. A. C.	26 February 1992	28 February 1996
Entwhistle, Mrs. P. G. S.	1 September 1989	31 August 1993
Evans, Dr. M.	1 August 1986	31 August 1990
Edwardes-Evans, Mr. M.	1 September 1983	30 September 1989
Fennell, P. W. H.	1 October 1987	30 September 1989
Fernando, Dr. S.	11 November 1986	31 October 1994
Finch, Mr. J. D.	1 September 1983	30 September 1991
Firth, Dr. H.	1 September 1985	31 October 1988
Fisher, Mr. T. W. OBE	1 September 1983	30 September 1987
Forman Hardy, Mrs. J.	9 November 1987	30 September 1995
Forth, Dr. M. W.	30 September 1985	31 March 1987
Fraser, Mrs. R. M. F.	30 September 1986	30 September 1992
Freeman, Dr. H. L.	1 September 1983	30 September 1987
Garden, Dr. E. B.	30 September 1986	30 September 1991
Gardner, Mr. R. K.	1 September 1983	30 September 1989
Gaspar, Dr. D.	13 June 1989	30 June 1993
Ghadiali, Dr. H.	6 March 1989	28 February 1993
Gittleson, Dr. N. L.	10 November 1986	31 October 1994
Godridge, Mr. M. J.	1 September 1983	30 September 1987
Goonatillake, Mrs. C.	27 April 1989	22 November 1990
Gorden, Dr. E. B.	30 September 1986	30 September 1991
Graham, Mr. M. J.	8 October 1987	31 August 1995
Graham-White, Mr. J.	2 February 1987	2 February 1991
Grant, Mrs. J. M.	1 September 1985	31 December 1988
Griffiths, D. G.	3 March 1988	7 October 1988
Grimshaw, Dr. J. S.	1 September 1983	30 September 1989
Guinan, Mrs. P.	1 September 1983	14 March 1986
Gunn, Mr. M. J.	1 June 1991	31 May 1995
Gwynne-Davies, Mr. R.	1 September 1983	22 March 1986
Gwynne-Jones, Professor H.	1 September 1983	5 March 1985
Halliday, Miss M. E.	22 October 1992	31 October 1996
Hamadah, Dr. K.	1 October 1986	30 September 1992
Hanham, Mrs. J. B.	1 September 1983	30 September 1989
Hargreaves, Mr. R.	1 September 1983	30 September 1987
Harper, Dr. M. A.	10 September 1987	31 August 1995

Name in alphabetical order	Period of office	
	From	To
Harper, Dr. P.	16 February 1987	24 April 1990
Harrington, Dr. J. A.	1 September 1983	10 June 1985
Hartley, Mr. R. G.	1 September 1983	10 June 1985
Hauck, Dr. A.	1 October 1989	30 September 1993
Hawes, The Rev. Canon	30 September 1986	30 April 1994
Herbert, Professor M.	1 September 1983	10 June 1985
Hettiaratchy, Dr. P. D. J.	2 February 1989	31 January 1993
Hide, Dr. D.	1 September 1986	10 November 1991
Hillier, Mr. A. C.	1 September 1983	30 September 1987
Holt, Mr. J. R. T.	1 September 1985	26 April 1986
Howarth, Dr. E.	1 September 1983	30 September 1989
Howd, Mrs. I.	1 September 1983	30 September 1987
Hughes, Mr. P.	30 September 1985	31 August 1989
Hughes-Roberts, Dr. H.	1 September 1983	31 August 1986
Hurst, Dr. J.	11 November 1985	31 March 1989
Hutchinson, Mr. P.	20 March 1984	20 March 1986
Ingrey-Senn, Dr. R. C.	1 September 1983	1 September 1985
Jackson Mr. J.	1 September 1983	30 September 1987
Jancer, Dr. J.	1 September 1983	30 September 1987
Jefferys, Dr. P. M.	1 September 1983	30 September 1989
John, Miss C.	1 September 1983	1 September 1987
Jones Mr. R. M.	1 September 1983	1 July 1986
Jones, Professor K.	1 September 1983	3 June 1986
Jowel, Mrs. T.	1 September 1985	31 July 1990
Kaye, Mr. L.	1 September 1983	30 September 1985
Kendrick, Mrs. G. M.	1 September 1983	4 August 1986
Kennon, Dr. R. W.	1 June 1984	31 December 1988
Kirkhope, Mr. T. J. R.	1 September 1983	30 September 1988
Lakes, Mr. G. H.	1 January 1991	31 December 1994
Land, Mrs. E. A.	1 September 1983	30 September 1989
Langley, Dr. G. E.	1 September 1983	30 September 1989
Lee, Mr. A.	1 September 1983	30 September 1985
Lee, Mrs. S. N.	13 June 1989	30 June 1993
Lee-Evans, Mr. J.	1 September 1983	1 September 1986
Lees Mr. G. D.	1 September 1985	30 September 1988
Lennox, Dr. I. G.	1 September 1983	30 September 1985
Leopold, Mr. H. K. E.	1 September 1983	30 September 1985
Lewis, Mrs. A. R. M.	1 September 1983	30 September 1989
Lillington, Mr. B. R.	1 September 1983	30 September 1989
Lingham, Mr. R. C.	1 October 1989	30 September 1993
Linton, Miss G.	3 November 1986	31 October 1994
Lipscomb, Mrs. V.	24 April 1989	30 April 1993
Llewellyn, Dr. S. P.	30 November 1986	10 November 1989
Llewellyn-Jones, Mrs. C.	1 September 1983	31 August 1994
Lockie, Miss, D. M.	1 September 1983	30 September 1987
Malcolm, Dr. M. T.	1 September 1989	31 August 1993
Manikon, Mr. S. S.	26 February 1985	28 February 1993
Mason, Mrs. L.	31 October 1987	31 October 1993
Meacher, Mrs. M.	30 September 1986	6 September 1992
Meirion-Wynne, Mr. T.	1 October 1986	1 July 1987
Mendelson, Dr. E. F.	30 November 1991	30 November 1995
Mian, Dr. I. H.	1 June 1991	31 May 1995
Midforth, Mrs. I.	1 September 1985	31 August 1993
Milligan, Mr. A.	24 April 1989	30 April 1993
Minto, Dr. A.	1 September 1983	27 March 1986
Moody, Mr. R. H.	1 September 1983	30 September 1987
Moore, Dr. S. R. W.	1 September 1983	30 September 1986
Morgan, Mrs. E.	1 September 1983	31 December 1988
Morley, A.	22 October 1992	30 September 1996
Morris, Mrs. M. R.	31 August 1989	31 August 1990
Mumford, Mr. S. A. R.	22 November 1989	31 August 1993
Murphy, Professor E.	24 March 1988	30 November 1993
McClarron, Mr. H.	1 September 1989	31 August 1993
McCoubrie, Dr. M.	6 March 1985	6 March 1987
McGinnis, Mr. E. B.	29 August 1991	4 September 1993
McGuinness, Mr. E. M.	1 September 1983	1 September 1987
Napier, Mr. B. S.	1 September 1983	1 September 1987
Napier, Mr. T. M.	1 October 1987	20 May 1992
Neal, Dr. C. D.	1 April 1991	31 March 1995
Nelson, Dr. T. E.	1 September 1983	30 September 1987
Nutting, Miss I.	1 September 1989	31 August 1993
O'Brien, Dr. P. M. J.	9 November 1987	21 May 1988
Oakley, Mr. A. P.	1 September 1983	30 September 1985
Ogunremi, Mr. J.	1 September 1985	14 July 1986
Olsen, Mrs. J.	30 September 1992	30 September 1996
Olsen, Prof. M. R.	1 September 1983	1 November 1987

Name in alphabetical order	Period of office From	To
Ottley, Mrs. D.	1 September 1983	30 September 1985
Owen, Mrs. E.	9 November 1987	30 September 1995
Oyebode, Dr. O.	31 January 1989	31 January 1993
Palacios, Mr. J.	1 September 1985	31 August 1989
Parkin, Mr. A.	21 December 1987	30 September 1995
Parkin, Mr. D.	26 January 1987	26 January 1991
Peel, Mr. T.	30 September 1985	31 August 1989
Penrice, Dr. G. J.	9 November 1987	7 November 1988
Phillips, Mrs. M.	1 July 1991	30 June 1995
Philpott, Dr. R. M.	16 December 1986	31 December 1994
Pinschof, Mr. J. M.	1 September 1983	30 September 1989
Pippard, Dr. J. S.	1 September 1983	30 September 1985
Prins, Mr. H. A.	1 September 1985	31 August 1989
Prior, Miss J. M.	1 May 1992	30 April 1996
Pryce, Dr. I. G. (WO)	31 May 1991	31 March 1995
Rao, Dr. Y. J.	1 July 1990	15 June 1992
Rassaby, Mrs. E.	1 June 1991	31 May 1995
Richardson, Ms. G.	1 January 1987	31 December 1992
Roberts, Mrs. M. R.	31 May 1991	31 March 1995
Rogers, Ms. J.	16 July 1991	31 July 1995
Rolfe, Dr. A.	1 September 1983	1 September 1987
Rowton-Lee, Dr. M. A.	1 July 1990	30 June 1994
Royle, Mr. G. A.	1 September 1983	30 September 1985
Samuels, Mrs. A.	1 September 1989	31 August 1993
Scott-Fordham, Mrs. A.	30 September 1985	30 September 1989
Scott-Moncrieff, Ms. L.	24 April 1989	28 January 1992
Sebaratnam, Dr. N. P.	1 October 1989	30 September 1993
Selim, Mrs. C.	30 September 1987	30 September 1993
Sharich, Mr. J.	1 February 1991	31 January 1995
Shephard, Miss D. M.	1 September 1983	30 September 1985
Shephard, Mrs. G. P.	1 September 1983	8 April 1987
Simon, Prof. G. B.	22 February 1985	2 August 1985
Sinclair, Ms. L.	13 June 1989	30 June 1993
Smith, Mr. B.	1 June 1983	30 September 1993
Smith, Mr. G. A.	1 September 1983	31 August 1989
Spinks, Ms. P.	1 October 1989	30 September 1993
Stables, Mr. R.	21 July 1987	21 July 1995
Stroll, Mrs. B. J.	1 October 1989	30 September 1993
Sullivan, Mr. D. D. H.	1 September 1983	30 September 1985
Sykes, D. P.	1 September 1983	1 October 1984
Tarlo, Dr. L.	1 September 1983	31 December 1988
Taylor, Mr. M. B.	1 October 1989	30 September 1993
Teaney, Mr. H. A.	31 January 1989	31 August 1992
Tennent, Dr. T. G.	1 September 1983	30 September 1987
Thorne, Mr. B. G. J.	17 November 1986	30 November 1994
Tickell, Mr. T.	1 September 1983	31 December 1989
Timson, Mr. R. M.	6 March 1985	31 March 1989
Torpy, Mr. D. M.	1 June 1987	1 June 1995
Turner, Mrs. S. E.	1 October 1983	30 September 1989
Vickers, Mr. H.	31 March 1987	31 March 1991
Watson, Mr. A.	1 April 1991	31 March 1995
Watts, Mr. C. N. S.	1 October 1986	6 October 1990
Way, Dr. M.	1 September 1983	31 October 1984
West, Prof. D. J.	24 December 1988	31 December 1996
Williams, Dr. C.	1 September 1983	30 September 1985
Williamson, A.	22 October 1992	30 September 1996
Wilson, Mr. L. J.	2 February 1987	2 February 1995
Wix, Mr. R. J.	16 February 1987	16 February 1995
Yates, Prof. A. J.	1 July 1990	30 June 1994
Zigmond, Dr. A. S.	1 June 1991	31 May 1995

Health Charges

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 26 November, *Official Report*, column *810*, what assessment she has made as part of her Department's review of the measures being taken throughout Europe to limit medicine bills of the proportion of the growth in national health service spending on medicines in 1991, which was due to the cost of new medicines introduced in the past five years; and what comparable figures are available for Germany, France, Holland and Belgium.

Dr. Mawhinney *[pursuant to his reply, 15 December 1992, c. 180-81]:* I regret that some of the figures quoted in the previous reply may have been misleading, because they included expenditure on medical devices as well as on medicines. To clarify the position, the figures, under the definition of new medicines stated before, are as follows.

For England only, the net ingredient cost of NHS drugs dispensed by chemists grew by £207 million in 1991. Of that growth, £143 million, or 69 per cent., was spent on new medicines introduced in the previous five years.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Bosnia

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the EC task force's contribution to the delivery and planning capacity in Bosnia of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since its formation in November, the European Community task force—ECTF—has focused its efforts on improving the co-ordination and liaison between the various relief programmes of EC member states, the European Commission and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees; the provision of additional trucking capacity and a secondary distribution network; and the provision of teams of experts from EC member states to work in conjunction with the UNHCR. To date the ECTF has 37 trucks with a further 30 expected shortly and various experts are being recruited. The United Kingdom has played a leading role in the formation of the EC task force and has provided its head, together with 12 trucks, 10 trailers and 17 drivers and mechanics.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the planning and priorities of the relief efforts for Bosnia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our relief effort in the former Yugoslavia is focused on the provision of food, shelter and medicines to those in need in Bosnia this winter. We have already committed over £70 million in humanitarian relief, all of which has been agreed in consultation with the UNHCR who are co-ordinating the international response to this crisis. I also refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) on 23 November at columns *452-53*, in which I set out our humanitarian relief programme in more detail.

Aid

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what decisions have been taken since 1 July to increase economic aid and technical assistance to developing countries in *(a)* the European Development Council and *(b)* the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As announced in the autumn statement, the Government have made provision for our overseas aid programme to developing countries to increase to £1,900 million in 1993-94 and to be maintained at that level during 1994-95 and 1995-96. For 1993-94 this represents an increase of 3·5 per cent. in cash terms, 1 per cent. in real terms over the current year's figure. No decisions to increase economic aid or technical assistance were taken at the European Development Council.

UN Relief and Works Agency

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwaelth Affairs what assistance has been provided to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in the current financial year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty Government's regular support for UNRWA amounts in 1992-93 to some £6 million, maintaining the United Kingdom's position as one of UNRWA's major donors. In addition, my noble friend the Minister for Overseas Development has agreed to provide nearly US$820,000—around £0·55 million—for the construction and equipping of a 630-place elementary and preparatory level girls school. The school is to be built at Beit Ula in the Hebron area of the West Bank and will help to relieve the increasing pressure on educational facilities among the growing school-age Palestinian community. Construction of this British/UNRWA school in a needy area is expected to start shortly and to be completed within 18 months. When complete it will provide 12 new classrooms, a laboratory, a library, a multi-purpose room, two administrative rooms and playground as well as necessary furnishings and teaching equipment.

We also contribute to the work of UNRWA via the EC which is to meet the total construction costs of the new Gaza general hospital, a 232 bed facility. The EC is providing 13 mecu and construction is expected to begin in February 1993.

Guyana

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has regarding future aid for Guyana.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have concluded that it would be right to resume capital aid, following the holding of free and fair elections in October. We plan to provide up to £2 million of programme aid immediately for disbursement before 31 March 1993, conditional upon IMF board approval of a new enhanced structural adjustment facility arrangement for Guyana on 21 December. We will also be ready to consider new requests for technical co-operation. We will consider our longer-term plans early in the new year, after further discussions with the Government of Guyana.

Annual Review

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will publish the Overseas Development Administration's 1992 annual review.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Copies of the ODA's 1992 annual review "British Overseas Aid" have today been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 9 December, *Official Report*, column *675*, if he will list the sponsors of the Security Council resolution 794 and state for each sponsor *(a)* the nature and type of assistance that country is giving to the implementation of resolution 794,

(b) the type of humanitarian and development aid that country is providing and *(c)* the specific regions of Somalia in which that country is actively involved.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Security Council resolution 794 had no sponsors. It was submitted as a presidency text with the agreement of the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the non-governmental organisations assisted by the British Government to provide humanitarian and development aid to Somalia in each of the last five years and for each organisation state whether it is working *(a)* in the north, *(b)* in the south or *(c)* in both.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to his question of 11 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *434-35*.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list every organisation through which cash from the British Government has been channelled for Somalia together with *(a)* in each case the sum of money agreed for each of the years 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992, *(b)* the sum paid out to each organisation in each of the past 24 months and *(c)* the range of aid or development project each organisation is helping to provide.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* The information the hon. Member has requested is not available for all of the last four years. Information on commitments of Britain's humanitarian assistance to Somalia by month, implementing agency and region is available for 1991 and 1992 has been placed in the Libraries of the House. Information on disbursements of bilateral development assistance to Somalia in 1989, 1990 and 1991 by project has been placed in the House Libraries. These projects were implemented under bilateral aid agreements between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Somalia. The ODA was responsible for the administration of all funds disbursed.

Iraq

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how Her Majesty's Government intend to act on the recommendations of the joint report by the ODA, EC and the office of the United States Foreign Disaster Assistance on the emergency winter assessment mission to northern Iraq in October.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In response to the findings of the assessment mission we reacted swiftly with a donation of £2·6 million to fund the purchase of 2,700 tonnes of chick peas and a similar quantity of edible oils through the United Nations World Food Programme, as well as road repair and maintenance through the Save the Children Fund. We are also contributing to relief efforts through our share of the EC emergency assistance allocation of 10·13 million ecu, which is being used for the provision of food and kerosene, and for support to non-governmental organisations projects in both northern and southern Iraq. We continue to monitor the situation and are considering the funding of further NGO proposals.

Humanitarian Appeals

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what humanitarian appeals have been launched by the United Nations in the last six months; what the United Kingdom's contribution has been to each of the appeals; and whether the appeal targets have been met;

(2) what humanitarian appeals are being considered or under preparation in the United Nations for launch in the next three months.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answers 19 November 1992]:* The United Nations has issued consolidated humanitarian appeals in the last six months as follows:

Million United States $

	Total amount sought	*Total contributions/ pledges*
1. The Consolidated United Nations-Southern African Development (SADC) Appeal for the Drought Emergency in Southern Africa (DESA)	858·1	628·4
2. The Consolidated Appeal for Emergency Humanitarian Assistance for Afghanistan	179·7	59
3. The Special Consolidated United Nations Inter-Agency Appeal for Kenya[1]	[1]159·7	[1]128·3
4. The Updated Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for the Special Emergency Programme for the Horn of Africa (SEPHA) (including the 100-day Plan of Action for Somalia)	1,145·8	793·0
5. The United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Programme of Action and Appeal for former Yugoslavia	561·7	358·6
6. The New Plan of Action for Inter-Agency Humanitarian Programme for Iraq (1 July 1992 to 31 March 1993)	256·1	61·8

[1] This appeal was revised and integrated into the overall SEPHA appeal: the figures quoted are those included in the SEPHA appeal.

The United Kingdom has provided £51·2 million in response to item No. 1 above including £20 million of programme food aid which was excluded from the appeal and £7·55 million, of which £2 million is via United Kingdom NGOs, for the appeal for Afghanistan, item No. 2. The special consolidated United Nations inter-agency appeal for Kenya, item No. 3 was incorporated into the second SEPHA appeal item No. 4 to which the United Kingdom contributed £18 million. This followed a contribution of £23 million in response to SEPHA I earlier in the year. On the appeal for the former Yugoslavia, item No. 5, we have provided £7¾ million in cash and over £14 million in kind and on the appeal for Iraq, item No. 6 £2½ million via the World Food Programme. These figures do not include the United Kingdom's share of EC assistance.

More detailed information on appeals from individual United Nations agencies could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

We expect to receive shortly a consolidated appeal on Mozambique. The Secretary-General is expected to appeal this month for $6 million to cover costs associated with the remainder of the Cambodian refugee repatriation during 1993.

Note: All United Nations appeals are demoniated in United States dollars. Our pledges are made in pounds sterling and converted into United States dollars by the United Nations, using the exchange rate current on the day the moneys are received.

World Bank

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he proposes to make the World bank more accountable.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The World bank is accountable to the 172 countries which are shareholders and which elect or appoint executive directors who form its board. The board is responsible for the conduct of the general operations of the bank, including specific policies and lending proposals. Directors recently gave broad endorsement to the conclusions and recommendations of the report by an internal task force on portfolio management, which proposed changes designed to improve effective implementation of projects financed by the bank and internal accountability of staff. There will be further discussions in the board on various aspects of the bank's management practices; and our director will continue to play an active role in getting the recommendations put into effect.

HOME DEPARTMENT

NHS Premises (Fire Safety)

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plan he has to remove Crown immunity from national health service buildings with respect to fire safety legislation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what research his Department has carried out into the cost of bringing national health service premises up to the standards required by fire safety legislation; and what cost was estimated.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: National health service premises are already subject to the provisions of the Fire Precautions Act 1971. The Crown immunity which they formerly had was removed on 1 April 1991 by section 60 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Sunday Trading

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has of the number of shops which have opened for trade on the Sundays in the weeks before Christmas; and what representations relating to loss of trade he has had since 1 November from shops which have remained closed on Sundays.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the first point is not available centrally. The second point has been raised at ministerial meetings with two major retailers.

Babri Masjid Mosque

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the number of religious places, private property and citizens which have been attacked where the attack has been linked to the Babri Masjid mosque incident; and what arrangements have been made for the protection of religious places, private property and citizens.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I am aware of 34 attacks on Muslim, Hindu or Sikh people and property since the Babri Masjid mosque incident.

Police efforts to protect religious places are the responsibility of chief officers, working with the local community. All forces are in contact with local community leaders to provide them with advice on the protection of vulnerable targets. Where appropriate, specific measures have been taken, such as the assignment of officers to the protection of certain places, a telephone hotline and closed circuit television cameras.

My right hon. and learned Friend met leaders of the Hindu and Muslim communities on 10 December to discuss with them these incidents. Following that meeting, they issued a joint statement condemning violence and calling for restraint.

Strip Searches

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many strip searches have taken place in each of the London police station within the Greater London area, on juvenile detainees in each of the last three years.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what instructions are issued on who is allowed, when a juvenile detainee is being strip searched and such strip searches involve the anal/genital area, *(a)* to carry out the strip search and *(b)* to be present while it is taking place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A search involving physical examination of a person's body orifices is defined by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 as an intimate search. Additional guidance which is issued by the Department advises that a visual inspection of intimate parts of the body should be regarded as an intimate search even though physical contact may be absent.

An intimate search must be carried out by a doctor or a nurse, unless an officer of at least the rank of superintendent considers that this is not practicable. Code of practice C further prescribes that, subject to his or her wishes, an intimate search of a juvenile may take place only in the presence of an appropriate adult of the same sex.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who, under Home Office instructions, must be present when a strip search takes place of *(a)* a boy and *(b)* a girl juvenile being held in a police state; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The codes of practice issued under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 state that a strip search must take place only in the presence of persons who are of the same sex as the person being searched, and whose presence is necessary for the purpose of the search.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy as to the use of strip searches of juveniles detained in police stations and such searches taking place without their parents being present or informed that this action is to take place.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There is no specific requirement for the parents of a juvenile to be present during a strip search, although they must be notified as soon as practicable of the circumstances of his or her arrest and asked to come to the police station.

Victim Support

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much public money has been made available to victim support organisations in each Welsh county in each of the last three years.

Mr. Jack: Home Office grant aid to individual local schemes is allocated by the victim support local funding panel, on which the Home Office has observer status. The table details the public funding given to local schemes in Wales for the financial years 1990-91 to 1992-93:

Funding of victim support in Wales 1990-91 to 1992-93

County	Home Office	Local authority	Urban aid	Total
1990-91				
Clwyd	9,547	500	—	10,047
Dyfed	11,880	—	—	11,880
Mid Glamorgan	67,923	3,600	20,221	91,744
South Glamorgan	10,385	—	—	10,385
West Glamorgan	18,459	1,050	—	19,509
Gwent	42,911	22,356	—	65,267
Gwynedd	13,637	525	—	14,162
Powys	37,568	3,500	—	41,068
Total	212,310	31,531	20,221	264,062
1991-92				
Clwyd	14,221	—	—	14,221
Dyfed	45,522	2,000	—	47,522
Mid Glamorgan	74,921	3,055	45,965	123,941
South Glamorgan	12,316	—	—	12,316
West Glamorgan	35,102	2,200	—	37,302
Gwent	46,921	29,258	—	76,179
Gwynedd	14,653	—	—	14,653
Powys	49,454	3,500	—	52,954
Total	293,110	40,013	45,965	379,088

	1992-93			
County	*Home Office*	*Local authority*	*Urban aid*	*Total*
Clwyd	16,524			16,524
Dyfed	48,376	2,000		50,376
Mid Glamorgan	93,311	2,310	36,088	131,709
South Glamorgan	30,285			30,285
West Glamorgan	65,654	2,200		67,854
Gwent	49,968	41,564		91,532
Gwynedd	16,414			16,414
Powys	52,172	3,150		55,322
Total	372,704	51,224	36,088	460,016

Notes:
A local authority grant of £1,025 to the north Wales victim support scheme in 1990-91 has been split arbitrarily between Clwyd and Gwynedd.
Non-Home Office figures for 1992-93 represent local schemes' budget estimates for the year, not outturn.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juveniles were convicted of offences in 1990 and 1991 in *(a)* the west midlands and *(b)* Walsall; and how many of these were under the age of 15 years.

Mr. Jack: The information is given in the table.

Number and percentage of juveniles found guilty of all offences in the West Midlands police force area and Aldridge and Brownhills and Walsall petty sessional divisions[1,2] by age and type of offence 1990 and 1991

	Total juveniles (aged 10 to under 17) (=100 per cent.)		*Aged 10 to under 15*			
			Number		*Per cent.*	
Area/type of offence	*1990*	*1991[3]*	*1990*	*1991[3]*	*1990*	*1991[3]*
West Midlands pfa						
Indictable offences	1,537	1609	458	464	30	29
Summary non-motoring offences	489	515	103	125	21	24
Summary motoring offences	164	181	24	16	15	9
All offences	2,190	2,305	585	605	27	26
Aldridge and Brownhills psd[1]						
Indictable offences	21	19	4	—	19	—
Summary non-motoring offences	5	7	—	—	—	—
Summary motoring offences	4	1	—	1	—	100
All offences	30	27	4	1	13	4
Walsall psd[2]						
Indictable offences	102	103	29	31	28	30
Summary non-motoring offences	33	58	5	22	15	38
Summary motoring offences	15	14	—	1	—	7
All offences	150	175	34	54	23	31

[1] Including convictions at the Crown court where the committing court was Aldridge Brownhills psd.
[2] As above but committing court was Walsall psd.
[3] Provisional.

Maritime Investigations

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in what circumstances police authorities have powers to oversee and fund maritime investigations;

(2) if he will list the conditions of tender and give details of all tenders submitted to the Devon and Cornwall constabulary for the purpose of contracting for the salvage of MFV Pescado;

(3) if he will instigate an independent inquiry into all aspects of the issuing of the tender to Swan Salvage for the salvage of MFV Pescado; and whether the Golden Eye salvage vessel displayed her flag of origin.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not readily available and I will be writing to the hon. Member.

Race Relations Act 1976

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to bring sentencing within the scope of the Race Relations Act 1976.

Mr. Jack: We have no such plans, but my right hon. and learned Friend has recently published information under section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to facilitate the performance by persons engaged in the administration of criminal justice of their duty to avoid discriminating on the grounds of race or sex or any other improper ground.

Community Relations

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his meeting with Muslim and Hindu community leaders on 10 December.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and I welcomed the opportunity to listen to the concerns of both communities and were greatly encouraged that the community leaders were able to agree the following joint statement:

"Recent events in the Indian sub-continent are a cause of deep concern to many people in Britain and touch profound religious feelings.

In Britain, Hindus and Muslims have lived peacefully together for many years. We are appalled that some people are evidently using the troubles elsewhere as an excuse for attacks on places of worship, businesses and individuals in this country.

We utterly condemn the use of violence where it occurs.

We appeal now to everyone in our communities to continue to show the utmost restraint, to resist any suggestion of retaliation, and to co-operate fully with the police and other authorities.

Restoring calm between our communities is in the best interests of every Hindu and Muslim in Britain."

Close contact is being maintained with both communities, and on 16 December I visited the west midlands to talk to members of the local communities and to hear a police assessment of recent events in the area.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women were *(a)* murdered or *(b)* assaulted by their spouses or co-habitees in the borough of North Warwickshire, the borough of Nuneaton and Bedworth and the county of Warwickshire in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jack: Records available to me show the number of women who were the victims of offences currently recorded as homicide committed by their spouses or co-habitants in the Warwickshire police force area in each of the last five years is as follows:

Year	Number
1987	1
1988	—
1989	—
1990	1
1991	—

Information on the precise location within the police force or on assaults on women by their spouses or co-habitants is not collected centrally.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands listing the domestic violence units in his area and the expenditure involved in maintaining each of the domestic violence units.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The force has 11 units, one for every division. Six of the units are staffed by two officers each, at an annual cost of £50,000 per unit; the remaining five are each staffed by a single officer at an annual cost of £30,000 per unit.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men were *(a)* killed or *(b)* assaulted by their wives in Warwickshire in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jack: Records available to me show the number of men who were the victims of offences currently recorded as homicide committed by their wives in the Warwickshire police force area in each of the last five years is as follows:

	Number
1987	—
1988	—
1989	1
1990	—
1991	—

Information on assaults on men by their wives is not collected centrally.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of Warwickshire *(a)* giving the number of officers in his force who have received training in dealing with domestic violence and *(b)* listing the domestic violence units in the area covered by his force and the expenditure involved in maintaining such units.

Mr. Charles Wardle: All officers receive general training in dealing with incidents of domestic violence, by which the force means all violence which occurs within the family, including child abuse. Two hundred and ten officers have undergone more specialised training. The force currently has one dedicated family protection unit which was established in July this year. The unit is staffed by an inspector, two sergeants and 14 constables. The cost of maintaining the unit includes approximately £464,000 a year for staff salaries, plus additional costs for training and travelling.

Prison Officers (Accommodation)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has received on the ability of prison officers to find accommodation in the London area at rents that they can afford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No survey has been undertaken by the prison service as to how prison officers newly posted to London prisons find suitable accommodation. Since fresh start, prison officers are no longer quarters entitled.

Officers who are transferred to London prisons on permanent compulsory transfer terms are entitled to reimbursement of the expenses incurred in moving home. If they own a property, its sale at the current market value is guaranteed through a Home Office scheme operated by the Black Horse Relocation Company. Financial assistance to officers transferring at public expense from a cheaper to a more expensive area and whose outgoings have necessarily increased is available in the form of additional housing cost allowance. Officers may apply for an advance of salary for house purchase which is repayable, free of interest, over a 10-year period.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers have resigned from the service in each of the last five years and have given as the reason the difficulty in finding reasonably priced accommodation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No records are kept of the number of prison officers who resign from the Prison Service because of their inability to find suitable accommodation.

Mrs. Cynthia Hazig

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department now intends to take following the report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration on the complaint made to him by the hon. Member for Tooting on behalf of Mrs. Cynthia Hazig of Tooting, so that similar incidents do not in future take place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This case arose because of defective laminate in a passport issued in 1985. This type of passport is no longer issued and the new style, machine-readable passport has to meet very strict quality controls. New instructions have been issued to immigration officers on the examination of suspect travel documents.

Racial Incidents

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents of racially motivated crime have been recorded each year since 1979 in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: The information available relates to reported racial incidents, as defined by the Association of Chief Police Officers, and is for England and Wales only. The available figures are as follows:

Number of racial incidents in England and Wales

Number of incidents

Year	*Provincial forces*	*Metropolitan Police*	*England and Wales*
1985	3,955	1,945	5,900
1986	4,833	1,733	6,566
1987	3,126	2,179	5,305
1988	2,169	2,214	4,383
1989	2,347	2,697	5,044
1990	3,451	2,903	6,354
1991	4,509	3,373	7,882

ACPO definition: Any incident in which it appears to the reporting or investigating officer that the complaint involves an element of racial motive, or any incidents which include allegations of racial motivation made by any person.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been victims of racial attacks in London in each year since 1990, detailed by London borough; and what advice is given to the Metropolitan police on reporting such attacks as racially motivated.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) on 16 December on the number of racial incidents in each London borough.

The Metropolitan police work to Association of Chief Police Officers guidelines in these matters in common with all other forces.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many racially motivated attacks on asylum seekers and refugees have been recorded by his Department in 1992; in which counties they took place; and what were the victims' nationalities.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not available centrally.

Child Sex Abuse

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offenders involved in child sex abuse incidents are currently being held in bail hostels or other similar institutions whether awaiting trial or on probation or parole, in the Coventry and northern Warwickshire area.

Mr. Jack: There are currently two probation/bail hostels in Coventry and Nuneaton. On 15 December 1992 three of the residents out of 29 were defendants or offenders in child sex abuse cases.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the amount of public funding paid to private institutions for the treatment of offenders involved in child sex abuse.

Mr. Jack: Local authorities, health authorities and probation committees may fund treatment of individual offenders at their discretion, but no funding for this purpose came directly from central Government.

Parrots

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average fine imposed for killing parrots in 1991-92.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Police (Code of Ethics)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the code of ethics produced by the Association of Chief Police Officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Home Office officials have been working with the police service on the development of the code of ethics, which was launched on 8 December by the Association of Chief Police Officers. The code of ethics is not yet finalised, and one of the issues that have to be addressed is its relationship with police disciplinary procedures. This will be considered as a part of the review of police disciplinary procedures announced on 16 December.

Betting Shops

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representtions he has had from employees of William Hill's betting shops about the proposals to extend opening hours into the evening.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have record of 17 representations from employees of William Hill, all of which were opposed to the evening opening of licensed betting offices. In addition, we have received a number of other representations from betting office staff in which the employer was not identified.

Gaming

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to maintain as public policy the avoidance of undue stimulation of gaming.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government have no plans to depart from their policy that the demand for gambling, including gaming, should not be unduly encouraged. As in the past, this principle will continue to be applied in different degrees according to the nature of the gambling involved.

EC Frontier Controls

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the position regarding frontier controls on people travelling between the United Kingdom and other member states of the European Community after January 1993.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The date 1 January 1993 will not, in the event, be of any practical sigificance so far as the movement of people travelling within the European Community is concerned. There remain varying interpretations of article 8A of the treaty of Rome. None of the member states of the Community intends to make fundamental changes on 1 January 1993 to the arrangements in force at its frontiers with other member states for controlling immigration and for police checks.

Immigration control on entry to and departure from the United Kingdom will continue to be operated in accordance with the Immigration Act 1971 and relevant Community legislation. Passengers entering the United Kingdom from other member states, except the Republic of Ireland, will continue to be required to present their passports or other national identity documents to the immigration officer for inspection. In the case of British citizens and other EC nationals, the purpose of the check is simply to establish their nationality, and the arrangements already made for expediting the passage through the immigration control of EC nationals will continue. No change will be made in the exercise of the powers contained in the prevention of terrorism Act.

It will similarly continue to be necessary for people travelling from the United Kingdom to other EC countries, other than the Republic of Ireland, to be in possession of a passport or other national identity document. The member states that are parties to the Schengen convention expect to abolish frontier controls at the land frontiers between their territories, and subsequently at airports in respect of flights between their countries, in the course of 1993. On present plans, however, it will still be necessary thereafter for people travelling from the United Kingdom to one of those countries to be in possession of a passport or other national identity document, together where necessary with a visa.

I shall be considering what further changes might be made in the course of 1993 to the United Kingdom immigration control arrangements vis-a-vis other member states of the European Community, in furtherance of our policy of reducing checks on EC nationals to the minimum level compatible with the retention of effective immigration control of third-country nationals together with adequate safeguards against the entry of terrorists and other serious criminals.

Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters have been received by his Department expressing concern about the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Since 22 October we have received approximately 210 letters about the Bill.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many citizens of the former Yugoslavia have entered the United Kingdom since 6 November.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Comprehensive information on admissions of passengers to the United Kingdom is collected on a monthly basis, and the data for the whole of November are not yet available.

Refugee Children

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations his Department has received in support of the provision of a children's advocate on behalf of unaccompanied refugee children.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not readily available.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide the asylum statistics for 1992, including details of the numbers of decisions reached, refusals by category and their nationalities.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for the period January to November 1992 is given in the table.

Applications received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, and decisions,[1,2] by nationality, 1 January 1992-30 November 1992.

Nationality	Applications	Decisions: Granted asylum	Granted exceptional leave	Total refused	Refused asylum and exceptional leave after determination	Refused on safe third country grounds	Refused under para 101 of immigration rules[3]	Total decisions
Europe and Americas								
Bulgaria	145	*	—	35	20	—	15	35
Colombia	220	*	10	20	10	5	5	30
Romania	270	—	10	85	50	10	25	95
Turkey	1,650	420	1,375	580	140	70	370	2,375
Former USSR	230	5	5	20	*	15	10	30
Former Yugoslavia	4,830	—	*	110	—	60	50	110
Others	245	5	5	65	10	25	25	75
Total	7,585	430	1,405	915	230	180	500	2,745
Africa								
Angola	190	10	5	3,640	65	5	3,565	3,650
Benin	15	—	—	325	—	—	325	325
Cameroon	35	—	—	530	5	—	525	530
Congo	15	—	*	255	*	*	255	255
Ethiopia	590	10	1,900	140	5	10	120	2,045
Ghana	1,400	5	20	1,120	270	25	825	1,145
Somalia	1,360	25	2,065	290	*	40	250	2,380
Sudan	510	140	100	120	*	*	115	360
Togo/Ivory Coast	285	—	—	1,120	10	5	1,110	1,120
Uganda	240	10	850	270	115	5	145	1,130
Zaire	795	10	10	4,470	90	65	4,315	4,490
Others	1,145	5	75	1,355	125	25	1,200	1,440
Total	6,580	210	5,030	13,640	685	190	12,760	18,880
Middle East								
Iran	345	105	580	50	15	5	30	735
Iraq	635	175	1,165	35	5	5	25	1,375
Lebanon	345	20	515	60	40	10	15	600
Others	415	30	95	105	50	15	45	230
Total	1,740	335	2,360	250	110	30	115	2,945
Asia								
China	300	15	10	35	15	*	20	60
India	1,325	—	435	1,095	700	65	330	1,525
Pakistan	1,535	*	395	965	650	10	300	1,360
Sri Lanka	1,860	40	4,135	195	10	45	140	4,370
Others	460	10	240	180	125	*	50	430
Total	5,480	65	5,215	2,470	1,500	125	845	7,745
Other and Unknown Nationality	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grand Total	21,390	1,040	14,010	17,270	2,525	530	14,220	32,315

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest 5 with * = 1 or 2.
[2] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same period.
[3] For failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to two invitations to interview to establish identity.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers have been returned since November 1991 to third countries outside the EC; and if he will name those countries.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information is given in the table. All decisions on third country removals are taken in the light of the circumstances of the individual case.

Asylum applicants at ports removed on safe third country grounds to non-EC countries, by country to which removed, excluding dependants, 1 November 1991 to 30 November 1992

Country to which removed	
Switzerland	20
Sweden	17
United States	10
Austria	5
Ghana	2
Iran	2
Turkey	2
Australia	1
Canada	1
Guinea	1
India	1

Country to which removed	
Kenya	1
Norway	1
Poland	1
Total	65

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many new detention places for asylum seekers have been set up since August 1991; if he will name the detention centres; and what further plans his Department has to set up new detention places.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Since August 1991, the number of detention places available to accommodate Immigration Act 1971 detainees including asylum seekers has increased by 18. A new seven-bed detention centre at Stansted airport was commissioned in August 1992 and improvements to the detention facilities at Haslar which were completed in September 1992 provided an additional 11 places. Under plans which have not yet been finalised, we are aiming to provide around a further 300 additional detention places in phases from 1993 to 1995.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the criteria used to place asylum seekers in Her Majesty's prisons and the conditions in force.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Detention under the powers contained in the Immigration Act 1971 is authorised only where there is no alternative. The overriding consideration is whether the person is likely to comply voluntarily with any restrictions imposed upon him, including any arrangements for removal from this country.

Her Majesty's prison Haslar is used almost exclusively for Immigration Act detainees, including asylum seekers. Otherwise, prisons are used only when no places are available at either Haslar or an immigration service detention centre, or where the detainee is unsuitable for detention in these establishments.

Immigration detainees in prisons are accorded access to visits, private cash, education, physical education, work and legal aid.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum applicants refused asylum have been deported or removed in 1991 and 1992, under category 101 and the safe third countries rule.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for the period January to November 1992 on asylum applicants refused under paragraph 101 of the immigration rules, and on applicants at ports removed from the United Kingdom on safe third country grounds, is given in the table. Comprehensive information for 1991 is not available.

Refusals[1] under paragraph 101 of the immigration rules of applications for asylum in the United Kingdom, and removals[1] of port asylum applicants on safe third country grounds, excluding dependants, 1 January 1992 to 30 November 1992.

Refused under para 101 of immigration rules[2]	*Removals of port applicants on safe third country grounds*
14,220	365

[1] Figures rounded to nearest 5.
[2] For failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to two invitations to interview to establish indentity.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when instructions were sent to the post in Islamabad to issue entry clearance to Mr. Syed Farhat Abbas—Ref. TH/16422/90 and—B 020653—to join his wife in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I very much regret that the entry clearance officer was not immediately informed that the presenting officer's application for leave to appeal to the immigration appeal tribunal against the adjudicator's decision to allow Mr. Abbas' appeal has been withdrawn on 27 October. Instructions to issue an entry clearance were sent by telex to the British high commission in Islamabad on 16 December.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when instructions were sent to the post in Islamabad to issue entry clearance to Mr. Mohd Asif Gill—Ref. Imm/v 94835 and Imm (APP 320)—to join his wife in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The adjudicator's determination allowing Mr. Gill's appeal was delivered on 2 November and after consideration in the Home Office was sent to the British high commission in Islamabad on 1 December, with a request that the entry clearance officer should act in accordance with the spirit of the determination.

Dr. Kypros Loucas

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what inquiries were made before Dr. Kypros Loucas began to work at Wormwood Scrubs; what these inquiries revealed; and what account was taken of the inquiries in considering whether to appoint Dr. Loucas to work connected to prisoners with severe mental disorders.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to review the employment of Dr. Kypros Loucas in the prison medical service at Wormwood Scrubs;

(2) what plans he has to investigate the circumstances in which Dr. Kypros Loucas was appointed to his present part-time post at Wormwood Scrubs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if his Department will continue to employ the services of Dr. K. Loucas as a visiting psychiatrist at Her Majesty's prison, Wormwood Scrubs;

(2) if he will make a statement on the employment of Dr. Kypros Loucas at Wormwood Scrubs prison.

(3) when his Department first became aware of the concern expressed by the Mental Health Act Commission on Dr. Kypros Loucas; and if he will make a statement on Dr. Loucas' continued employment at Wormwood Scrubs prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Dr. Kypros Loucas was appointed by open competition following an advertisement in the *British Medical Journal* inviting applications from fully registered medical practitioners of consultant status. Two professional references were offered and followed up. These provided no contra-indications to his appointment and an appointment as a visiting consultant psychiatrist was offered on 28 June 1990.

The appointment requires Dr. Loucas's attendance for two sessions per week at Wormwood Scrubs. As visiting consultant he does not have sole charge of patients and acts as psychiatric adviser to, and under the direction of, the full-time senior medical officer.

The Prison Service was not aware of the concern expressed by the Mental Health Act Commission until shortly before the broadcast of the "Cutting Edge" television programme on 7 December.

In his own interests, Dr. Loucas has been advised not to visit the prison until the allegations contained in the programme have been investigated.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In general, private finance involving the acceptance of risk by the private sector, has not been used.

I am considering how to apply the Government's private finance initiative in its areas of responsibility on the basis of the guidance which has recently been published by the Treasury.

Women Prisoners

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the possibility of women prisoners joining the therapeutic regime at Grendon.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At the end of 1994, a small unit will become available at Grendon. There are a number of possible options for its use: for adult male offenders, for young offenders or to make the unit one for women prisoners. No decision has been taken about the future of the unit.

Before the possibility of women prisoners participating in the therapeutic unit at Grendon could be contemplated it would be necessary:

(a) to have reliable information about the therapeutic needs of women prisoners; and
(b) to explore all possible options for meeting those needs, drawing on experience both inside and outside the prison service.

Furthermore, any decision to place women prisoners in Grendon would require very careful consideration, including:

(a) defining the objectives of such placement, in particular identifying what benefits the women would derive from it;
(b) examining staffing mix, training, attitudes;
(c) exploring essential safeguards for all involved; and
(d) appropriate consultation.

Careful, detailed planning would then be needed.

Prison Staff

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the numbers of *(a)* prison custody officers and supervisors, *(b)* management, *(c)* administrative and maintenance staff, *(d)* full and part-time chaplains, *(e)* catering staff, *(f)* medical staff, *(g)* education staff and *(h)* seconded probation officers working in HMP Blakenhurst and HMP Bullingdon, respectively.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* A contract for the operation of Blakenhurst prison has been awarded to UKDS and the prison is due to open in April 1993. There is currently a skeleton staff on site supervising routine maintenance work. The controller appointed under section 85(1)(b) of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and his secretary are also based at the prison.

As at 10 December, the numbers of staff at Bullingdon prison, in the grades requested, were as follows: officer grades—prison officers, senior officers, principal officers, night patrol and auxiliary officers—309; governor grades—eight; administrative and industrial grades—50; chaplains—three; medical grades—16; education staff and instructional officers—12; seconded probation officers—six. A contract for the provision of catering services was awarded to ARA Services plc in March. One member of the administrative staff is responsible for monitoring the contract.

Arrests, London

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis indicating how many *(a)* white people and *(b)* people from the ethnic minorities were arrested in London in each month of 1992; and, how many in each category were subject to an immigration check whilst in custody.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* Information on the ethnic appearance of persons arrested in the Metropolitan police district is recorded by the arresting officer. The following information is available for 1992:

Month	White European	Dark European	Black	Asian	Far Eastern	Middle Eastern	Unknown
January	5,537	374	1,668	522	99	122	650
February	5,524	324	1,812	423	74	107	644
March	5,679	354	1,671	491	65	98	620
April	5,394	335	1,801	449	69	118	605
May	5,313	346	1,739	465	54	84	590
June	5,631	300	1,787	467	62	95	546
July	5,441	335	1,861	447	57	101	542
August	5,111	267	1,631	440	54	93	584
September	5,287	297	1,796	412	58	88	565
October	4,658	252	1,606	365	59	73	468
Total	53,575	3,184	17,372	4,481	651	979	5,814

Statistics on immigration checks are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

West Yorkshire Police

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes were solved by allocation to known criminals serving prison sentences by the West Yorkshire police force in 1991; and what was the percentage of crimes detected for the year other than by allocation.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* The available information for 1991 shows that there were 15,280 offences cleared up in West Yorkshire by interview of convicted offenders in custody. Eighty one per cent. of offences were cleared up by methods other than allocations.

Security Risks

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in each year since 21 November 1979, and so far in 1992, the Director-General of the Security Service has reported information about a present or former Minister or senior public servant indicating that he or she may be or may have been a security risk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* It is not the practice to disclose information of this kind.

Prison Education

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the expenditure per head of prison population, for prison education for *(a)* each United Kingdom prison and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* Total payments to local education authorities and relevant overheads per head of prison population in England and Wales are available only from 1 April 1984, and are shown in the table. Information for individual prison establishments, could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Year	£
1984-85	470
1985-86	459
1986-87	402
1987-88	441
1988-89	515
1989-90	620
1990-91	740
1991-92	779

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what action he will take to evaluate the standard of education provided by prison education establishments;

(2) what steps he is taking to monitor the quality of services provided within the prison education service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* The Prison Service already employs professionally qualified education staff in its chief education officer's branch to provide guidance on the evaluation of education programmes and to advise and assist governors to monitor the standard and quality of educational services delivered in prison establishments. Education services for inmates are also inspected by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the curriculum provided within British prisons is comparable with that available within the community.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* Yes. The need to ensure this is one of the main reasons why the present arrangements in England and Wales are being changed and competitive tendering has had to be undertaken. Local education authorities are the current providers of education to inmates in prisons, but from 1 April 1993 they will no longer have the primary responsibility for the provision in the community of the futher education curriculum which most prisoners require.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements are in force to ensure that prisoners can continue education courses after release from British prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* The Criminal Justice Act 1991 requires that from 1 October 1992 all adult offenders in England and Wales sentenced to one year's imprisonment or more and all young offenders will be supervised in the community after they leave the prison or young offender institution. Prison staff prepare discharge reports which identify to the supervising service, among other things, education and training programmes which the inmate has undertaken in custody and which he or she might usefully continue after release. Where possible, the inmate will be offered help in making any necessary arrangements.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve basic education resources for prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to a question by the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney) on 17 November, *Official Report*, column *104*. Since 1979, the Government have consistently increased in real terms payments to local education authorities for the provision of education in prisons. Competition is directed to ensuring from 1 April 1993 the most effective use of the resources that can be made available by awarding contracts to those providers, whether from the public or private sector, which offer the best combination of quality and price and which reflect the priority of the service.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the prison experience available to agencies tendering for prison education service contracts which were not existing prison education establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* All organisations that have been invited to tender for the provision of educational services to prisoners were asked to give details of any experience which they had of delivering education provision in prison establishments, and of any other relevant experience.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if records of achievement will be kept in respect of prison education; and if these will have national accreditation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* The terms and conditions of the contracts to be let for provision of educational services in prisons from 1 April 1993 will require providers to introduce nationally accredited records of achievement for prisoners.

Prison Disablement Officers

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many disablement officers have been employed within the prison service; and in which prisons they were serving in the last financial year for which details are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* The disabled persons liaison officer for the prison service is based in the headquarters directorate of personnel and finance—DPF3. There are no disablement officers employed in prison establishments.

SCOTLAND

Housing Maintenance, Dundee

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sums have been allocated to the City of Dundee district council for housing repairs and maintenance in each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The level of a local authority's expenditure on the repairs and maintenance of its housing stock is a matter for decision by the local authority concerned. The expenditure by the City of Dundee district council on the repairs and maintenance of its housing stock in each of the past five years, as recorded in returns made to the Scottish Office Environment Department, is as follows:

	£
1987-88	7,425,628
1988-89	8,305,212
1989-90	10,181,038
1990-91	11,112,639
1991-92	14,581,254

Hostel Schemes

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assistance his Department is giving directly or through Scottish Homes to the development of foyer hostel schemes in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes is contributing to the funding of a feasibility study for a foyer in Kirkcaldy, in conjunction with Kirkcaldy district council, Fife regional council and the Historic Buildings Council; and is examining the possibility of a feasibility study for a foyer in Glasgow.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what central Government mechanism exists for ensuring that council-owned houses are maintained in a windproof, watertight and fit condition; and how many times these powers have been used over the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities have an obligation at common law to keep their houses in a tenantable and habitable condition. In addition, section 17 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 imposes a duty on local authorities to manage their houses. Repairing obligations are a matter between landlord and tenant.

Kyle-Kyleakin Ferry

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the loss to Caledonian MacBrayne's annual revenues of the scheduled end to the Kyle to Kyleakin ferry.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend does not consider it justified to require Caledonian MacBrayne to make public commercially sensitive information about revenues, operating surpluses and deficits incurred on individual routes. The company's annual report and accounts for 1991, which were presented to Parliament on 27 May 1992, and are available in the Library, identified the operating deficits and surpluses realised by the company in respect of groups of services defined by area of operation.

Whitson Fairhurst Houses

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what Government assistance is available for Whitson Fairhurst houses; and what sums have been allocated to each district council this year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Owners of Whitson Fairhurst houses and other house types designated as

defective who bought them from a public sector authority before 26 April 1984 can require their local authority to repurchase or give grant to make good the house under part XIV of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. The Government issue supplementary capital allocations each year to local authorities, on the basis of authorities' returns, to meet in full their liabilities to incur capital expenditure under the Act.

The supplementary capital allocations issued to local authorities in 1992-93 on the housing revenue account—HRA—and non-HRA blocks to cover their expenditure under the Act in respect of all types of designated defective housing is set out in the following table. Allocations on the HRA block are in respect of the repurchase of defective houses and on the non-HRA block are to make available reinstatement grants for the repair of designated houses. Information is not held centrally in respect of individual types of designated defective housing such as Whitson Fairhurst.

Local Authority	*HRA £ million*	*Non-HRA £ million*
Roxburgh	0·090	—
Clackmannan	0·003	—
Falkirk	—	0·040
Nithsdale	0·009	—
Kirkcaldy	0·005	—
Aberdeen	0·154	—
Kincardine and Deeside	0·533	—
East Lothian	0·050	—
Edinburgh	0·221	—
Midlothian	—	0·029
Argyll and Bute	—	0·030
Bearsden and Milngavie	0·023	—
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0·025	—
Glasgow	0·296	—
Dundee	0·017	—
Perth and Kinross	0·503	0·017
SCOTLAND	1·929	0·116

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what figures he has to show the life expectancy of Whitson Fairhurst houses in the City of Dundee district.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: When first built, the Whitson Fairhurst house type could reasonably have been expected to have a life of about 60 years. A defect subsequently discovered in the type may mean that some will last for a shorter period, but much depends on the condition of individual houses.

KS Properties Ltd.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he was consulted about the write-off of money due to the Scottish Development Agency by KS Properties Ltd; what steps he is taking to recover the money; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish Office approved in June 1990 a request by the then Scottish Development Agency to write off the sum of £40,084, being the balance of a loan owed to the agency by KS Construction Limited. The agency earlier wrote off £4,900 in interest accrued on the loan. These actions followed the company entering into receivership. Writing off of debt is a step taken only where the debt is judged irrecoverable.

If my hon. Friend requires further details about this matter, which was essentially an operational matter for the Scottish Development Agency, I am sure that the chairman of the agency's successor body, Scottish Enterprise, would be pleased to attempt to assist him.

Wool Production

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the effect of removing the wool price guarantee from 1 May 1993 upon *(a)* Scottish wool production, *(b)* wool production in the crofting counties and *(c)* crofter and sheep farmer incomes from wool production.

Mr. Hector Monro: Removal of the wool price guarantee should not significantly affect wool production in the crofting counties, nor in Scotland generally, wool being essentially a by-product of the sheepmeat industry.

The effect on the incomes of individual producers will vary but returns from wool account for less than 5 per cent. of total producer returns from sheep.

Fluoridation

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if the chief dental officer will issue a statement on water fluoridation;

(2) what considerations led to the issuing of the statement on fluoridation of water by the chief medical officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: In the light of newspaper articles which did not adequately represent his views on fluoridation, the chief medical officer wrote on 3 December to the chairman of Greater Glasgow health board to clarify the position. Copies of his letter were sent to the chairmen of Argyll and Clyde, Ayrshire and Arran and Lanarkshire health boards. The letter explained his views and summarised the scientific evidence that fluoridation is a safe and highly effective means of reducing dental decay, particularly in children. The chief dental officer fully concurs with the terms of the letter and has no plans to issue a separate statement. Copies of the letter are being placed in the Library of the House.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to announce the outcome of the current applications for NHS trust status in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have received 14 applications from hospitals/units interested in becoming NHS trusts in April 1993. These were submitted by Caithness and Sutherland, Raigmore, Moray Health Services, Grampian Healthcare, Dundee General Hospitals, West Lothian, Monklands and Bellshill, Stirling Royal infirmary, Royal Alexandra hospital, the North Ayrshire and Arran general hospitals, Ayrshire and Arran Community Healthcare and, in Glasgow, the Southern General, Yorkhill and the Victoria infirmary. Public consultation on the applications has been carried out by the appropriate host health boards who have submitted to me reports on the comments made.

As previously, all applications are being considered against the published criteria of benefits for patients, management competence, the involvement of professional staff, and the financial viability of the applicant unit. I have completed my consideration of the applications for

Moray Health Services, Dundee General Hospitals, Grampian Healthcare, Stirling royal infirmary, the Royal Alexandra hospital, Yorkhill, Southern General and Victoria infirmary. I have concluded that these applications meet the criteria and consequently should be approved. My decision in respect of Glasgow hospitals is without prejudice to the review of acute services currently being undertaken by Greater Glasgow health board.

I expect to complete my consideration of the outstanding six applications shortly and will announce my decisions as early as possible in order that successful candidates can get ahead with the work required before becoming operational on 1 April 1993.

The establishment as NHS trusts of the successful candidates offers a further opportunity for improving services which are already of a high standard. The experience of the two Scottish trusts currently operational is of more patients being treated, greater innovation in the services being offered, and in general a service which is endeavouring to be more responsive to the needs of patients. Those promoting the current applications have indicated a commitment to achieving similar outcomes for their patients. This is to be welcomed and, I believe, augurs well for the NHS in Scotland and of course patient care.

Shipping Subsidies

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for shipping subsidies for sea transport services in the Highlands and Islands in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Subject to parliamentary approval of the estimates, I propose to make available in 1993-94 total subsidy provision of £15·129 million as compared with £13·657 million in 1992-93. This represents an increase of 10·8 per cent. over last year's level of provision. The deficit subsidy for Caledonian MacBrayne will be £7·165 million. For services to Orkney and Shetland, tariff rebate subsidies of up to £6·679 million will be made available. Up to £1·285 million will be available for other coastal shippers operating on the west coast of Scotland.

This substantial increase in financial support for shipping services clearly affirms the Government's continuing commitment to assist essential sea transport services to the western and northern isles.

Nuclear Fuel, Torness

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all papers deposited by his Department at the public inquiry into the application to build a dry store for spent nuclear fuel at the Torness nuclear plant; how many officials from his Department are expected to attend the inquiry; and what budget has been made available to cover the costs of the inquiry.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* Two statements have been deposited by the Scottish Office Environment Department. One is a brief resume of radioactive waste management policy and the other gives a detailed statement of the regulatory regime operated by Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate in Scotland. Scottish Office officials will attend the inquiry as necessary; thus far two officials from the Scottish Office Environment Department have given oral evidence. No specific budgetary provision has been made for this inquiry.

Ewe and Suckler Cow Premiums

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider organising appeals on ewe and suckler cow premiums to be heard consecutively when an appeal so constituted would provide a new entrant to farming with a stocking requirement best suited to the land on which he operates.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* We are currently considering the detailed arrangements which will be necessary to manage quotas under the sheep annual premium scheme and the suckler cow premium scheme. It is too early to specify what these will be.

EC Structural Funds

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which regional and island councils have made applications concerning the inclusion of areas eligible for assistance in relation to objective 1, objective 2, objective 3, objective 4 and objective 5 of the European Community's structural funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* Regional and island authorities wholly or partly within the existing Highlands and Islands objective 5b area have presented a detailed case for objective 1 status. All other regional authorities, as well as Grampian and Strathclyde, have made representations regarding either objective 2 or objective 5b status for all or part of their respective areas. Objectives 3, 4 and 5a are not limited geographically.

Housing

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new homes will be provided by Inverclyde district council in *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94; what is the total provision from Scottish Office funds which will be received by the council in support of capital expenditure on housing; and what capital expenditure he expects the council to incur in each of the next two years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* Information on the number of dwellings completed in 1992-93 and 1993-94 is not yet available.

Inverclyde district council's gross housing capital allocations for 1992-93 total £11·805 million. I plan to announce provisional allocations for 1993-94 before Christmas.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sums of money have been given to the Inverclyde district council for housing maintenance and repairs in each of the last seven years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 13 December 1992]:* Local authority expenditure on housing maintenance and repairs is financed mainly from rental income. Expenditure on housing maintenance and repairs by Inverclyde district council in each of the last seven years, as recorded in returns made by the council to the Scottish Office Environment Department, is as follows:

	£
1985-86	4,115,765
1986-87	5,176,806
1987-88	5,550,497
1988-89	5,875,281

	£
1989-90	6,296,113
1990-91	8,866,330
1991-92	7,856,574

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new houses were completed in Strathclyde in each year since 1979; and if he will publish an analysis of those figures by local authority district and between private, local authority and housing association ownership management.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* Information on the number of dwellings completed in each district and islands council area for private, local authority, and housing association ownership or management is contained in the quarterly statistical bulletins published by the Scottish Office entitled "Housing Trends in Scotland", or prior to 1983 "Scottish Housing Statistics", copies of which are in the Library.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new homes were provided by Inverclyde district council in each of the past 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* Information on the number of local authority dwellings completed in each district and islands council area is contained in the quarterly statistical bulletins published by the Scottish Office entitled "Housing Trends in Scotland", or prior to 1983 "Scottish Housing Statistics", copies of which are in the Library.

Fisheries Protection

Ms. Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether a decision has now been made on the future of the Scottish fishery protection patrols run by the Royal Navy from Rosyth.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer of 15 December 1992]:* The Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency expects to reach agreement shortly with the Ministry of Defence on a contract to provide fisheries protection patrols in Scottish waters in 1993-94. No decision has been taken on arrangements for 1994-95 and future years.

Earnings

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the proportion of part-time female manual workers, part-time female non-manual workers and all female part-time workers with earnings excluding overtime less than *(a)* £3, *(b)* £4·50 and *(c)* £5·20 per hour in (i) the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow, (ii) Strathclyde, (iii) Fife, (iv) Grampian and (v) Scotland as a whole;

(2) if he will publish a table giving the proportions of full-time male manual workers, full-time male non-manual workers and all full-time male workers with earnings excluding overtime less than *(a)* £190 per week and *(b)* £200 per week in (i) the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow, (ii) Strathclyde, (iii) Grampian, (iv) Fife and (v) Scotland as a whole;

(3) if he will publish a table showing the proportions of full-time female manual workers, full-time female non-manual workers and all full-time female workers with earnings excluding overtime of less than £190 per week in *(a)* Strathclyde, *(b)* Grampian, *(c)* Fife and *(d)* Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* Information on the level of details requested is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Member giving the requested information—where sample sizes allow—as soon as possible. A copy of the letter will be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Edinburgh Summit

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his current estimate of the total cost to *(a)* Edinburgh district council, *(b)* Lothian regional council and *(c)* the Scottish Office of the staging of the Edinburgh summit of the European Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* The main costs of organising the European Council and associated media facilities—estimated at £6·4 million—will be met by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The policing costs—estimated by Lothian and Borders police at £2·5 million—will be met in the usual way: 51 per cent. by central Government, in this case the Scottish Office through police specific grant; and 49 per cent. by the relevant local authority, in this case Lothian regional council. In addition, a number of organisations, including the Scottish Office, have staged events or offered hospitality to mark the holding of the European Council in Edinburgh. The cost to the Scottish Office of the eve-of-Council concert, associated hospitality and media activity is estimated at £150,000. The cost of other events, including those for which Edinburgh district council and Lothian regional council were responsible, is a matter for the organisations concerned.

Ambulance Service

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the ambulance service cover operated through the night in *(a)* Renfrewshire and *(b)* Strathclyde as a whole; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* The level of ambulance service in Renfrewshire and Strathclyde is an operational matter for the general manager of the Scottish ambulance service. Cover in these areas has been reorganised to ensure that staff and vehicles are deployed in the most efficient manner using a system which has improved performance in other areas. The general manager will continue to monitor the level of night-time cover provided to ensure the most effective service.

A1

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the most recent data on traffic volume and flows on sections of the A1 road in Scotland which have been prepared by the A1 steering group.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* Traffic flows on the A1 are being continuously monitored. The annual average daily flows during 1991 which are the most recently collated figures are listed.

	Number
Edinburgh city bypass	19,900
Bankton to Tranent	12,500
Tranent to Haddington	14,800
Haddington to East Linton	12,000
East Linton to Dunbar	10,700
Dunbar to Lothian regional boundary	7,100
Lothian regional boundary to Ayton	5,700
Ayton to national border	7,700

Clyde Report

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate which recommendations made by Lord Clyde in the Orkney inquiry report he has *(a)* accepted, *(b)* already implemented, *(c)* rejected or *(d)* is still considering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* Lord Clyde's recommendations cover a wide range of issues. Not all were directed to my right hon. Friend. Action to follow-up the recommendations can be summarised as follows:

Recommendations	
1, 2, 3	Accepted
4	Accepted, subject to consultation with training agencies, social work authorities and the police
5, 7-14, 19-23, 27, 28	Accepted, drawn to attention of social work authorities for action
8, 9, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18	Accepted, drawn to attention of education authorities for action
5, 7-14, 19, 22, 23, 27	Accepted, drawn to attention of chief constables for action
6, 35, 180, 181, 182	Accepted, drawn to attention of Child Protection Committees
24	Already considered by Child Care Law Review subject to further consideration
25, 26	Under consideration by the Scottish Office and Crown Office
29, 30, 31	Accepted, revised guidance in preparation
32	Accepted
33, 34, 36	Under consideration by The Scottish Office and the Association of Directors of Social Work
37, 38, 41, 45, 42-80, 138-148, 164	Broad thrust accepted but subject to separate consultation on emergency protection legislation, regulations and guidance in view of complex procedural issues involved
40, 42, 43, 44, 57, 61-68, 77-79, 85, 89, 91, 93, 97, 98, 99, 101, 102, 105, 106, 109, 111, 112, 114-120, 123-130, 132, 134, 135	Accepted, social work authorities asked to review practice and procedures
100	Accepted
101-3, 105-6	Accepted, drawn to attention of health boards for co-operation with social work authorities
81-84	Under consideration; survey of safeguarders being conducted and subsequent conference planned by the Scottish Office
95-99	Under consideration by the Scottish Office and the Association of Directors of Social Work
108-137	Majority accepted; working party established to produce guidance on joint investigation and interviewing and consider recommendations in detail
149	Accepted for inclusion in revised Children's Hearings Rules
150-152	Accepted
153-155	Consideration to be given subject to consultations with hearings, professional and press interests
156-157, 167	Under consideration in context of report on "Role and Functions of the Reporter" (Finlayson Report)
168, 169	For consideration by the Association of Directors of Social Work and Covention of Scottish Local Authorities
39, 171, 175	For consideration in the light of consultation with professional interests and training organisations
172, 176	Not possible for the present on grounds of cost
173	Accepted
174	For consideration by the Association of Directors of Social Work
177	Accepted, Open University course on investigative interviewing and guidance being prepared by working group on joint investigation and interviewing
178	Already accepted as priority area in The Scottish Office specific grant scheme
170, 179, 185	Management issues for consideration by social work authorities
183, 184	Accepted, to follow monitoring The Scottish Office specific grant scheme
186, 187	Accepted, drawn to the attention of Chief Constables
188-192	For consideration by The Scottish Office, local authorities and the Association of Directors of Social Work
94, 193, 194	Drawn to attention of Orkney Islands Council for action

Community Charge

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in which regional and island areas the community charge registration officer has undertaken an annual canvass of premises since April in order to maintain the accuracy of the community charges register; and what information he has regarding the estimated costs of such canvasses in 1992-93.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* I understand that all Scottish community charges registration officers have, since April, conducted the annual canvass, required by the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, in order to maintain the accuracy of their community charges registers. No information is collected centrally about the cost of this exercise.

A96

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the current road improvement projects on the A96, giving details of expenditure in each case.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* Under the route action plan for the A96 trunk road, the following schemes are currently under construction or being prepared:

	Estimated cost
1. Major Schemes	*£ million*
Bucksburn Diversion (under construction)	6·9
Lhanbryde Bypass	2·6
Keith Bypass	12·0
Kintore Bypass	14·5
Blackburn Bypass	9·6
2. Minor Improvements	*£*
Huntly/Dufftown Stacking Lane (under construction)	200,000
Ardgilzean Stacking Lane (under construction)	200,000
Alves Stacking Lane / Alves/Ardgye Climbing Lane	1 million
Colpy Stacking Lane	300,000
East Road, Elgin Improvement	650,000
Banff Stacking Lane	150,000
Newtongarry/Adamston Climbing Lane	1·5 million
Central Reserve Safety Fencing, Tyrebagger Hill	150,000
Morayston to Tornagrain Improvement	950,000
3. Accident Investigation and Prevention (AIP) Schemes	*£*
Tertowie Junction, North of Blackburn	1,000
Mosstodloch	14,000
Bends West of Lhanbryde	3,000
Bends East of Ardgilzean	7,500
Kintore Primary School	15,000
Coachhouse Inn Junction Improvement	1,800
Smithton–Culloden West Junction	20,000
Smithton–Culloden East Junction Stacking Lane	100,000
Inverness–Hardmuir Junction	6,000

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will announce the commencement date for the Llanbryde bypass on the A96.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* A public local inquiry was held on 3 November 1992 to consider outstanding objections to the draft statutory orders for this scheme and the report of the inquiry is awaited.

If the reporter recommends that the orders should be made the outstanding preparation work will be completed in the summer of 1993. Within the A96 route action plan funds are being made available for various improvements to upgrade the route. The Lhanbryde bypass is well placed to compete for such funding.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will announce the route and commencement date for the Keith bypass on the A96.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* Draft orders and a draft compulsory purchase order have recently been published.

In the statement which I made on 5 March setting out the forward roads programme, I announced that, subject to the satisfactory completion of the statutory procedures and the availability of funds, it was the Government's intention to start this scheme in the year 1994-95.

EC Initiatives

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money has been received by *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland as a whole under each of the approved European Community initiatives to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* Three Community initiatives operate in Scotland with specific allocations for the period 1990-93. These are:

	Total Allocation Scotland		*Total Allocation Strathclyde*	
	mecu	*£ million*	*mecu*	*£ million*
Renaval	24·43	19·86	21·04	17·11
Rechar	20·02	16·28	4·00	3·26
Leader	7·21	5·86	1·39	1·13

In addition, Scotland benefits from allocations to Great Britain programmes under other Community initiatives. The details of the amounts committed to successful Scottish projects are:

	Scotland £	*Strathclyde* £
Stride	1,493,103	[1]n/a
Now	999,411	142,336
Horizon	3,178,742	992,772
Euroform	2,794,124	383,875

[1] Beneficiaries are spread throughout the Objective 2 areas in Scotland. A separate figure for Strathclyde is not available.

For 1993, objective 2 and 5b areas in Scotland will be able to bid for a Great Britain programme under the RETEX Community initiative. As yet, no allocations under RETEX have been made.

Note: The authentic figures for allocations are those expressed in ecu. Equivalents expressed at the current exchange rate of £1 = 1.23 ecu are for illustrative purposes only. For most initiatives part of the allocation has already been received from the Commission at a previous exchange rate. The final sterling sums available to the programmes will depend on the exchange rates at the time the various payments are received.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

RECHAR

Mr. Illsley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to relax capital spending controls for those local authorities entitled to bid for European Community RECHAR programme moneys to enable them to bid for a fair entitlement of the money available under the scheme.

Mr. Robin Squire: I have been asked to reply.

On 30 June 1992 my Department issued details of the 1992-93 arrangements for the treatment of European regional development fund—ERDF—grants to local authorities through the "other services" block, which covers the generality of ERDF grants for which this Department is responsible. These will ensure that local authorities will receive supplementary credit approvals to provide 100 per cent. public expenditure cover for ERDF receipts for RECHAR projects. From 1993-94 onwards, public expenditure cover will be provided at 100 per cent. for all forecast ERDF receipts.

In addition, although there are no plans to relax the capital finance rules specifically for those local authorities which are eligible for ERDF, from 13 November 1992 to 31 December 1993, every authority will be able to spend virtually all of the capital receipts they receive.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what action he has taken to attract and secure a second RECHAR programme;

(2) what response he has made to the report on proposals for a second phase of the Community's RECHAR programme for the regeneration of coal mining areas; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if the will support local authority attempts to secure a second RECHAR programme of EC aid for coal areas.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 16 December 1992]*: The present RECHAR initiative is only one of 13 Community initiatives financed by the European structural funds.

The Edinburgh European Council decided that after 1993:

"The allocation for Community Initiatives should be between 5 and 10 per cent. of total resources committed under the Structural Funds. They should mainly promote cross-border, transnational and inter-regional cooperation and assistance for the outermost regions, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity".

Detailed decisions on future Community initiatives, including the possibility of a second RECHAR initiative, will not be taken until after next year's review of all the regulations on the structural funds.

Tropical Timber

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *808*, if he will publish an estimated number of forest dwellers that are dependent directly upon the trade in tropical timber; and if he will outline the benefits derived by the forest people from such trade.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

Reliable global estimates of the numbers of forest dwellers dependent upon the tropical timber trade are not available. the main benefit is likely to be employment.

"Policy Appraisal and the Environment"

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what account he took of the advice on page 7 of the Department of the Environment's document "Policy Appraisal and the Environment", issued in 1991, before announcing the current proposed pit closures and energy policy.

Mr. Eggar: My Department's objectives, copies of which are in the Library, include the objective of taking proper account of environmental issues in the development of all its policies.

Royal Mail

Mr. Dykes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to allow the Royal Mail to carry items through the post under 5kg in weight, exempted from the distance selling arrangements for value added tax; and what effect he estimates this would have on intra-Community trade.

Mr. Leigh: I have no plans to vary the range of products that may be carried by the Royal Mail, or the conditions under which such products may be carried.

Magazine Publishers

Mr. Dykes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will broaden his review of barriers to trade to take into account the distance selling arrangements for magazine publishers after 1 January 1993.

Mr. Leigh: I am aware of concerns which have been expressed about the possible impact of distance selling regulations on magazines. These are being taken into account in the Council working group discussions in Brussels. I shall be happy to consider any representations from magazine publishers.

Caminus Energy

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) whether the appointment of Caminus Energy as consultants to his Department was the result of competitive tender; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what factors were taken into account in the decision to appoint Caminus Energy as consultants for his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We invited a number of companies to tender to undertake work on the review. After evaluating all the proposals, we appointed Caminus Energy because of its experience in the coal and electricity fields and the quality of its presentation. It also represented good value for money.

Furniture (Fire Safety)

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received concerning his proposals for variation of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations concerning the letting of furnished accommodation.

Mr. Leigh: To date, some 90 representative organisations and individual businesses have commented on the proposals. Organisations representing providers of

furnished accommodation and tourism interests have sought a much longer period in which to meet the fire resistance requirements, while those representing consumer interests expressed concern about the safety implications of a further postponement.

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he informed the European Commission of all loans, grants and loan guarantees provided to British Nuclear Fuels plc under the Atomic Energy Act 1989, in respect of the Thorp reprocessing plant; and under what provision of EC law this notification is required.

Mr. Eggar: The question whether the matters referred to by the hon. Member are notifiable state aids is one which will have to be considered by the Commission in addressing Greenpeace's complaint.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the predicted construction cost of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield when consent for construction was given; and what is the most recent estimate of its completion cost, in both historic and current prices.

Mr. Eggar: When consent was given for construction of the THORP plant at Sellafield, the estimated cost of the plant, together with that of the receipt and storage facilities and an appropriate share of the cost of vitrification facilities for high level waste, was £645 million in mid-1977 money values.

Construction was completed in February 1992. I am advised by BNFL that the actual cost of the plant, together with the ancillary facilities mentioned above, was £1,960 million. The cost, exclusive of the share of the vitrification facilities, was approximately £1,850 million.

If the cost of £1,960 million is deflated to mid-1977 money values from the date when the various expenditures occurred, the equivalent value is £851 million.

Job Creation

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what job-creation measures were introduced following the announcement of the closure of the Chatham dockyards, the Corby steelworks and the Ravenscraig steelworks; what was the total cost of these measures; and how many new jobs have been created.

Mr. Sainsbury: Following the Chatham dockyard closure in 1984, remedial measures included the designation of an enterprise zone by the then Secretary of State for the Environment and activity by English Estates to clear dereliction, provide new infrastructure and market the reclaimed dockyard site under a co-ordinated development plan. Total net expenditure by English Estates to date has been £69 million, but the eventual level of receipts from the project is expected to broadly balance out expenditure. The English Estates site is expected to provide some 5,000 jobs and housing for 5,000 people.

The Corby steelworks closed during 1980, and remedial measures included development area status in 1979, designation as a European Coal and Steel Community—ECSC—steel closure area in 1980, the setting up of the Corby development corporation in 1980 and an enterprise zone in 1981. Expenditure on regional grants—regional development grants, regional selective assistance and regional enterprise grants—to date has been £51·4 million: not all of this has been directly job related, but that which was resulted in the creation of 5,195 jobs and the safeguarding of a further 113.

Figures about ECSC loans for all areas are held by the European Commission. Questions about development corporations and enterprise zones are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, and those about Ravenscraig for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

East Sussex

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what proposals he has for ensuring that the potential for economic growth in East Sussex is fulfilled;

(2) what assessment he has made of the economic difficulties facing East Sussex;

(3) what assistance is available to East Sussex to enable the county to attract inward investment.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies that I gave on 8 and 10 December, *Official Report*, columns *590* and *749-50*.

Mr. Waterson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that East Sussex is able to attract foreign-based companies wishing to set up business in the United Kingdom;

(2) what are the opportunities for economic development in East Sussex.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer my hon. Friend to my answers of 8 and 10 December to my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden); *Official Report*, columns *589-90* and *749-50*.

Businesses in East Sussex as in the rest of the country will benefit from a favourable tax regime, lower interest rates and a stable low inflation economy.

European Structural Fund

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what policy he will adopt in deriving his priorities when responding to any request for advice from, or consultation by, the European Commission in respect of bids made by local authorities relating to the designation of parts of their areas as being eligible for support under objective 5(b) of the European structural fund; and when he expects to be in a position to respond to such requests for advice or consultation;

(2) what is the latest date after which he will not entertain submissions from local authorities for parts of their areas to be considered as eligible for support under objective 5(b) of the European structural fund.

Mr. Sainsbury: The European Commission does not expect to present its proposals for revised structural funds regulations until early next year. It will then have to be considered by the Council.

Copyright

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations his Department will make to EC Ministers on home copying of copyright music; and what assessment he has made of the effect as between EC member states of the introduction of an EC-wide home copying royalty.

Mr. Leigh: The possibility of a directive on home taping has been discussed three times in the Internal Market Council, and on each occasion the United Kingdom has expressed a general expression reservation on the need for Community action. It is not possible to make an assessment of the effects of an EC-wide levy scheme until details are known. At the present time, the Commission has not submitted any formal proposal for such a scheme.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimates his Department has made on the level of home copying of copyright music in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh: My Department has not itself conducted or commissioned research into the level of home copying in the United Kingdom, but both copyright owners and consumer groups have carried out their own surveys. These surveys are not directly comparable, but both indicate that the practice of home copying of copyright music is widespread. The bodies concerned have drawn differing conclusions as to the consequences of this for the economic interests of copyright owners.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations his Department have made to the Government of Poland on piracy of copyright music.

Mr. Leigh: The United Kingdom Government has not made direct representations to the Government of Poland on the piracy of copyright music, but has fully supported European Community initiatives to achieve effective protection of intellectual property in that country. Earlier this year, Poland entered into an association agreement with the Community, one condition of which is that both the level of intellectual property protection and the means for enforcing rights must be brought up to the standard comparable to that in the Community.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a paper outlining the United Kingdom Government position on the EC proposals on copyright harmonisation.

Mr. Leigh: I have no plans to publish such a paper. Early in 1991, the Commission announced an ambitious programme for harmonisation in the copyright field. A directive on rental, lending and related rights has already been adopted under that programme. Other directives are at an advanced stage of negotiation, and further initiatives are expected. In all cases where proposals have already been submitted by the Commission, the Government have provided explanatory memoranda to Parliament, and have fully consulted relevant interests in establishing its negotiating position. This process will continue as new proposals emerge.

Telephone Charges

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to oblige telephone service providers to lower or remove the standing charge element of domestic telephone bills.

Mr. Leigh: I have no such proposals. Under existing legislation, the Director General of Telecommunications has the power to limit or reduce telecommunications operators' standing charges if he considers that there is insufficient competition to ensure that prices are set at a fair level.

Rural Post Offices

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many rural post offices closed in 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Leigh: For the four years commencing 1 April 1989 the changes in the numbers of rural post offices were as follows:

	Closures	*Openings*	*Total number of rural post offices*
1988-89	262	54	10,470
1989-90	241	49	10,278
1990-91	294	65	10,049
1991-92	193	86	[1]10,016

[1] Includes 74 satellite offices not previously included.

Small Businesses

Mr. George: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many small businesses have gone out of business in *(a)* the west midlands and *(b)* Walsall metropolitan borough council since 1987.

Mr. Leigh: The best available guide to trends of businesses comes from VAT data. During the period end 1986 to end 1991, 74,700 businesses left the VAT register in the west midlands region. In the same period, 93,500 businesses joined the VAT register.

The latest available figures down to county and local authority level are for the period end 1986 to end 1990. In this time 28,700 businesses left the register in the county of west midlands and 2,700 left in the Metropolitan borough of Walsall. The number of businesses joining the VAT register were 35,500 and 3,300 respectively.

Car Advertising

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation requiring vehicle manufacturers to adopt European Community motor traders guidelines relating to advertising of cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. I do not consider that any additional controls are necessary at the present time over and above those contained in the British code of advertising practice administered by the Advertising Standards Authority. The code requires that all advertisements in the printed media are legal, decent, honest and truthful.

The ASA monitors car advertising for compliance with the code on a regular basis, paying particular attention to claims relating to speed, power, acceleration and performance. Its latest survey in April 1992 confirmed an overall improvement in compliance of car advertising with the British code of advertising practice.

Business Information Services

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measure he is taking to encourage the use of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry business information services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: It is my Department's policy to encourage United Kingdom businesses to make the fullest use of

commercially available business information. As announced on 19 March 1991, *Official Report*, column *89*, we are providing support towards the development strategy of chambers of commerce, including accrediting chambers' business information services. I have now decided that from January 1993 my Department will direct to a nearby approved chamber business information service, inquiries from United Kingdom firms seeking published information on either United Kingdom suppliers of goods and services or on firms in western Europe or North America as potential buyers of United Kingdom goods and services. I understand that chambers will charge for their services. My Department will no longer maintain its own database of such information. I am currently considering whether to extend this arrangement to other overseas markets where there is good published information.

Single Market

Mr. Butler: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the frontier controls on the movement of goods between EC member states following the completion of the single market on 1 January 1993.

Mr. Heseltine: 1. The Edinburgh European Council recognised the completion of the single market by its end 1992 target date.

2. Perhaps the most visible sign of the completion of the single market will be the changes in the general regime for trade in goods at our frontiers with other member states of the European Community. These changes will not apply to the movement of goods between the United Kingdom and countries outside the Community.

3. Customs are making very considerable changes to controls for the single market. Formalities, forms and fiscal frontiers will end for intra-EC traffic. In particular the single administrative document will be abolished. Her Majesty's Customs calculates that reduced documentation will save British business £135 million a year. As a result of these changes EC travellers will see a panoply of controls traditionally associated with customs at the border vanish, including red and green channels, the need to make a declaration and quantitive or value restriction on goods brought back for personal consumption.

4. Baggage and car hall layouts will therefore no longer present an impression of barriers to travellers; screens, baggage benches and notices barring the way will all be removed. All of this amounts to no visible sign of a regular or routine Customs presence. In the single market, Customs are confident that travellers and freight traffic will now move freely through the Customs area, subject only to spot checks, conducted on the basis of intelligence and sharply focused profiles, on a small proportion to detect illicit traffic in a few high priority areas.

5. Her Majesty's Customs will, above all, continue their vigilance against traffic in illicit drugs. The money laundering provisions which form an important adjunct in the fight against drug smuggling will likewise remain in place. Licences will also still be needed for the movement of licit drugs, in keeping with our international obligations under the Vienna conventions. Her Majesty's Customs will also continue to seize obscene material imnported from other EC member states.

6. As my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade announced on 10 December, a new Export of Goods (Control) Order will come into force on 31 December 1992. Under this order, licences will still be needed for the export to all destinations of dual use goods, weapons, explosives, munitions and firearms and nuclear goods. It will remain an offence to export these goods to EC member states without a licence.

7. EC visitors wishing to bring firearms into the United Kingdom will continue to need prior permission to do so from the police. Commercial firearms movements will be covered by the harmonised Community licensing regime introduced by the weapons directive. Under this regime we will be notified of all firearms movements to, or through, the United Kingdom and a specific licence will still be needed to import the most dangerous firearms which are prohibited in the United Kingdom. The ban on individuals importing stun guns and CS gas sprays, the private possession of which is prohibited in this country, will continue. The import into the United Kingdom of other forbidden weapons will remain prohibited.

8. Licences will continue to be required for the export of cultural goods over certain monetary thresholds. This licensing system will be policed, inter alia, by selective frontier checks.

9. The EC waste shipments regulation will permit member states and their competent authorities to exercise controls on all cross-frontier shipment of wastes, including bans in prescribed circumstances. This will therefore render the existing United Kingdom import controls on asbestos waste unnecessary. However, in the intervening period after 1 January 1993, but before the regulation comes into force, it will continue to be an offence to import asbestos waste into the United Kingdom.

10. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 1 December the arrangements for trade in wildlife, and products derived from the wildlife trade, following the completion of the single market. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is separately announcing changes in connection with the completion of the single market in relation to agriculture, fisheries and food.

11. In addition, the Government have been reviewing, along with other member states, all the other prohibitions and restrictions on trade between the United Kingdom and other member states of the European Community, the enforcement of which has in the past heavily depended on the information available from the single administrative documents. Traditionally, these prohibitions and restrictions have applied to a range of goods imported or exported from or to both EC and non-EC countries. For a great many of these goods, the risks have been predominantly on trade between the United Kingdom and non-EC countries. The Government have therefore reviewed the rationale for those prohibitions and restrictions, some of which are historical, with a view to determining which can only be enforced effectively and proportionately by means of export and import controls. Throughout the review, the Government's main concern has been to retain the highest possible standard of protection for the United Kingdom, consistent with our Community obligations. Where it has been decided that frontier controls need not be retained, therefore, any restrictions on the sale, use or manufacture of these items on the territory of the United Kingdom will remain in place.

12. In other areas, the Government's review has revealed a number of prohibitions and restrictions which derived from moribund legislation, or legislation which

has been overtaken. It has been a specific offence to import articles bearing devices which imply Government sanction or guarantee. Domestic protection against this abuse is, however, provided by the—more general—provisions of the Trade Descriptions Act. Although the prohibition of imports of goods bearing a false indication of origin has been enforced actively, alternative domestic protection is also available under the Trade Descriptions Act.

13. The recent legislation to prohibit certain types of dangerous dogs only needed the security of an import ban during the transitional period. Now that the legislation is fully in force, and the deadline for obtaining a certificate of exemption in respect of these types of dogs has passed, the offence of possession of an un-exempted dog in the United Kingdom provides adequate protection. The separate announcement by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture will cover other frontier controls on animals.

14. Further cases of prohibitions and restrictions have been overtaken by EC legislation: our national prohibitions on the import of specific carcinogenic substances and matches made of white phosphorus have been overtaken by EC legislation on dangerous substances. The spread of common safety standards in the EC, particularly through the "New Approach" industrial standards directives, make it no longer necessary to retain Her Majesty's Customs' formal powers to detain unsafe consumer goods at the frontier, though Customs will continue to liaise closely with trading standards authorities in cases where information about such goods becomes available to them. The increasing body of harmonised food law and legislation on medicines in the European Community makes our national frontier controls on foodstuffs and medicines from next year unnecessary. The national United Kingdom controls on the import of textiles and clothing will become redundant on the completion of the single market, and will be subsumed into a genuinely Community-wide regime.

15. We have identified a further set of prohibitions and restrictions which are rarely used, and where the Government feel confident in relying in future on inland offences, which already carry the greatest weight of enforcement. These are described below.

16. The import control on substances—chiefly goat hair—which might be infected with anthrax, affects imports destined for only a few United Kingdom processing sites. However, the legal obligation of all processors of these substances to handle them correctly and prevent any risk of infection will prevent any increased hazard to health. The prohibition on the supply and use of certain sizes of lead fishing weights by anglers has played an important role in reducing the poisoning of swans and other water fowl. The main legislative weapon has been the National Rivers Authority byelaws; the associated frontier control has rarely been used. Similarly, the frontier zones have not proved an effective place to challenge counterfeit. So from next year there will be no importation or exportation offence for counterfeit currency, and fictitious postage stamps and the dies for making them as far as goods travelling between the United Kingdom and EC countries are concerned.

17. A similar pattern appears in intellectual property. Powers for owners of intellectual property to request Her Majesty's Customs to seize counterfeit or pirate goods, that is goods that infringe trademark or copyright, have never been used to detain goods imported from the EC. In practice, enforcement of intellectual property rights inland has been the norm, either with rights owners taking legal action themselves or by the enforcement of criminal offences. From next year, the option of action at the frontier will cease for goods entering the United Kingdom from the EC.

18. The prohibition on the import of horror magazines had also fallen into disuse, and from next year the Government are content to rely on the offence of possession for selling or hire and other offences which penalise those who seek to profit from such material. Similarly, the prohibitions on the import and export of lottery material are now rarely used, and other powers already exist to deal inland with unlawful lottery material. As regards imports of nuclear materials, we have concluded that there is sufficient control of these materials within the United Kingdom to enable the associated frontier control on their import to be abolished.

19. Finally, frontier controls on unapproved CB radios and cordless telephones play in important role in forestalling the use of equipment using the wrong radio frequencies. Such equipment can cause serious interference and endanger life and limb by interrupting radio use by emergency services. However, the main danger here is equipment from outside the Community. Our controls on third country traffic in CB radios and cordless telephones will be retained and restrictions on manufacture, sale and possession will continue to be vigorously enforced.

Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what preparations his Department is making for the nuclear non-proliferation treaty first preparatory committee meeting for the 1995 review.

Mr. Eggar: Within Whitehall, primary responsibility for the nuclear non-proliferation treaty lies with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. As such it will take the lead in preparations for the meeting of the first preparatory committee, which is to be held from 10 to 14 May next year. My Department works closely with the Foreign Office on this subject, and will support preparations for the meeting as appropriate.

British Coal

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take action to ensure that the present redundancy scheme operated by British Coal is extended beyond the current termination date of March 1993.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal. It would however seem reasonable for the corporation not to determine their redundancy arrangements from 1 April 1993 until the outcome of the coal review and the current statutory consultations are known.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will be taking full account of the private

finance initiative announced in the autumn statement and of the guidance which has been published by the Treasury in determining his priorities for departmental expenditure and in considering how to encourage a still closer partnership between his Department and the private sector.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Waterson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made as to whether the coverage of the assisted area map is likely to include travel-to-work areas on the south-east coast.

Mr. Sainsbury: The needs and circumstances of all areas, including those on the south-east coast, are currently being considered as part of the assisted areas map review.

Energy Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions have taken place in the Eurapean Energy Council in regard to the requirement to renegotiate by 31 December 1995 the agreement on the co-operation between the United States and the European Atomic Energy Community—1958—during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council.

Mr. Eggar: None. Co-operation between Euratom and the USA is a matter for the Foreign Affairs Council. Discussions in the Council working group during the United Kingdom presidency have been of a general nature.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take steps to verify the recent financial projections British Nuclear Fuels plc has made in regard to THORP at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: British Nuclear Fuels plc has advised me that for the United Kingdom to abandon the THORP project would cost the country as a whole over £1 billion —at a 6 per cent. discount rate—and some 3,000 jobs, even if there were no requirement to repay overseas customers their investments. This projection, which was made with the assistance of the accountants Touche Ross and Co., which has been discussed in detail between my officials and BNFL. While I am not in a position to verify every figure, the methodology is considered to be sound and we have no reason to believe the numbers to be inaccurate.

Nuclear Power Policy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the relationship between the energy policy review and the forthcoming 1994 review of nuclear power policy.

Mr. Eggar: The 1994 review of the future prospects for nuclear power will need to take account of any relevant conclusions reached as a result of the current coal review.

Preston Farm Industrial Estate

Mr. Devlin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions his Department has had with the Teesside development corporation about future developments at Preston Farm industrial estate, Stockton-on-Tees.

Mr. Sainsbury: None recently. However, officials of the Department of the Environment have regular meetings with the Teesside development corporation to discuss a range of issues.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will announce a decision on assistance from his Department to the proposed hydroponics plant at Preston Farm industrial estate, Stockton-on-Tees.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am not aware of any application to my Department for assistance for a hydroponics plant in the north-east region. But in any event such applications are confidential matters between applicant and the Government.

Companies House

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the potential conflict of interest concerning an official of Companies House being a non-executive director of a company subject to penalty for the late filing of accounts.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: In accordance with standard DTI procedures, when an official is offered the post as a non-executive director, the relevant line manager is informed. Guidance is given to ensure that if a conflict of interest arises with his her official duties, the individual will stand aside.

Late Filing

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many company directors and how many public limited companies of which they are directors have been given mandatory late filing penalties; how many company directors and companies have been given extensions of time for late filing; and what is the average length of time between warning letters in relation to late filing and sequential prosecution action by the Registrar of Companies *(a)* from April 1991 to March 1992 and *(b)* from April 1992 to October 1992.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Since the introduction of late filing penalties in July 1992, some 48,640 penalties have been levied on companies in Great Britain whose accounts have been filed late with Companies House. The penalties are levied on the company not on the directors. No extensions have been given for late filing: extensions can only be granted in exceptional circumstances before the period of time allowed for filing has elapsed. In the six months to November 1992, 2,003 applications were received and 559 were granted. The length of time between the issue of warning letters for late filing and subsequent prosecution depends upon the circumstances of each individual company and the available court time, but is usually about nine months.

Auditors

Mr. Butler: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the first annual report of the recognised supervisory bodies on the regulation of auditors under part II of the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have received the joint first annual report of the three institutes of chartered accountants on their activities as recognised supervisory bodies for the

regulation of company auditors, and have placed copies in the Library. I expect to receive shortly the reports of the other two recognised supervisory bodies. My Department will be discussing the contents of the reports with the bodies.

Wave Energy Review

Mr. Stern: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the report of the wave energy review will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the report of the wave energy review will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have today placed a copy of the main report of the wave energy review in the Libraries of both Houses.

The review, which has been overseen by the wave energy steering committee, which has independent members, has involved close liaison with the wave energy teams included in the review. There is generally good agreement with the wave energy teams over the methodology and values in the review.

I will now consider the report in the light of the report of the renewable energy advisory group and in the context of the Government's energy policy and the coal review and will announce decisions in due course.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Stern: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the report by the renewable energy advisory group will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the report by the renewable energy advisory group will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have today published the report by the renewable energy advisory group and placed a copy in the Libraries of both Houses.

I shall give careful consideration to the report's recommendations in the context of the Government's energy and environmental policy and the coal review and announce decisions in due course.

I am particularly grateful to the chairman and all the members of the renewable energy advisory group for their efforts in producing this report.

Iran

Mrs. Chaplin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the export licensing policy towards Iran.

Mr. Heseltine: The Government are considering carefully the criteria that should be applied in exercising its policy of rigorous scrutiny of export licence applications for Iran. While this consideration is taking place, I have decided that no licence applications will be granted for Iran until January 1993. Licences which have already been granted and trade in non-licensable goods will not be affected.

Offshore Licensing

Mrs. Chaplin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the 14th offshore licensing round.

Mr. Eggar: I am very pleased with the response to the round shown by the oil and gas industry. We received 96 applications from groups involving 62 companies for 122 blocks offered in the first two stages of the 14th round. The number of blocks applied for is the highest since the 4th round, over 20 years ago. The response shows there is still a major commitment to exploring in the United Kingdom continental shelf.

I am particularly encouraged by the sustained level of interest shown in exploring the southern basin of the North sea which historically has been associated with major gas finds.

Applications were received for a wide variety of blocks, with considerable interest shown in a number of relatively new areas such as the Rona ridge—west of Shetland—Cardigan bay and the Solway firth. As we anticipated, there will be some tough competition for the popular blocks in oil and gas areas.

The applications we have received will help maintain the momentum of activity on the UKCS into the next century in both gas and oil areas. It is confirmation that oil and gas companies are confident they will be able to secure cost reductions, which will allow them to develop the discoveries they make economically. This is increasingly important given the number of oil provinces worldwide and other sources of gas against which the UKCS must now compete.

Recycling

Mrs. Chaplin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he proposes to take on the recycling of waste.

Mr. Heseltine: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I have today published a report prepared by Environmental Resources Limited for our Departments. The report sets out a range of options for the use of economic instruments to promote the recovery of resources from waste. It identifies a number of different approaches which could be effective in promoting recycling and my Department has therefore invited comments on these from interested parties by 31 January 1993.

I have arranged for a copy of the report to be placed in the Library of the House.

Patents and Licences

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance his Department provides for patenting or licensing of any products or processes developed from work funded by the Department.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* The Department is aware of the importance of protecing intellectual property arising from work for which it provides financial assistance. Recipients of DTI funding are required to take reasonable steps to exploit the results of their projects, including making arrangements for intellectual property rights. The scope exists under the collaborative schemes to include in eligible costs reasonable patenting costs incurred by small and medium-sized companies, and in the case of SMART and SPUR, the expense of patenting in the United Kingdom and overseas can be claimed as an eligible cost.

Coal Industry

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the number and total cost of consultancies commissioned into the coal industry in the financial years 1990-91, 1991-92 and so far this year.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* The Department of Energy commissioned only one consultancy on the coal industry in 1990-91, from Alan Oakes. On grounds of commercial confidentiality, the costs of individual consultancies is not released.

In 1991-92 the Department of Energy commissioned six consultancies on coal privatisation at a cost that year of £3·3 million. A further two consultancies have been commissioned by the DTI in 1992-93 and expenditure on privatisation consultants in total was £1·2 million in the first six months of this year.

In addition, a number of consultants have been used as part of the Department's coal research and development programme, managed by the energy technology support unit at Harwell.

Coal Mines

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many representations he has received in the last three months from businesses wishing to take over existing pits in Wales; how many different firms have sent such offers; what criteria he is using to judge each request; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* My Department has received representations from four businesses interested in existing pits in Wales.

On the question of consideration of expressions of interest in closing pits, I refer to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) on 15 December, *Official Report*, columns *145-46*.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessments he has made of the social, economic and environmental costs and potential benefits of a plan for coal-fired electricity generation based on fluidised bed combustion and flue gas desulphurisation.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* My Department is aware of a number of assessments of the economic and environmental advantages of fluidised bed combustion systems for electricity generation as an alternative to conventional pulverised coal fired plant that may require flue gas desulphurisation. The Government are committed to achieving the emission reductions required by the EC large combustion plant directive.

Patents

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals the United Kingdom Patent Office has to continue to act as an international preliminary examining authority after 1 June 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* The Comptroller General of the Patent Office has discussed with other members of the European Patent Organisation's administrative council whether the office should continue to act as an international preliminary examining authority after 31 May 1993. He has also consulted the World Intellectual Property Organisation. The administrative council has concluded that the provisions of the protocol on centralisation of the European patent convention, under which this work will cease on 31 May 1993, should prevail but has commissioned a wide-ranging study of the relationships between the European Patent Office and the offices in member countries and of the needs of small and medium-sized firms.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how the principles of subsidiarity will be applied with regard to the relationship between the patent offices of member states of the EC which are contracting states of the European patent convention and the European Patent Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* The European Patent Office is not a Community body—the European patent convention is a free-standing treaty and the principles of subsidiarity do not directly affect the relationship between the patent offices of contracting states and the European Patent Office.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what fee is charged for international preliminary examinations for patents by *(a)* the European Patent Office and *(b)* the United Kingdom Patent Office; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the new protocol for centralisation, requiring United Kingdom applicants for international preliminary examinations to have these carried out at the European Patent Office on the development of innovation in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* The European Patent Office charges DM 3,000 for international preliminary examinations and the United Kingdom Patent Office charges £130. The effects of the protocol on innovation in the United Kingdom cannot be quantified with precision but do not effect the innovator's ability to seek national patents. The 1973 treaty, which provides for these examinations to be conducted by the European Patent Office after 31 May 1993, can only be amended by unanimous agreement of the 17 contracting states. The Comptroller General of the Patent Office has, however, discussed with the other members of the European Patent Organisation's admininstrative council the need to ensure that the European patent convention and its protocol on centralisation, which date from 1973, do not inhibit the process of innovation in the United Kingdom and Europe.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from, or on behalf of, patent agents in the United Kingdom with regard to the implementation of the European protocol on centralisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* None. The Comptroller General of the Patent Office has, however, had a number of discussions with representatives of the patent agent profession on this matter in the course of the last 18 months.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the proportion of the worldwide

total of international preliminary examinations under the patent co-operation treaty which are currently undertaken by the United Kingdom Patent Office.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* It is estimated that the United Kingdom Patent Office currently undertakes about 13 per cent. of the worldwide total of international preliminary examinations under the patent co-operation treaty.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what procedures are necessary to ensure that the United Kingdom Patent Office may continue to act as an international preliminary examining authority.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* Continuation of the United Kingdom Patent Office's work as an international preliminary examining authority after 31 May 1993 would require a unanimous decision to this effect of the 17 contracting states of the European Patent Organisation.

Regional Aid

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction in his Department's budget by 1995 for spending on regional financial assistance; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what were the amounts of regional financial assistance expenditure in 1979 and 1991; and if he will increase the funding in future years.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* In the financial year to the end of March 1980, £272 million was spent on regional financial assistance. Total expenditure in 1991-92 amounted to £159 million.

The allocation of funds to individual programmes is currently being considered and will be published in the trade and industry expenditure plans report in February 1993.

Pit Closures

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Coal about the release of financial information to representatives of the work force at the 10 collieries currently scheduled for closure.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 4 December 1992]:* British Coal is fully aware of the importance I attach to the statutory consultations being conducted in a genuine manner, and to the provision of information necessary for that.

Electromagnetic Compatibility

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the estimated total compliance cost to all businesses and as to *(a)* the setting up cost and *(b)* the typical cost for a small business on-going annual cost arising from the regulation sponsored by his Department giving effect to EC directive 89/336 on electromagnetic compatibility; and what is the estimated public expenditure cost of enforcing this measure annually.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* The United Kingdom regulations on electromagnetic compatibility arise from an EC treaty obligation to implement a directive. Approximately 60,000 manufacturing companies with 200 or more employees and another 9,000 each employing fewer than 200 people will be affected. It is not possible to calculate the cost for a typical small business and difficult to estimate costs to industry as a whole as companies will not all choose to comply at the same time during the transitional period running to 31 December 1995. It will, therefore, be some time before a reliable estimate of compliance costs can be made. Enforcement will be carried out from within existing resources and no significant extra cost is expected.

EC Regional Development Fund

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much European regional development fund expenditure there has been in the United Kingdom's assisted areas in each year since 1984-85 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 17 November, *Official Report*, columns *131-32*.

Disposable Nappies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to introduce specific safety regulations governing the flammability of disposable nappies.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 11 December 1992]*: These products are subject to the general safety requirement under section 10 of the Consumer Protection Act 1987.

My Department has no plans to introduce specific safety regulations on the flammability of disposable nappies.

Coal Mining

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what action he will take in order to provide new employment opportunities in areas which have lost mining jobs since 1988;

(2) what plans he has to increase employment in coal mining areas;

(3) what new investment initiatives have been proposed for revitalising areas which have previously been economically dependent on the British coal industry;

(4) what proposals he has for attracting new high technology industry to declining mining areas.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* Since 1988 there have been a number of measures to provide new employment opportunities in areas which have lost mining jobs. Those areas which are also assisted areas are, amongst other things, eligible for regional selective assistance which provides funding for firms with projects that safeguard or create employment. Within the assisted areas, English Estates has also been able to provide sites and premises for business. In addition most of the areas concerned are eligible for and benefit from support under the European structural funds objective 2 and RECHAR programmes. British Coal Enterprise has also been active in these areas and its initiatives have successfully created employment for many former British Coal employees.

More recently, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced on 13 and 19 October a

substantial package of measures to assist areas which may suffer from job losses in the mining industry. The measures include—an £85 million programme of premises/sites provision by English Estates; a £75 million package of training/counselling measures; enhanced assisted area status for Barnsley, Doncaster and Mansfield; £11 million of unallocated European structural funds; £5 million coalfield areas fund for local authority measures; the deployment of enterprise zones where appropriate; nearly £2 million for the Tyne and Wear development corporation; funding for the emerging East Midlands development organisation; the extension of regional enterprise grants for small firms; and extra help for inward investment promotion and for local regeneration agencies. In addition, British Coal will clear the sites of any closed collieries quickly and British Coal Enterprise is implementing measures to assist ex-British Coal employees. Lord Walker is acting as a co-ordinator of these measures and is advising my right hon. Friends the President of the Board of Trade and the Secretary of State for Wales. The shape and timing of these latest measures will be reconsidered in the light of the outcome of the coal review.

Nuclear Material

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to publish in the MM20 business monitor series on trade statistics details of the movement by air into and without the United Kingdom of *(a)* nuclear fuel rods and *(b)* plutonium.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* The MM20 business monitor series does not include details of mode of transport.

Oil and Gas Exploration

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received about the 14th round of offshore oil and gas production licences and its implications for wildlife areas in *(a)* Cardigan bay, *(b)* the Pembrokeshire islands, *(c)* Lundy island, *(d)* the Moray Firth and *(e)* the Wash.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* Since the announcement of the current licensing round, I have received approximately 350 letters regarding licensing in Cardigan Bay. Some 100 of these refer also to the Pembrokeshire islands and Lundy island; areas adjacent to these islands have not been offered for licensing in this round. About 30 of the letters also refer to the implications of licensing for wildlife in the Moray firth, an area which already has an established oil production industry. No other representations on licensing have been received concerning the Pembrokeshire islands, Lundy island, the Moray firth or the Wash.

Coal Prices

Mr. Churchill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade by how much the price of British coal, delivered to the power station, has increased or decreased in each of the past six years expressed as an index, taking 1985-86 as 100; and what has been the equivalent increase or decrease in the price of electricity to the domestic consumer.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 4 December 1992]:* The available information expressed in 1985 prices, is as follows:

	Average Prices of All Coal Purchased by Major Electricity Generating Companies:	*Fuel Price Index for Domestic Electricity:*
Index 1985 = 100		
1985	100	100
1986	98	99
1987	88	94
1988	89	93
1989	81	93
1990	73	94
1991	68	97

Deflated by the GDP (market prices) deflator.
Source: Based on information published in *Energy Trends* Tables 26 and 28.

The cost of fuels such as coal represents less than a third of the total price of electricity to domestic consumers, and is only one of the many factors that dictate the final price.

Telecommunications

Mr. Lewis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what advisory bodies have been established under section 54 (i) of the Telecommunications Act 1984; and if he will list their members.

Mr. Leigh: The advisory bodies established under section 54 (i) of the Telecommunications Act are: the Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for Small Businesses; the Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for Disabled and Elderly People; the English Advisory Committee on Telecommunications; the Wesh Advisory Committee on Telecommunications; the Scottish Advisory Committee on Telecommunications and the Northern Ireland Advisory Committee on Telecommunications. The membership of each committee is as follows:

Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for Small Businesses
Chairman
Mr. M. J. Ashton
Members
Miss J. R. Allan
Mrs. J. A. Barden
Mr. S. H. Bennett
Mr. R. W. Frenzel
Mr. P. A. Frymann
Mr. R. Furey
Mr. M. Jordan
Mr. S. A. Mayo
Mrs. P. G. Parker
Mrs. M. R. Seymour
Mr. M. E. G. Taylor

Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for Disabled and Elderly People
Chairman
Mr. D. Hobman CBE
Members
Mrs. S. Barrows MBE
Mr. D. R. L. Dunsmuir
Mr. M. C. Godfrey
Mr. W. Harbert OBE
Mr. D. Hyslop
Mr. C. M. Low
Mr. M. C. Martin OBE
Dr. E. C. Midwinter OBE
Mrs. S. A. Porter
Dr. E. M. Steiner

Mr. B. J. Vernon

English Advisory Committee on Telecommunications
Chairman
Mr. H. R. Hutton
Members
Ms. A. Ballard
Mrs. D. C. Banks OBE
Professor M. D. I. Chisholm
Mr. S. J. Cooper
Mrs. J. H. Fergus MBE
Mr. J. D. Green
Mr. D. O. Michel OBE
Mr. D. R. Oram
Mr. A. C. Squires

Welsh Advisory Committee on Telecommunications
Chairman
Professor M. D. Tedd
Secretary
Mr. G. MacKenzie
Members
Mr. J. Bannon
Mrs. P. Blackwell
Mr. D. R. Dutton
Mr. G. S. Hall
Mr. D. T. Jones
Mr. J. C. Maynard
Mr. L. Murphy
Professor J. J. O'Reilly
Miss G. M. Williams

Scottish Advisory Committee on Telecommunications
Chairman
Mr. W. K. Begg, OBE
Secretary
Mr. R. L. L. King
Members
Mrs. J. M. Dickson
Lady Forbes
Mr. D. A. Gardner
Mrs. C. J. Jones
Mr. P. Michie
Mr. J. Purvis, CBE
Mrs. K. Scott
Mr. J. G. Watson, MBE
Professor H. Williams
Mr. P. Wilson
Mr. E. Young

Northern Ireland Advisory Committee on Telecommunications
Chairman
Mr. J. L. C. Thompson
Secretary
Mr. R. T. Jordan, MBE
Members
Mr. F. C. Barter
Mr. W. Carruthers, OBE
Mrs. M. Jefferson, MBE
Mr. J. A. Kerr
Mrs. O. M. Marshall
Mr. J. O. McDonald, MBE
Mr. W. J. H. McPherson
Mr. G. E. Mills
Mrs. M. Noble
Mr. J. D. Thompson

Military Plants (Conversion)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to provide a substantive answer to the question of 22 May from the hon. Member for Newport, West concerning military to civil industrial conversion.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* The meeting confirmed that the conversion of military plants in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union may be seen as an end in itself, but where there are no commercial means to achieve it is not of direct interest to my Department.

Board of Trade

Mr. Pope: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the functions of the Board of Trade; who are its members; and when it last met.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* Under the Order in Council of 23 August 1786, the Board of Trade was appointed to deal with all matters relating to trade and foreign plantations. Its members are the Lord Archibisop of Canterbury, the First Lord Commissioner of the Treasury, the First Lord Commissioner of the Admiralty, Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, the Chancellor and Under Treasurer of the Exchequer, the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Paymaster General. The last meeting of the board, which was held to coincide with its bicentenary, was on 21 March 1986.

Mr. Pope: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he proposes to answer the question from the Member for Hyndburn of 18 November regarding the Board of Trade.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave today.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Quality

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many EC countries have been or are currently being prosecuted for failing to implement EC directives on water quality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My Department holds details of the number of infraction cases referred to the European Court of Justice following a reasoned opinion for the period 1983-92. This information in respect of water quality directives is as follows:

1983-87	
Belgium	titanium dioxide waste
Belgium	pollution of groundwater
Greece	pollution of groundwater
Greece	mercury and cadmium discharges
Italy	water quality for freshwater fish
Italy	pollution of groundwater
Netherlands	pollution of groundwater
1988	
France	drinking water
Germany	pollution of groundwater
Italy	water quality for freshwater fish
1989	
Belgium	drinking water
Belgium	quality of surface water for drinking, and measurement and sampling of surface water
France	quality of surface water for drinking, and measurement and sampling of surface water
Germany	quality of surface water for drinking, and measurement and sampling of surface water
Greece	quality of surface water for drinking
Italy	discharges of HCH
Italy	discharges of cadmium

Spain	pollution of groundwater
Spain	discharges of HCH
United Kingdom	drinking water

1990

Germany	drinking water
Italy	discharges of cadmium
United Kingdom	bathing water

1991
None

1992
None to date

Empty Office Buildings

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated numbers of empty office buildings in the Greater London area on 1 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Information on the number of empty office buildings in Greater London is not kept by this Department.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what part he expects electricity generated by combined cycle gas turbine stations to play in reducing United Kingdom carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000.

Mr. Maclean: Combined cycle gas turbine stations emit around half as much carbon dioxide (CO_2) as conventional coal fired plants per unit of electricity generated. The discussion document, "Climate Change: Our National Programme for CO_2 Emissions", published on 14 December, sets out a number of options for limiting CO_2 emissions. Decisions on the programme as a whole will be taken in the light of decisions taken pursuant to the coal review.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the breakdown of local authority revenue for each year from 1979-80 to 1992-93, with estimates for 1993-94, in terms of (i) Government grants, (ii) non-domestic rates and (iii) domestic rates or community charges or council tax, expressed both in pound million and as a percentage.

Mr. Robin Squire: The available information is as follows:

Local Authority Revenue Expenditure

	Revenue Expenditure	*Government Grants*		*Non-Domestic Rates*		*Domestic Rates/Community Charges*	
	£ million	*£ million*	*Per cent.*	*£ million*	*Per cent.*	*£ million*	*Per cent.*
1981-82	20,106	11,234	56	5,013	25	4,034	20
1982-83	21,952	11,705	53	5,685	26	4,548	21
1983-84	23,263	12,584	54	6,042	26	4,382	19
1984-85	24,119	13,126	54	6,361	26	4,707	20
1985-86	24,284	13,069	54	6,740	28	5,094	21
1986-87	26,630	13,402	50	7,566	28	5,912	22
1987-88	28,980	14,274	49	8,088	28	6,539	23
1988-89	31,240	14,469	46	8,819	28	7,689	25
1989-90	33,282	14,707	44	9,595	29	8,487	26
1990-91	35,893	15,004	42	10,429	29	10,109	28
1991-92	40,137	20,820	52	12,408	31	6,381	16
1992-93	42,934	23,246	54	12,306	29	7,213	17

Notes:

1. For the years 1981-82 to 1989-90, local authority expenditure is taken to be "relevant expenditure" plus expenditure on certain non-relevant items such as net expenditure on mandatory student awards. It represents spending to be financed by rate support grant, relevant specific grant, rates and balances. This measure of expenditure is net of sales, fees and charges, interest receipts etc. For the years 1990-91 to 1993-94 local authority expenditure is "revenue expenditure to compare with TSS" which is expenditure to be met from revenue support grant, specific and special grants in aggregate external finance, non-domestic rates, community charges/council tax and appropriation from reserves. In 1991-92 this also included community charge grant.
2. For the years 1981-82 to 1989-90 Government grants comprise aggregate Exchequer grant and rate rebate grants. For 1990-91 to 1992-93 Government grants included are revenue support grant, specific and special grants in aggregate external finance, community charge grant (1991-92), community charge benefit grant and transitional relief-community charge reduction scheme grant.
3. For the years 1981-82 to 1989-90, this represents non-domestic rate yields net of rate relief. For the years 1990-91 to 1993-94 this represents the distributable amount from the non-domestic rates pool.
4. Net of domestic rate rebates for the years 1981-82 to 1989-90. Net of community charge benefit grant and transitional relief/community charge reduction scheme grant for the years 1990-91 to 1992-93.
5. The information is not available for years prior to 1981/82.
6. The column percentages do not add to 100 per cent. because of withdrawals from or additions to reserves.

For 1993-94, total standard spending—excluding care in the community—is £41·168 billion of which, it is estimated, £23·061 billion—or 56 per cent.—will be met by revenue support grant, specific and special grants in aggregate external finance, council tax benefit grant and the council tax transitional reduction scheme grant, £11·559 billion—or 28 per cent.—will be met by the distributable amount from the non domestic rates pool and £6·541 billion—or 16 per cent.—will be met by council

tax net of estimated council tax benefit grant and council tax transitional reduction scheme grant.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by grade and location, the number of staff employed by his Department throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Howard: Following is the information for non-industrial staff:

Economic region	*Number*
Eastern	
HEO and equivalent	1
EO and equivalent	2
AO and equivalent	2
AA and equivalent	1
TOTAL	6
East Midlands	
Grade 4	1
Grade 6	2
Grade 7	12
SEO and equivalent	11
HEO and equivalent	16
EO and equivalent	23
AO and equivalent	32
AA and equivalent	24
TOTAL	121
London	
Grade 1	1
Grade 2	7
Grade 3	26
Grade 4	6
Grade 5	115
Grade 6	249
Grade 7	590
SEO and equivalent	487
HEO and equivalent	697
EO and equivalent	803
AO and equivalent	962
AA and equivalent	496
Special Grades	7
TOTAL	4,446
North West	
Grade 3	2
Grade 5	5
Grade 6	4
Grade 7	45
SEO and equivalent	56
HEO and equivalent	68
EO and equivalent	100
AO and equivalent	151
AA and equivalent	78
Special Grades	1
TOTAL	510
Northern	
Grade 3	1
Grade 5	2
Grade 6	1
Grade 7	14
SEO and equivalent	17
HEO and equivalent	18
EO and equivalent	26
AO and equivalent	32
AA and equivalent	22
TOTAL	133
Scotland	
Grade 6	2
Grade 7	6
SEO and equivalent	8
HEO and equivalent	11
EO and equivalent	14
AO and equivalent	25
AA and equivalent	7
TOTAL	73
South East	
Grade 3	1
Grade 5	3
Grade 6	6
Grade 7	26
SEO and equivalent	39
HEO and equivalent	34
EO and equivalent	60
AO and equivalent	124
AA and equivalent	87
TOTAL	380
South West	
Grade 3	2
Grade 4	2
Grade 5	13
Grade 6	22
Grade 7	49
SEO and equivalent	60
HEO and equivalent	110
EO and equivalent	165
AO and equivalent	309
AA and equivalent	181
Special Grades	1
TOTAL	914
Wales	
Grade 6	10
Grade 7	5
SEO and equivalent	6
HEO and equivalent	3
EO and equivalent	3
AO and equivalent	3
AA and equivalent	4
TOTAL	34
West Midlands	
Grade 3	1
Grade 5	3
Grade 6	1
Grade 7	21
SEO and equivalent	21
HEO and equivalent	27
EO and equivalent	38
AO and equivalent	58
AA and equivalent	33
TOTAL	203
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Grade 3	1
Grade 5	3
Grade 6	3
Grade 7	19
SEO and equivalent	41
HEO and equivalent	29
EO and equivalent	40
AO and equivalent	52
AA and equivalent	41
TOTAL	229
GRAND TOTAL	7,049

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by grade and location the number of staff employed in his Department's headquarters buildings in London.

Mr. Howard: Following is the information for non-industrial staff based in Marsham street, Romney house, St. Christopher house and Lambeth Bridge house:

	Number
Grade 1	1
Grade 2	7
Grade 3	22
Grade 4	5
Grade 5	95
Grade 6	73
Grade 7	371
SEO and equivalent	309
HEO and equivalent	476
EO and equivalent	579
AO and equivalent	675
AA and equivalent	379
Special grades	3
Grand Total	2,995

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by grade, the number of staff employed by his Department.

Mr. Howard: Following is the information:

	Number
Grade 1 staff	1
Grade 2 staff	7
Grade 3 staff	34
Grade 4 staff	9
Grade 5 staff	145
Grade 6 staff	300
Grade 7 staff	788
SEO and equivalent	748
HEO and equivalent	1,016
EO and equivalent	1,276
AO and equivalent	1,751
AA and equivalent	975
Special grades	9
Grand Total	7,059

Pilot Plant Emissions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to ask Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to make any additions to its guidance relating to pilot plant emissions and novel processes following the appeal by ICI against the setting of quantitative release limits for its HFC32 experimental production unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The appeal by ICI has yet to be determined by the Secretary of State, and therefore no further advice can be given in relation to this appeal at this stage.

However, as a general principle, it is reasonable to set quantitative limits for all prescribed processes, after due consideration of all credible potential releases. If, due to the novel nature of a process, greater awareness of release limits improves with operation, then the authorisation may be amended to reflect this. In line with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's precautionary approach to pollution control, quantitative release limits are required in order to demonstrate compliance, through monitoring, with the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, particularly the requirement to apply best available techniques not entailing excessive cost/best practical environmental options.

Vehicle Noise

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional resources will be granted to local authorities and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency towards the implementation of the extended noise nuisance abatement powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Maclean: In June, my Department consulted on proposals to extend the statutory abatement procedures of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to include noise in the street. The responses to this consultation are currently being considered. If new legislation is introduced, potential savings and additional costs will be taken into account in revenue support grant settlements for the appropriate financial year.

Local Authorities

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each English and Welsh local authority *(a)* its population, *(b)* its number of employees, *(c)* the number of employees per thousand population and *(d)* the political party in control.

Mr. Robin Squire: I have today placed the information requested about local authority employees, for England, in the Library of the House. The information shows staff numbers for all general services taken from the joint staffing watch.

Staffing levels of local authorities in Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Aerials and Antennae

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what planning guidance he has issued in relation to the control of aerials and antennae on high grounds.

Mr. Baldry: We will publish a revised planning policy guidance note 8 "Telecommunications" on Monday 21 December 1992.

Recycling

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will exempt local authority expenditure on recycling from the financial costs mechanism of the standard spending assessment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: Standard spending assessments reflect the revenue costs of providing a standard level of service across the full range of local authority services, including recycling. Under the provisional capping criteria, which my right hon. and learned Friend announced in his statement on 26 November, no local authority expenditure would be outside the capping regime.

Sellafield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to which local authorities his Department has circulated the British Nuclear Fuels' application for authorisation to operate the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield, under section 8(4A) of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960; and what criteria were used by his Department to decide in which local authorities radioactive disposal from THORP is likely to take place.

Mr. Maclean: The four applications received from BNFL for authorisation under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960—RSA 60—to dispose of radioactive waste from Sellafield, including proposed discharges from THORP plant were sent to Cumbria county council and Copeland district council. These local authorities were identified because, as required by section 8(4) of RSA 60, they are the ones in whose areas the Sellafield discharge points are located.

However, on 16 November 1992, the chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution acting jointly with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food initiated wide-ranging formal public consultations involving a large number of local authorities. This consultation is about the applications themselves, additional information supplied by BNFL, draft authorisations and related explanatory memorandums.

Council Tax

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the total cost to public funds of *(a)* introducing and *(b)* administering the council tax.

Mr. Robin Squire: The cost to local authorities in England of preparing for the council tax is estimated to be £156·1 million.

The local authority associations have estimated that the cost of collecting the council tax in 1993-94 will be 40 per cent. lower than the cost of collecting the community charge, with further reductions in later years when transitional problems have been dealt with.

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps a householder may take if he or she feels that a mistake has been made in the boundary of his or her property in the council tax assessment.

Mr. Robin Squire: Anyone who wishes to correct a factual error in a draft valuation list may now approach his or her listing officer at the local office of the Valuation Office agency. Where the listing officer agrees, such an error will be amended before the final list is compiled on 1 April 1993. If the listing officer does not agree, however, a householder will between 1 April and 30 November 1993 be able to lodge a formal proposal to alter the compiled list.

Primates

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 16 November, *Official Report*, column *48*, what further investigations the Government have made into the evidence of the import of wild primates from Kenya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We are not aware of any evidence that the export of primates from Kenya poses a threat to the survival of wild populations. Each application to import primates into this country is examined by our scientific advisers, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, and allowed only if they are satisfied that there will be no harm to the species.

Homelessness

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many emergency cold weather hostels there are in the Greater London area; and if he will list their locations.

Mr. Baldry: To provide immediate shelter for people who would otherwise sleep rough over the winter, my Department is funding 400 bedspaces in nine temporary shelters in central London. The shelters will be open between 1 December 1992 and 31 March 1993. In addition, we are planning to provide up to 300 further places across London, which can be opened at short notice in the event of exceptionally severe weather. The nine winter shelters being funded by my Department are:

Managing agency	*Address*
London borough of Camden	25 Parker street, WC2
London borough of Lambeth	Cynthia Moseley centre, Oval way, SE11
Crisis	147 Tooley street, SE1
Single Homeless Project	1 John street, WC1
St. Mungo's	10-11 Bulstrode place, W1
Centrepoint	Soho Women's hospital, Soho square, WC2
Salvation Army	1 St. Ann's street, SW1
Salvation Army	23-27 Tudor street, EC4
English Churches Housing Group	156 St. John street, EC1

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what have been the extra resources given by his Department for homeless people living outside the Greater London area between 1 January and 1 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: In the current financial year the Department is paying £6·1 million in grants under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 to nearly 150 voluntary organisations throughout England which provide direct practical help to people who are homeless or at risk of becoming so.

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the numbers sleeping rough in London at the most recent convenient date and the number of empty hostel places as at the same date.

Mr. Baldry: The 1991 census found that on the night of 21 and 22 April, there were 1,275 people sleeping rough in London. A count by voluntary sector organisations in central London on 5 November 1992 found around 420 people sleeping rough—less than half the number who were estimated to have been sleeping on the streets of central London before my Department's rough sleepers initiative began in 1990-91. Information about the number of empty hostel places available at any one time is not held centrally.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homeless households are currently living in temporary accommodation in England.

Mr. Baldry: The latest available estimate for the number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation in England relates to 30 September and appears in table 4(d) of "Households found accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England: Statistics for the third quarter 1992", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance his Department is providing to schemes linking provision of accommodation for homeless young people to training.

Mr. Baldry: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on Tuesday 15 December, *Official Report*, columns *94-95*.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has that homeless families place themselves in bed-and-breakfast or temporary accommodation; and if he will provide an estimate of the total number of self-placed families living in such accommodation in each local authority area.

Mr. Baldry: The Department has no information about this.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make extra resources available to assist the homeless to have clean and dry accommodation over the Christmas period.

Mr. Baldry: In addition to the 2,550 places in various types of accommodation so far provided in central London under the rough sleepers initiative, we are providing a further 400 bed spaces in temporary shelters this winter. The shelters will be open in central London from 1 December 1992 to 31 March 1993. We are also planning to provide up to 300 further places across London, that can be opened at short notice in the event of particularly severe weather.

Nationally, the Government are providing over £6 million in grants this year to voluntary organisations throughout England which give direct practical help to homeless people. The primary responsibility for help to people sleeping rough in severe weather rests with local authorities. The local authority associations have accepted this responsibility through their support for the winter watch guidelines published by Crisis and Shelter.

Private Sector Housing

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of private sector housing starts in *(a)* the west midlands and *(b)* Walsall for 1991-92.

Mr. Baldry: It is estimated that private enterprise housebuilding starts amounted to 13,100 dwellings, and housing association starts to 2,100 dwellings, in the west midlands standard statistical region during the financial year 1991-92. The corresponding figures reported for the Walsall local authority area were 503 and 159 dwellings.

Stockport Metropolitan Borough

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what decisions he has taken in respect of the future local government boundary of Stockport metropolitan borough; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Cheshire and Greater Manchester (County and District Boundaries) (No. 2) Order 1992 was made on 26 August 1992, giving effect to the Secretary of State's decision on changes to the City of Manchester and Stockport local government boundary from 1 April 1993.

A draft order was issued on 4 December 1992 showing the Secretary of State's decision on Stockport's boundaries with Tameside, High Peak in Derbyshire and Macclesfield in Cheshire.

I am sending the details of both these sets of changes to my hon. Friend.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on the measures which he is taking to implement compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Robin Squire: Regulations and guidance to be issued under section 9 of the Local Government Act 1992 are expected to be in place early in the new year. These regulations and guidance will clarify the statutory framework for services currently subject to compulsory competitive tendering.

On 10 November, *Official Report*, columns *743-45*, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced his decisions following consultation on proposals to extend competition to local authorities' professional services. A preliminary meeting about the detailed implementation of these decisions has been held with the local authority associations, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Audit Commission, the Accounts Commission, and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage contract saving his Department uses for assessing savings as a result of council compulsory competitive tendering on contracts valued at above £100,000 and below £500,000.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Secretary of State does not assess the savings on individual local authority contracts. Research carried out by the Institute of Local Government Studies for the Department of the Environment indicated that following competition there was an overall reduction of about 6 to 7 per cent. in the cost of work subject to compulsory competitive tendering under the Local Government Act 1988, whether the service was carried out in-house or by a private contractor.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the current level for the de minimis level would be for compulsory competitive tendering if it had been upgraded in line with the retail prices index.

Mr. Robin Squire: The amount is £132,041.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many contracts valued at between £100,000 and £500,000 have been put out to tender by councils under compulsory competitive tendering in each year since 1988.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to adjust the de minimis level to take account of inflation since 1988 for local authority compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Robin Squire: There are no proposals to adjust the de minimis level, although it is kept under review.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average cost of putting a contract out to tender for councils under compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Robin Squire: Research carried out by the Institute of Local Government Studies for the Department of the Environment indicated that the average cost of preparing for competition was about 2·5 per cent. of the total contract value.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, column *301*, if he will *(a)* make a statement on decisions taken at the meeting of the International Radioactive Waste Department Advisory Committee in Vienna from 27 to 29 October and *(b)* arrange for a copy of the documentation submitted by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Maclean: The answer is as follows:

(a) No decisions were taken at the meeting of the International Radioactive Waste Advisory Committee subgroup in Vienna, 27 to 29 October 1992, since it was convened solely as a discussion forum to help develop an international consensus on principles and criteria for disposal of solid radioactive waste, with particular reference to safety indicators for disposal in geological formations. A copy of the minutes of the meeting, prepared by International Atomic Energy Agency staff, has been placed in the Library.

(b) HMIP did not submit documentation to this meeting, but the HMIP representative participated fully in the discussions.

Roads (Public Paths)

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to clarify the requirement for vehicular use in respect of the definition of roads used as a public path in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Mr. Maclean: The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 sought to dispel any confusion surrounding roads used as public paths—RUPPs—by requiring highway authorities to acknowledge the rights found to exist. Where vehicular rights exist, RUPPs must be reclassified as byways open to all traffic—BOATs—which are defined as routes over which the public have a right of way for vehicular traffic, but which are used mainly by walkers and riders.

I am aware of a growing concern about the reclassification procedure. A working party of the rights of way review committee has been considering a number of relevant issues including the definition of a BOAT. The working party has recently drawn up recommendations which we will be considering carefully.

Pollution (Consultations)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what targets have been set for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to reply to inquiries made to the inspectorate on matters subject to a public consultation period.

Mr. Maclean: Members of the public may make representations to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution about applications for authorisation and other legislation under integrated pollution control. It is Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's practice to acknowledge such representations at the earliest opportunity.

British Waterways

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy for moneys raised from the sale of British Waterways properties to be spent on improvements to the waterway system.

Mr. Maclean: Moneys raised from the sale of British Waterways' properties are reinvested for the benefit of the waterways.

Planning Guidance (South-east England)

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what appraisal has been undertaken of the environmental impact of his proposals to base regional planning guidance in the south-east on a requirement for 855,000 houses to be built between 1991 and 2006; if he will publish it; and what alternative levels of development have been considered.

Mr. Baldry: The proposals referred to are those contained in my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State's letter of 9 July 1992 to the chairman of the London and South East Regional Planning Conference—SERPLAN—inviting SERPLAN to put forward proposals for the distribution of new housing provision in the south-east. The letter which was sent to my hon. Friend at the time asked SERPLAN to have regard to various criteria including environmental constraints in different parts of the region, the protection of green belts, the avoidance of development pressure on areas of outstanding natural beauty and the need to optimise the use of urban land. The suggested provision of 855,000 net additional dwellings over the period 1991 to 2006 was arrived at after considering a wide range of views put to my Department, including suggestions for higher and lower provision.

SERPLAN's views on the housing distribution, together with those of others will be taken into account in deciding the content of new draft regional planning guidance for the south-east which will be published shortly for consultation.

Development Plans

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the extent to which the establishment of an urban regeneration agency will result in a reduction in the proportion of housing development taking place outside Greater London and other urban areas.

Mr. Robin Squire: When the URA comes into being it will bring vacant, derelict and under-used land back into

use in partnership with the private sector and local authorities. The agency will focus on urban land, but it is not possible to estimate the impact of this on the amount of development, including housing, on land outside urban areas. All schemes that the agency is able to bring forward on vacant and derelict land will, however, relieve pressure on other sites, many of which might otherwise be in rural areas.

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what importance will be given to development plans in terms of the guidance provided in paragraph 5 of planning policy guidance note 1.

Mr. Baldry: Paragraph 5 of PPG1 explains that applications for development proposals should be allowed, having regard to the development plan and all material considerations, unless the proposed development would cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance. Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 requires planning decisions to be determined in accordance with the plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It follows that the contents of a development plan are of pivotal importance in deciding planning applications, as is explained in more detail between paragraphs 25 and 31 of that guidance.

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authority development plans placed on deposit since 10 February to which his Department has objected on the ground of an omission of environmental policies contained in any of the new or revised planning policy guidance notes issued in 1992.

Mr. Baldry: Of the 59 development plans[1] placed on deposit on or after 10 February 1992, my Department has made 260 objections on environmental grounds to the following 55:

Babergh
Barking and Dagenham Unitary Development Plan (UDP)
Basingstoke and Deane Borough
Berkshire Structure Plan
Bexley UDP
Bolton UDP
Braintree
Brent UDP
Brentwood
Bridgnorth
Broxbourne
Broxtowe
Calderdale UDP
Cambridge City
Chorley
Corby
Cumbria and Lake District Structure Plan
Erewash
Forest Heath
Gosport Borough
Hartlepool
Hackney UDP
Hammersmith and Fulham UDP
Harrow UDP
Hereford and Worcester Minerals
Kensington and Chelsea UDP
Leicester City
Leicestershire Minerals Plan
Leicestershire Structure Plan Replacement
Manchester UDP
Merton UDP
Newcastle-under-Lyme
North Kesteven Local Plan
North Yorkshire Structure Plan (Alteration)
Peak Park Structure Plan
Portsmouth City
Reading Borough
Richmond UDP
Rossendale
St. Edmundsbury
Salford UDP
Sandwell UDP
South Kesteven
South Shropshire
Surrey Structure Plan Replacement 1992
Tamworth
Test Valley
Tower Hamlets UDP
Tunbridge Wells Borough
Uttlesford
Waltham Forest UDP
Wandsworth UDP
Warwick
Wychavon
Wycombe

[1] Local plans unless otherwise specified.

Environmental considerations should permeate the policies of the development plan as a whole, which should be as concise as is consistent with providing the framework for development. Authorities need to apply national policy guidance in the light of local circumstances; not all such guidance will be relevant to every plan. The departmental objections on environmental grounds related to policies not conforming with national policy guidance. Examples are inconsistency with national policies on the green belt, nature conservation, countryside and the rural economy, and omission of policies for waste disposal, as well as objections to policies considered too restrictive, too vague, or not relating to land use.

Asylum

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional resources will be available for local authorities for the settlement of asylum seekers and refugees.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave yesterday to the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) at column *318*.

Urban Programme

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources have been received by urban programme authorities in *(a)* the first round and *(b)* the second round of city challenge.

Mr. Robin Squire: Sums of £82·5 million and £150 million will be available for the first round and second round city challenge winners respectively each year for five years.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to consider the action plans of each of the city challenge departments.

Mr. Robin Squire: Round II city challenge partnerships are required to submit their action plans to the Department by 31 December. The plans will be assessed against published guidance and decisions will be announced in February.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment his Department has made of the loss of training places which will result from the reduction in the urban programme.

Mr. Robin Squire: The urban programme will support an estimated 74,097 training places in 1992-93. Because of the increase in total resources available for the urban programme and city challenge, from £319 million in 1992-93 to £408 million in 1993-94, I would expect to see a corresponding rise in the number of training places.
Source (training places): UP Submissions 1992-93.

PSA, Wick

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes following the investigation of management practice at the Property Services Agency office, Wick.

Mr. Redwood: The investigation has confirmed that some irregularities have been committed by an officer in the Wick office and appropriate disciplinary action is being considered.

Sizewell B

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response Her Majesty's Government have received from the European Commission to the submission on Sizewell B made on 13 May.

Mr. Maclean: The favourable opinion of the European Commission was published in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities on 26 November 1992, reference number L344/40. A copy is available in the Library of the House.

Fire Advisory Panel

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to review the membership of the Fire Advisory Panel in order to include greater representation from fire brigade officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Fire Advisory Panel members who have fire service experience provide valuable input to the discussions, but I see no need to add more fire brigade officers to the panel.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the criteria used to appoint members of the Fire Advisory Panel.

Mr. Baldry: Members of the Fire Advisory Panel are chosen for their expertise in areas relevant to the scope of those aspects of fire safety most closely concerning the building regulations.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the current members of the Fire Advisory Panel and indicate whether each member has served or currently serves as a member or officer of the Society of Fire Safety Engineers, or has had or currently has experience as a professional firefighter.

Mr. Baldry: The current members of the Fire Advisory Panel are:

Dr. E. Marchant, Mr. R. Read, Mr. S. Ham, Mr. L. Davies, Mr. A. Morris, Dr. P. Warren, Mr. T. Ashton, Mr. D. Wright, Mr. P. Dalloway, Mr. F. Hoehnke, Mr. D. O'Brien, Dr. S. Melinek, Miss N. Bovill, Mr. A. Porter, Mr. T. Shields, Mr. W. Malhotra, Mr. A. Ferguson *(chairman)*, Mr. I. Macpherson, Mr. A. Edwards, Dr. J. Denney, Mr. L. Turner, Dr. G. Cooke, Dr. P. Beaver, Mr. R. Graham, Mr. D. Stewart, Dr. A. Macpherson, Mrs. B. Menzies.

Two of these members, Mr. Wright and Mr. Graham, have professional firefighting experience. I understand that the Society of Fire Safety Engineers amalgamated with the Society of Fire Protection Engineers to form the Institute of Fire Safety—IFS. The Department has not asked members whether they are affiliated to the IFS, but I understand that nine of them are.

Housing Act 1985 (Grants)

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of the voluntary organisations that have received grants under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 in the past three years and the nature of projects for which the grants have been specifically allocated.

Mr. Baldry: I have today placed in the Library information about the nationwide programme of grants to homelessness voluntary organisations in respect of the current financial year and the two previous financial years.

Riverbus

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the funding of Riverbus by the London Docklands development corporation.

Mr. Baldry: The London Docklands development corporation has made a contribution of £83,000 towards the funding of Riverbus to help the service to continue operating in the short term.

Southern Water

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will prosecute Southern Water following the contamination of water supplies in southern Hampshire by the crypto-sporidium organism.

Mr. Maclean: The drinking water inspectorate is investigating the circumstances of this case and will advise my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on what action, if any, should be taken.

Forest Strategies

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will issue guidance on the preparation of forest strategies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I am pleased to be able to announce today the issue of a new circular, jointly with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales which provides guidance to relevant local authorities on the drawing up of forestry strategies for their areas. The issue of the circular follows up a consultation exercise held earlier in the year, announced as part of the action for the countryside initiative.

The main thrust of forest policy has changed over recent years. Increasingly new forests are designed with multiple objectives in mind. The value of forests for landscape, recreation and wildlife, as well as a general environmental resource, is now seen by the Government as being equally important as timber production. Accordingly, it is increasingly important that new forests are located in the right places. Indicative forestry strategies

will provide a means of identifying preferred locations for new woodlands as well as areas where such expansion may be inappropriate, because of environmental or other reasons.

I am arranging for copies of the circular to be placed in the Library of the House.

Environment Council

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Environment Council on 15 and 16 December.

Mr. Howard: I chaired the Environment Council which met in Brussels on 15 and 16 December. My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside represented the United Kingdom. Many of the United Kingdom's presidency objectives were achieved.

The Council agreed a regulation on ozone-depleting substances, accelerating the schedule for phasing out their production and consumption within the Community. Halons are to be phased out by the end of 1993, chlorofluorocarbons and carbon tetracholoride by the end of 1994, with a cut of 85 per cent. by the end of 1993, and 1,1,1-trichloroethane by the end of 1995, with a cut of 50 per cent. by the end of 1993. The Council also looked forward to early proposals from the Commission for ratification by the Community and its member states for the Copenhagen amendment to the Montreal protocol, and for the control of hydrochlorofluorocarbons, HBFCs and methyl bromide.

The Council adopted a common position on a new directive to apply stringent standards on exhaust pollutants and evaporative emission controls from light-duty vehicles. The same technical solutions developed for passenger cars will be applied to all passenger vehicles, vans and light goods vehicles below 3·5 tonnes. The standards will come into force on 1 October 1993 for new types, and 1 October 1994 for all vehicles entering into service.

The Council agreed a resolution setting out its response to the Commission's fifth environmental action programme, "Towards Sustainability". The programme maps out a broad strategy for the Community's environmental policy until the end of the century. The Council noted that the programme constitutes a good basis for the implementation in the Community of "Agenda 21" and that Community environmental policy will be guided by the principle of subsidiarity in the light of decisions reached at the Edinburgh European Council. The Council recognised inter alia the importance of the integration of environmental concerns into other policy areas; the use of new approaches such as economic instruments and voluntary schemes such as eco-labelling and eco-auditing; the need to take account of the costs and benefits of action or lack of action; the need to improve the implementation and enforcement of Community legislation; and the need to keep the implementation of the programme under regular review.

The Council reached agreement on a decision on ratification by the Community and its member states of the United Nations Environment Programme's Basel convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal. The Council will decide on the date of ratification after the adoption of the waste shipments regulation. The date of ratification will, if at all possible, be no later than three months prior to the second meeting of the parties to the convention which is likely to be in February/March 1994, so that the Community and its member states can become full parties to the convention in time for that meeting.

The Council reached political agreement, subject to the opinion of the European Parliament and a general reserve by one member state, on a regulation introducing an eco-management and audit scheme. The aim of the scheme, which is a voluntary one, is to encourage effective environmental management of industrial sites and regular public reporting of environmental impacts. The Government believe that the scheme will provide the incentive for industry to compete in delivering substantial environmental improvement.

The Council held a useful discussion of the progress that has been made on the various elements of the Community's climate change strategy, and on the framework convention on climate change. There was general agreement that the Community and its member states should aim to ratify the convention by the end of 1993 at the very latest. There was also agreement that the council should reach agreement on the proposal for a monitoring mechanism as soon as possible, and that work should continue on the carbon/energy tax proposal. This work will be carried forward under the Danish presidency.

The Council held a useful first discussion on the question of ensuring the effective implementation and enforcement of Community environmental legislation, based on a report from the Commission on the current position in member states. The Commission undertook to produce these reports on a regular basis, and the Council agreed to discuss the subject annually in the future. A number of proposals were made for improving the collaboration between the Commission and the member states on this question, and the Council welcomed in particular the successful establishment of the network of environment enforcement authorities following its first meeting at Chester in November.

The Council considered for the first time the Commission's proposal for a directive on packaging and packaging waste and invited the Committee of Permanent Representatives—COREPER—to continue their work on this issue. The directive is designed to prevent distortions to the single market in this area while ensuring a high level of environmental protection.

The Council noted the good progress which had been made on the Commission's proposal for a revision of controls on the wildlife trade—the CITES regulation—and invited COREPER to take the discussion forward.

The Council noted the decisions of the Edinburgh Council on the locations of various European bodies. They reaffirmed the importance of reaching a speedy decision on the site of the European Environment Agency. Meanwhile, there was general agreement with the Commission's plans for entering preparatory work for the agency.

The Council formally adopted a directive on procedures for harmonizing the programmes for the reduction and eventual elimination of pollution caused by waste from the titanium dioxide industry.

The Commission announced proposals for a formal European launch of the eco-labelling scheme in June.

Housing

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce the Housing Corporation's approved development programme, local authorities' housing investment programme allocations, the distribution of resources for estate action and the details of the housing revenue account subsidy determinations.

Sir George Young: I am today announcing a number of decisions about the provision of resources for housing in 1993-94.

Today, I am informing local housing authorities of their housing investment programme—HIP—allocations for 1993-94, some £1·9 billion in total.

These HIP allocations will support the investment programmes of local authorities which, as we have already announced, will receive a major boost for the remainder of 1992-93 and in 1993-94 and later years, as a result of the Government's decision to allow local authorities to spend virtually all of the capital receipts which they receive in the period from 13 November 1992 to 31 December 1993. Some £1 billion of additional housing capital expenditure should take place over the period 1992-93 to 1994-95 as a result of this change, which is being supported by the new capital partnership programme announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Of the HIP allocations that I am today announcing, some £1,380 million are general purpose allocations, or housing "annual capital guidelines". In July, I confirmed to local authorities that 40 per cent. of these would be distributed on the basis of a statistical assessment of local housing needs, leaving 60 per cent. to be allocated on a discretionary basis in relation to published criteria. The primary criterion has been the efficiency and effectiveness of local authorities in making use of capital resources to meet housing needs, and discretion has also been exercised significantly in relation to needs and other factors not adequately reflected in the statistical assessment. My regional offices have carefully considered the strategy statements submitted by each local housing authority, and their bids, and Ministers have reached their decisions on the allocations in the light of the advice provided by regional controllers.

The picture emerging from this process demonstrates very clearly the success of the new developments in the Government's housing policies, introduced over the past two years. The performance of local authorities across the country has improved substantially, both in their role as landlords of nearly 4 million council houses, and in the encouraging development of the enabling role of authorities. This has been accompanied by substantial changes in their perception of the broad and vital role in encouraging the private sector. Welcome new efforts have also been made to produce housing strategies and plans which are more accessible and to involve housing interests, tenants and residents in their preparation. In addition, the measures that we have taken this year to draw together the local authority HIP process, with the approved development programme—ADP—process of the Housing Corporation has got off to a good start. This has assisted in establishing coherent local housing strategies, and in demonstrating the considerable scope for effective co-ordination of the very large sums which Government are investing in local housing needs, through the programmes of local authorities and housing associations.

Arising from the assessments of performance, we have again been able to direct resources to a greater degree to local authorities who are best able to make use of them, while withholding resources to some degree from authorities where significant improvements still need to be made. I am glad to be able to publish today the names of the authorities who are the best performers in each region under the HIP process. All other authorities will have the assessment of their performance and proposals conveyed to them, partly in letters which are being sent out today from the Department's regional offices, and more fully in the discussions which will continue to take place in the continuous cycle of the HIP process. I am glad that many of the local authorities who were identified as the worst performers last year have made significant improvements in their performance and proposals, and I hope that it is encouraging to them that these improvements can be recognised through the allocations that I am announcing today. It is essential that, even where improvements are being made, better performance is sustained, and that proposals for greater progress are delivered. We shall return to this in future HIP rounds. Those authorities who are average performers should also look to do better, so that overall the standards of local authorities as landlords and enablers will continue to rise.

A further £370 million has been allocated for private sector renewal and housing defects, in the form of "specified capital grant", to assist councils with their expenditure in these areas. Taking account of local authorities' greater access to usable capital receipts, we propose to reduce the rate of Exchequer contribution from 75 to 60 per cent., so that the above allocations will support a higher total expenditure on private sector renewal and housing defects nationally than in the current year. The Department is consulting authorities on this proposed change. As with the annual capital guideline allocations, 40 per cent. of these resources have been distributed on a statistical assessment of local needs and 60 per cent. on a discretionary basis.

I am depositing tables in the Library of the House showing the 1992-93 allocation to each authority of the annual capital guideline and of specified capital grant. Together, these comprise the HIP allocations. I am also depositing a list of the names of authorities in each region who have been assessed as the best performers.

We have conducted a consultation exercise, over the last few months, into the future development of the HIP process. I am grateful for the many responses to this exercise on a range of issues relating to the strategies and programmes of local housing authorities. I shall be making an announcement early in the new year on our conclusions to this exercise, which will be followed by proposed working arrangements to ensure the timely launch of the HIP round for 1993.

The estate action budget for 1993-94 will be £356 million. Of this, some £113 million will be available for new schemes, the remainder being for schemes already under way. Local authorities are today being notified of the outcome of their bids for resources for new schemes next year, as well as of the resources being provided for continuing schemes. The tables in the Library show the latest position on the distribution of these resources between authorities.

The number of new schemes in next year's programme is at present 166. I am placing a list of these in the Library. Final approval will depend on confirmation of the extent to which authorities are able to contribute to overall scheme costs by using capital receipts freed-up as a result of the Secretary of State's announcement on the capital partnership programme. So far, it has been possible to increase the number of new schemes in the programme by almost 20 per cent. as a result of the capital partnership initiative.

Turning to the revenue expenditure of local housing authorities, I have today made the housing revenue account subsidy determination for 1993-94. I am placing copies of the determinations in the Library.

On subsidy allowances for management and maintenance, I confirm the proposals to increase allowances by 3·75 per cent.—1 per cent. in real terms—overall and to continue to distribute the increase through a system of targeted allowances reflecting authorities' relative need to spend.

For rent guidelines, I am confirming the proposal for an average increase in guidelines of 7·75 per cent.—5 per cent. in real terms. This will result in an average increase in guideline rents of £2·12 per week over those which apply this year, with a range of between £1·50 and £3 for individual councils, bringing the national average guideline rent to £29·40. Responsibility for setting actual rents, however, remains with individual local authorities. Housing benefit will normally meet the whole of any rent increase for the 70 per cent. of tenants receiving it.

We have already announced that £597 million more than originally planned will be made available to the Housing Corporation this year to boost the housing market. This has increased the estimated output from the corporation's approved development programme this year from 47,000 completions to 65,000 completions. The implementation of this programme is proceeding satisfactorily and we are confident that the resources will be spent in full. Over the next three years, the ADP is expected to provide a further 154,000 homes for rent or shared-ownership. Lower interest rates and competitive prices, as well as the increased contribution which we hope to obtain from the private sector, should enable us to maintain the programme at a lower cost to the taxpayer than previously projected.

In view of the importance of housing association rehabilitation projects to inner city regeneration and as a contribution to making the best use of existing stock, I have asked that the corporation should aim to maintain the proportion of such projects at 18 per cent. of new approvals for rent next year, pending completion of the Department's research into this subject.

Decisions on ADP allocations and local authority HIP allocations are now taken within a co-ordinated framework. Local authorities, the Housing Corporation and local housing associations have co-operated closely in preparing local programmes as part of a single housing strategy, and we have been able to consider the two programmes in parallel in taking decisions about the distribution of HIP resources. The tables in the Library also show indicative new ADP allocations for each local authority area for schemes to be approved in 1993-94, which are used for planning purposes, together with the full-life value of housing association schemes under way at 1 April 1993. Final ADP allocations will be announced in February next year. In future, the two processes will run to a common timetable.

These various allocations, combined with the measures on the use of capital receipts, continue the Government's commitment to social housing investment within a coherent framework involving local authorities, housing associations and the private sector. They also sustain the intention of helping the most neglected council estates. Local authorities should continue the encouraging improvements that they have made over the past year in response to our policies and, in particular, to improve further the standards of their management and the efforts that they make to draw the resources of the private sector into meeting housing needs.

Housing Resources Announcement—17 December 1992

List of those local housing authorities in each region of the Department of the Environment assessed as the best within the HIP process.

Northern
- Blyth
- Derwentside
- Hartlepool
- Langbaurgh-on-Tees
- Newcastle upon Tyne

Yorkshire and Humberside
- Kingston upon Hull
- York

East Midlands
- Derby
- Newark and Sherwood

South East
- Brighton
- Eastbourne
- New Forest
- Portsmouth
- Southampton

South West
- Bath
- Mendip
- Taunton Deane

West Midlands
- Birmingham
- The Wrekin

Eastern
- Cambridge
- Chelmsford
- Colchester
- Milton Keynes

London
- Croydon
- Kensington and Chelsea
- Newham
- Westminster

North West
- Bolton
- Rochdale

Merseyside
- Knowsley

EC Acquired Rights Directive

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the EC acquired rights directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* This information is not held centrally.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the results of the annual meeting of the convention to control toxic waste which met in Uruguay in early December.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* The main issue discussed at the first meeting of the contracting parties to the Basel convention was that of movements of waste from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries to developing countries. The conference adopted a decision containing the following key elements: a request that industrialised countries prohibit transboundary movements for disposal to developing countries; agreement that, until the conference takes further action and until the convention is reviewed in 1995, transboundary movements for recovery and recycling operations take place in accordance with the provisions of the convention an in particular with the requirement that waste be handled in an environmentally sound manner; and a request to developing countries to prohibit the import of hazardous wastes from industrialised countries. The United Kingdom presidency, on behalf of the European Community, made a statement explaining the European Community's position as set out in the recently agreed waste shipments regulation. The statement said that the regulation will prohibit exports for disposal except to European Free Trade Association countries and will strictly control exports for recovery to ensure the environmentally sound management of that waste in developing countries. The statement noted that Denmark, under its presidency of the European Community, would seek to promote a ban on the export of waste from the European Community to all developing countries.

Other decisions established a useful platform for work leading to the second meeting of the parties planned for February/March 1994. The conference decided on an open-ended ad hoc committee which will consider proposals on liability and compensation, a revolving fund for emergencies, technical guidelines and regional training centres for developing countries.

Lecturers (Council Elections)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what circumstances lecturers in further education colleges are barred from standing in local elections for councils with responsibility for education.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* Lecturers in further education colleges are currently barred only from standing for election to the local education authorities of which they are employees. When further education colleges transfer to the new further education sector on 1 April 1993, lecturers at the colleges will become employees of the corporations established to conduct the colleges. In these circumstances such lecturers will be entitled to stand for election to any council.

Shropshire

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give the actual cash sums paid by central Government to Shrewsbury and Atcham borough council in support of *(a)* revenue and *(b)* capital expenditure in the years for which figures are conveniently available and the projected figures for 1993-94;

(2) if he will give the actual cash sums paid by central Government to Shropshire county council in support of *(a)* revenue and *(b)* capital expenditure in the years for which figures are conveniently available and the projected figure for 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* Local authorities report the following:

Central Government contributions

£ million

	Shropshire county council	*Shrewsbury and Atcham borough council*
1987-88		
Revenue		
Rate Support Grant	77·354	2·484
Relevant specific grants to revenue	14·390	0·919
Rate Rebate Grant	0·0	1·942
Transport Supplementary Grant to revenue	1·429	0·0
TOTAL REVENUE	93·173	5·345
CAPITAL	1·244	0·0
1988-89		
Revenue		
Rate Support Grant	81·269	2·451
Relevant specific grants to revenue	15·984	0·945
Rate Rebate Grant	0·0	2·203
Transport Supplementary Grant to revenue	2·176	0·0
TOTAL REVENUE	99·429	5·599
CAPITAL	1·789	0·0
1989-90		
Revenue		
Rate Support Grant	77·646	2·423
Relevant specific grants to revenue	16·327	0·936
Rate Rebate Grant	0·0	2·755
Transport Supplementary Grant to revenue	1·806	0·0
TOTAL REVENUE	95·779	6·114
CAPITAL	0·593	0·0
1990-91		
Revenue Grants		
To Collection Fund		
Rate Support Grant	0·0	13·593
Special Grants	0·0	0·0
To General Fund		
Specific grants inside AEF	18·925	0·127
Other Revenue Support		
NNDR Entitlement (to Collection Fund)	0·0	20·389
TOTAL REVENUE SUPPORT INSIDE AEF	18·925	34·109

	Shropshire county council	*Shrewsbury and Atcham borough council*
CAPITAL	1·710	0·053
1991-92		
Revenue Grants		
To Collection Fund		
Revenue support grant	0·0	11·074
Special grants	0·0	0·0
Community charge grant	0·0	9·550
To General Fund		
Specific grants inside AEF	20·202	0·151
Other Revenue Support		
NNDR Entitlement (to Collection Fund)	0·0	24·467
TOTAL REVENUE SUPPORT INSIDE AEF	20·202	45·242
CAPITAL	3·344	0·714

Displaced Persons

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial assistance will be given to local authorities who provide accommodation and other facilities to refugees from the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Robin Squire: As announced by my hon. Friend the Member for Housing and Planning on 16 November, *Official Report*, column *54*, we propose to make available a special grant to assist the small number of local authorities worst affected by the recent influx of displaced persons from the former Yugoslav republic. My Department will be writing to local authorities shortly in order to obtain information on which to base the grant.

House Renovation Grant Scheme

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the outcome of this Department's review of the house renovation grant system.

Sir George Young *[pursuant to his answer, 16 July 1992, c. 1047]:* During recent months, it has become clear that the present renovation grant system is placing increasing financial pressure on a growing number of local authorities, mainly because of the demands of mandatory grants. I have concluded that there is a need to take a further thorough look at the operation of the system, in particular to examine whether it remains appropriate given the likely availability of resources in future years. Accordingly, my Department will be issuing a consultation paper early next year setting out possible options for change. I shall want to consider very carefully the views expressed by local authorities and others in response to this document.

I have today separately announced the resources which we are making available in 1993-94 to support local authorities expenditure on renovation grants, on other aspects of private housing renewal and on dealing with defective housing. I am pleased to say that, taken together with authorities' increased spending power from receipts next year, these provide for higher total expenditure than in the current financial year.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 11 January 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Conduct of Inquiries

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations have been made to him about those conducting legal inquiries on behalf of Her Majesty's Government giving press briefings during the inquiry.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The hon. Member has omitted to mention the inquiry in which he is interested, and therefore I regret I am unable to answer his question without further detail being provided.

Complaints Body

Mr. French: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make it his policy to establish a body equivalent to the Solicitors Complaints Bureau as a statutory body.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Government believe that the maintenance of professional standards is, in the first instance, for the professional body concerned. The Law Society has since 1986 delegated its statutory powers in respect of professional misconduct to the Solicitors Complaints Bureau. Matters of discipline and serious breaches of the society's rules of professional conduct are for the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal, a statutory and independent body with a lay majority, to consider and act upon. In order to ensure that public confidence is maintained, the Government also established the Office of the Legal Services Ombudsman, under provisions in the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990. The ombudsman acts as an effective independent scrutiny of the way in which the Law Society carries out its statutory duties; he also has the same powers in respect of the General Council of the Bar and the Council for Licensed Conveyancers.

Legal Aid Leaflets

Mr. Cox: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the languages in which legal aid leaflets are available in courts or prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board produces leaflets in the following languages: English, Welsh, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Gujerati, Hindi, Italian, Portuguese, Punjabi, Spanish, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese. The board supplies leaflets in any of these languages to courts or prisons on request.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Butte Mining

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Attorney-General what is his current estimate of the date of completion of the inquiries by the Serious Fraud Office into share dealings in Butte Mining.

The Attorney-General: An SFO investigation into aspects of the affairs of Butte Mining plc commenced in June 1992. The SFO target for cases generally is one year from acceptance for investigation to transfer to Crown court. It is policy not to divulge operational details relating to the progress of particular investigations.

TRANSPORT

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the findings of the research commissioned in 1990 as to how aircraft noise affects people's sleep will be made available.

Mr. Norris: My noble Friend Lord Caithness has received a report on the field study into aircraft noise and sleep disturbance which describes the study and its results. This is published today by the Department of Transport. Copies will be placed in the House libraries.

This has been one of the most comprehensive studies of the subject carried out anywhere in the world. The research has been carried out by teams led by Professor J. A. Horne, Loughborough University of Technology; Dr. K. I. Hume, Manchester Metropolitan University; and Professor I. D. Diamond, University of Southampton; under the overall direction of Dr. J. B. Ollerhead of the Civil Aviation Authority's Department of Safety, Environment and Engineering. I am grateful for the effort and expertise which they have devoted to this study.

People vary greatly in how they react to noise. This is true also of the effect of aircraft noise on people's sleep. However, one of the conclusions of this study is that, once asleep, very few people living near airports are at risk of any substantial sleep disturbance due to aircraft noise.

Road Building (Filler)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the extent to which blast furnace slag has been approved for use in motorway embankments.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Blast furnace slag is approved in the Department's Specification for Highway Works for use as general fill, as selected granular fill and as a capping material in motorway embankments. A copy of the specification is in the Library.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what regulations govern the choice by contractors of the type of fill material for use in major road building projects.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Contractors are required to satisfy the specification for each particular scheme. This specification incorporates the Department's Specification for Highway Works and lays down additional requirements as necessary including any environmental constraints.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake and publish a comparative study of the costs of using *(a)* blast furnace slag and *(b)* freshly quarried stone as fill material for major road building projects.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A study was carried out in 1991 by the Department of the Environment into the economics of using mineral and industrial waste materials as substitutes for naturally occurring aggregates. The study included a comparison of the costs of using steel blast furnace slag as a replacement for crushed rock. The report was published (ISBN 0 11 7524840) and a copy was placed in the House of Commons Library.

Traffic Calming

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department has spent on traffic calming measures in each of the last three years; and what savings in deaths and serious injuries on roads are estimated to have resulted.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Traffic calming is one part of a range of measures used in undertaking accident remedial schemes. The information requested is not available centrally, and could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to introduce the regulations enabling local authorities to introduce traffic calming measures on class A roads.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We hope to lay traffic calming regulations before the House in the new year. These will apply to class A as well as to other roads.

Channel Tunnel (Rail Freight)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will name the parliamentary constituencies in Greater London through which channel tunnel rail freight services will run when the tunnel opens.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail expects channel tunnel freight services to run on railway lines in the following Greater London parliamentary constituencies:

Battersea, Beckenham, Brent East, Brent North, Brent South, Chelsea, Chislehurst, Croydon Central, Croydon North East, Croydon North West, Croydon South, Dulwich, Ealing Acton, Ealing North, Ealing Southall, Enfield North, Enfield Southgate, Fulham, Hackney South and Shoreditch, Hammersmith, Hampstead and Highgate, Harrow East, Harrow West, Hayes and Harlington, Holborn and St. Pancras, Hornsey and Wood Green, Islington North, Islington South and Finsbury, Kensington, Lewisham Deptford, Lewisham East, Lewisham West, Newham North West, Norwood, Orpington, Peckham, Streatham, Tooting, Tottenham, Uxbridge, Vauxhall.

13. **Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects British Rail to receive for trialling on rails in Great Britain a pre-production series channel tunnel passenger service train.

Mr. Freeman: I understand from British Rail that it hopes to begin trials in June 1993.

Rear Seat Belts

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has of *(a)* the reduction in deaths and serious injuries resulting from the requirement for car passengers to wear rear seat belts and *(b)* the cost to the motor manufacturers of the requirement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It has been estimated that full compliance with the rear seat belt wearing requirements would save at least 100 lives and 1,000 serious injuries a year, but since the requirement has applied to adults only since July 1991, there is insufficient statistical evidence to demonstrate the actual savings. In the six months July to December 1991 deaths and serious injuries to adult rear seat passengers fell by 14 per cent. and to child rear seat passengers by 12 per cent. compared with the corresponding period in 1990, but it is not known how much of this reduction can be attributed to seat belt wearing.

The wearing regulations impose no additional cost to motor manufacturers: all new cars since October 1987 have been required to be fitted with rear seat belts.

Construction Contracts

230. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of state for Transport if he will list for each of the last 10 years major construction contracts awarded by his Department worth over £250,000 at current prices, indicating in each case which construction company was awarded the contract; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I regret that the full information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the following information shows, for each of the last five years, all new road construction contracts with award (cash) prices of £250,000 or more.

Contracts let in 1992

Scheme	*Contractor*	*£*
A46 Leicester Western bypass	AMEC/Alfred McAlpine joint venture	35,981,698
A423 Benson roundabout improvement	Amey Construction Ltd.	253,857
A650 Park Road, Bingley	Amey Construction Ltd.	4,054,039
A27 Crossbush bypass	Associated Asphalt Co. Ltd.	2,951,714
M5 Junction 27 hardshoulders	Associated Asphalt Co. Ltd.	721,702
A1 Marshall Meadows dualling	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	2,244,952
A1 Browniesside improvement	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	3,174,832
A638 Doncaster North Bridge relief road	Birse Construction Ltd.	5,594,403
A568 Widnes Eastern bypass (north section)	Birse Construction Ltd.	14,557,435
A16 Spalding to Sutterton	Birse Construction Ltd.	22,639,443
A42 construction of 18 laybys	Charles Gregory (Civil Engineering) Ltd.	1,239,028
A339 Basingstoke bypass	Costain Building & Civil Engineering Ltd.	8,597,625
M42 Junction 6 improvement	Costain Building & Civil Engineering Ltd.	252,031

Scheme	Contractor	£
M602 Junctions 2-3 central reserve	Edmund Nuttall Ltd.	286,551
A420 Kingston Bagpuize	Edmund Nuttall Ltd.	4,296,787
A40 Headington roundabout improvement	Ernest Ireland Construction Ltd.	529,040
A21 Blackbrook Sedlecombe improvement	ESCC Contract Services Ltd.	264,628
A27 Westhampnett bypass	Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd.	6,923,494
A23 Pease Pottage to Handcross	Fitzpatrick Contractors Ltd.	8,160,560
A59 Greengates to Gutteridge improvement	Galliford (UK) Ltd.	906,890
M62 Junction 18 to M66 Junction 4	Galliford (UK) Ltd.	662,312
M1 Junction 34 exit slip improvement	Henry Boot Northern Ltd.	327,084
A40 Headington roundabout improvement	John Mowlem Construction Ltd.	529,040
A11 Four Wentways to Newmarket	Lilley Construction Ltd.	9,251,976
A40 Denham roundabout alterations	M. J. Cagney (Civil Engineering) Ltd.	290,475
A11 Thetford to Bridgham Heath	May Gurney & Co. Ltd.	2,223,422
A1 Haggerston to Bridgemill	Northumberland County Council DLO	279,681
A43 Radstone Turn improvements	Serco Contracting Ltd.	411,133
M3 Bar End to Compton	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	25,882,357
M25 Junctions 15-16 widening (M4 to M40)	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	24,446,155
M6 widening Junctions 20 to 21A	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	52,512,897
A27 Brighton bypass contract 4	Taylor Woodrow Civil Engineering Ltd.	19,526,438
A27 Shoreham Kingston roundabout	Taylor Woodrow Civil Engineering Ltd.	436,293
A41 Edgware Way John Grooms footbridge	Walcon Construction plc	444,370
A34 Redhill to Woodfarm	Wrekin Construction Co. Ltd.	595,878
A663 Broadway to Whitegate Lane	Wrekin Construction Co. Ltd.	292,700
Total 1992		261,742,920

Contracts let in 1991

Scheme	Contractor	£
A41 Kings Langley bypass	A. F. Budge (Contractors) Ltd.	19,967,881
A52 Sherwin Arms Junction improvement	A. F. Budge (Contractors) Ltd.	463,108
A167 Chester Moor improvement	Alan Davison Construction Ltd.	321,024
A595 Egremont bypass	Alfred McAlpine Construction Ltd.	6,666,666
A596 Wigton bypass	Alfred McAlpine Construction Ltd.	4,052,697
A38 Two Watersfoot improvement	Alfred McAlpine Construction Ltd.	497,547
A41 Berkhamsted bypass	Amey Construction Ltd.	18,139,479
A421 Wendlebury to Bicester dualling	Amey Construction Ltd.	3,904,118
M4 Severn Crossing Toll Plaza	Avon Construction Ltd.	206,010
A1001 Park Plaza roundabout	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	355,053
A39 Wadebridge bypass	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	8,305,268
M20 Widening Junctions 5 to 8	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	68,804,939
M62 Widening Junctions 17 to 18	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	3,752,243
A406 Hangar Lane to Harrow Road	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	26,562,359
A20 Folkestone to Court Wood Contract 2	Birse Construction Ltd.	11,550,041
M25 Clacket Lane slip roads	Birse Construction Ltd.	3,896,152
A6 Market Harborough bypass	Birse Construction Ltd.	7,866,660
A12 Gisleham Roundabout	Bovis Construction Ltd.	494,436
A3 Milford bypass	Costain Civil Engineering Ltd.	7,889,074
A23 Warninglid Flyover to Sayers Common	Costain Civil Engineering Ltd.	15,685,563
A585 Fleetwood Dock Street diversion	Cumbrian Industrials Ltd.	2,190,000
A27/A26 Beddingham Roundabout approach	East Sussex County Council DLO	366,098
M6 widening Junctions 20 to 21A advance works	Edmund Nuttall Ltd.	1,812,266
M62 Junction 18 Turning Lane	Edmund Nuttall Ltd.	329,943
A19 Blue Bridge Bends improvement	Edmund Nuttall Ltd.	775,492
A40 Long Lane	Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd.	17,194,536
A41 Friarscroft to Aylesbury	Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd.	994,758
A47 Norwich Southern bypass Contract 1	Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd.	7,933,859
A134 Fornham St. Martin bypass	Fitzpatrick Contractors Ltd.	2,670,577
A47 East Dereham to North Tuddenham	Fitzpatrick Contractors Ltd.	6,895,877
M27 Junction 7 improvements	Fitzpatrick Contractors Ltd.	250,018
A604 (M1-A1 Link) Contract 5 North	Fitzpatrick Contractors Ltd.	3,752,268
A41 Glendale Avenue Footbridge	Gabriel (Contractors) Ltd.	406,175
A41 Edgwarebury Lane Footbridge	Gabriel (Contractors) Ltd.	398,675
M67/A57 Junction improvement	Galliford (UK) Ltd.	256,579
A5 Little Brickhill bypass	Galliford (UK) Ltd.	5,837,410
A5 Kilsby diversion	Galliford (UK) Ltd.	830,878
A604 (M1/A1 Link) Contract 8	Henry Boot Southern Ltd.	7,042,636
A303 Stockton Wood to Chicklade	HT Construction Ltd.	1,295,105
M5 widening Junctions 6 to 8	John Laing Construction Ltd.	59,368,900
A40 Denham Viaduct improvement	John Mowlem Construction Ltd.	608,150
A1 Gatenby Lane Junction improvement	John Mowlem Construction Ltd.	2,659,610
M3 Bar End—Compton advance works	John Mowlem Construction Ltd.	1,300,324
A1 Red Lodge to Newmarket	Kier Construction Ltd.	4,075,310
A16 Stickford bypass	Kimbell Construction Ltd.	1,013,087
A1 Girtford underpass	Kimbell Construction Ltd.	812,931

Scheme	Contractor	£
A47 Narborough bypass	May Gurney & Co. Ltd.	2,244,845
A423 Southam bypass	Midland Oak Construction Ltd.	2,224,307
A590 Dalton-in-Furness bypass	Miller Construction Ltd.	7,908,250
A453 Ratcliffe on Soar	Monk Construction Ltd.	1,159,587
A20 Court Wood to Dover Contract 3	Norwest Holst Construction Ltd.	21,684,567
A13 West India Dock Road improvement	Percy Bilton plc	999,412
A13 Isle of Dogs/Cotton St. footbridge	Roadworks (1952) Ltd.	302,088
A16 Ludborough bypass	Shephard Hill Civil Engineering Ltd.	1,233,511
A12 Gorleston Relief Road	Shephard Hill Civil Engineering Ltd.	15,934,883
A1 Alnwick bypass improvement	Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons Ltd.	326,120
A604 (M1-A1 Link) Contracts 2 & 3	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	35,617,820
A30 Okehampton-Launceston	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	26,809,215
A604 (M1-A1 Link) Contract 9	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	16,364,732
A23 Tilgate Forest Row footbridge	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	313,837
M5 Warndon Maintenance Compound	Thomas Vale Construction plc	1,134,037
A3 Beechcroft Drive footbridge	Walcon Construction Ltd.	386,590
A420 Fyfield to Tubney improvement	Walcon Construction Ltd.	339,814
A259 Shorncliffe Road	Walker Bros. (Civil Engineering) Ltd.	271,528
Total 1991		£475,506,923

Contracts let in 1990

Scheme	Contractor	£
A35 Axminster bypass	A. E. Farr Ltd.	8,071,374
A47 Norwich Southern bypass Contract 4	A. F. Budge (Contractors) Ltd.	29,860,233
A650 Drighlington bypass	A. F. Budge (Contractors) Ltd.	4,987,347
A47 Norwich Southern bypass Contract 2	A. F. Budge (Contractors) Ltd.	8,586,288
A38 Burnaston improvement	A. F. Budge (Contractors) Ltd.	6,384,490
A516 Etwall bypass	A. F. Budge (Contractors) Ltd.	2,656,861
A5 Telford to Shrewsbury Contract 2	Alfred McAlpine Construction Ltd.	38,596,977
A23 Muddleswood to Patcham	Alfred McAlpine Construction Ltd.	14,322,344
A16 Boston Algarkirk Diversion	Amey Construction Ltd.	8,961,439
A23 Sayers Common to Muddleswood	Amey Construction Ltd.	10,466,746
A27 Patcham to Coldean	Amey Construction Ltd.	14,766,437
M4 Junction 12 improvements	Associated Asphalt Ltd.	1,265,236
A34 Wytham Turn Stage 2	Associated Asphalt Ltd.	396,604
A604 (M1-A1 Link) Contract 5S	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	30,741,927
A20 Folkestone to Court Wood Contract 1	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	27,305,364
A6 Burton Latimer bypass	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	2,633,257
A30 Plusha to Bolventor	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	10,673,774
A49 Weaverham Diversion	Birse Construction Ltd.	4,230,071
A423 Maidenhead Thicket	Birse Construction Ltd.	8,439,669
A41 Whitchurch bypass	Birse Construction Ltd.	8,947,176
A1079 Market Weighton bypass	Birse Construction Ltd.	3,360,937
QEII Bridge Northern Approach Roads	Cementation Construction Ltd.	8,318,692
A41 Ruscote Avenue improvement	Charles Gregory (Civil Engineering) Ltd.	381,604
A16 Louth bypass	Clugston Construction Ltd.	4,995,421
A23 Purley Cross Junction improvement	Costain Civil Engineering Ltd.	1,487,469
A34 Robin Hood Roundabout	Dean & Dyball Ltd.	463,341
A30 Zelah bypass	Dean & Dyball Ltd.	2,632,265
A595 Hensingham bypass	Eden Construction Ltd.	4,285,308
A1/A19 Testos roundabout improvement	Eden Construction Ltd.	795,388
A59 Salmesbury to Skipton	Eden Construction Ltd.	1,943,322
A5 Telford to Shrewsbury Contract 1	Edmund Nuttall Ltd.	25,858,870
A523 Macclesfield Relief Road	Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd.	18,749,030
A30 Penhale to Carland Cross	Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd.	9,140,689
A12/M25 Brook Street	Fitzpatrick & Son Ltd.	309,567
A46/A52 Weighbridge	G. F. Tomlinson & Sons Ltd.	291,367
A43 Blisworth bypass	Galliford Civil Engineering Ltd.	15,074,800
A36 Codford bypass Phase 2	HT Construction Ltd.	441,206
A38 Marsh Mills	Hochtief Ag	22,478,528
A614 Howdendyke Cross Roads	Humberside County Council DLO	357,786
A140 Dickleburgh bypass	J. Breheny (Contractors) Ltd.	2,212,177
A10 Brandon Creek	J. Breheny (Contractors) Ltd.	1,039,521
A11 Red Lodge bypass	J. Breheny (Contractors) Ltd.	4,839,174
A31 Picket Post Junction improvement	John Mowlem Construction Ltd.	1,791,225
A4 Littlewick Green	John Mowlem Construction Ltd.	535,936
A339 Roman Road Roundabout improvement	Kimbell Construction Ltd.	336,899
A604 (M1-A1 Link) Contract 4	May Gurney & Co. Ltd.	4,410,721
A47 Norwich Southern bypass Contract 3	May Gurney & Co. Ltd.	14,752,896
A47 East Norton bypass	Midland Oak (Contractors) Ltd.	1,174,621
M40 Maintenance Compound at Longbridge	Midland Oak (Contractors) Ltd.	1,097,303
A66 Bowes bypass	Miller Construction Ltd.	8,978,565
A27 Brighton bypass Contract 2	M. J. Gleeson Group plc	8,767,755

Scheme	Contractor	£
M42/M40 Umberslade	Monk Construction Ltd.	1,504,780
A1 Bramham to Wetherby	Monk Construction Ltd.	14,911,151
A47 Etling Green Junction improvement	Norfolk County Council DLO	265,927
A696/B6323 Callerton Lane Link Road	Northumberland County Council DLO	823,240
A1 Shilbottle Junction	Northumberland County Council DLO	254,750
A27 Lyons Farm Junction improvement	P. Trant Ltd.	581,058
A23/M23 improvement (Gatwick Airport)	Percy Bilton plc	352,152
A42 Castle Donington Contract 3	Redland Aggregates Ltd.	2,772,379
A12 Capel St. Mary	Roadworks (1952) Ltd.	3,518,293
A47 Caistor and Ailsworth bypass	Roadworks (1952) Ltd.	7,506,331
A65 Draughton bypass	Shand Construction Ltd.	2,185,404
A43/A423 Kidlington Roundabout	SIAC Construction Ltd.	296,674
A604 (M1-A1 Link) Contract 1	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	3,085,649
A6 Quorn and Mountsorrel bypass	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	31,756,673
A42 Castle Donington Contract 2	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	16,789,402
A3 Liphook to Petersfield bypass	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	35,841,789
M40 widening Junctions 4-5	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	35,818,203
A120 Horsley Roundabout	Watson Construction Ltd.	252,536
A303 Mere to Wincanton	Wimpey Construction Ltd.	15,275,717
Total 1990		587,388,105

Contracts let in 1989

Scheme	Contractor	£
A604 (M1-A1 Link) Contract 6	A. F. Budge (Contractors) Ltd.	25,660,650
A42 Castle Donington	A. F. Budge (Contractors) Ltd.	24,730,506
A650 Airedale Route Contract 2	A. Monk Building & Civil Engineering Ltd.	536,180
M40 Waterstock to Wendlebury	Alfred McAlpine/Fairclough joint venture	64,100,726
A23 Waddon Marsh	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	1,000,000
QEII Bridge Southern Approach Roads	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	27,690,340
A19 Peterlee Junction Stage 2	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	3,239,909
A66 Stockton Racecourse Interchange	Birse Construction Ltd.	5,466,972
A47 Easton Hornstocks Bends	Charles Gregory Civil Engineering Ltd.	874,739
A45 Barford Road Junction	Clugston Construction Ltd.	499,516
A69 Brampton bypass	Cumbrian Industrials Ltd.	4,944,000
A65 Addingham bypass	Cumbrian Industrials Ltd.	3,669,000
A361 North Devon Link Road Stage 2	Devon Contractors Ltd.	365,992
A406 Hanger Lane (Twyford Tip)	Edmund Nuttall Ltd.	10,304,298
M62 Climbing Lane Junctions 21 and 22	Edmund Nuttall Ltd.	562,440
A259 Glyne Gap roundabout	East Sussex County Council DLO	297,416
A167 Pity Me roundabout	Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd.	253,754
A41 Improvement at Chester	Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd.	17,491,969
A500 Nantwich bypass	Galliford Civil Engineering Ltd.	5,094,318
A27 Farlington bypass	Geoffrey Osborne Ltd.	1,206,591
M3 Bassett to Compton advance works	Geoffrey Osborne Ltd.	489,250
M3/A339 Basingstoke	Hampshire County Council DLO	399,107
M3 Bassett to Compton widening	John Mowlem Construction Ltd.	41,662,080
A41 Bicester bypass Stage 1	John Mowlem Construction Ltd.	4,731,992
A604 (M1-A1 Link) Contract 6A	Midland Oak Contractors Ltd.	819,791
A696 Woolsington bypass	Miller Construction Ltd.	10,358,496
A1 Dualling South of Alnwick	Northumberland County Council DLO	622,018
A60 Mansfield Road improvement	Nottingham County Council DLO	363,123
A47 Eye bypass	Redland Aggregates Ltd.	5,199,976
A23 Waddon Way Junction improvement	Ringway Surfacing Ltd.	803,964
A36 Codford bypass	Rush & Tompkins Ltd.	2,084,710
A49 Shrewsbury improvement	Shropshire County Council DLO	697,632
A30 Launceston to Plusha	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	8,775,795
A604 (M1-A1 Link) Contract 7	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	14,188,340
A27/A22 Lewes Road	Walker Brothers Civil Engineering Ltd.	270,959
A303 Ilchester to South Petherton	Wimpey Construction Ltd.	12,773,286
M20 Maidstone to Ashford Contract 2	Wimpey Construction Ltd.	28,667,972
A435 Alcester bypass	Wrekin Construction Co. Ltd.	8,780,768
Total 1989		339,678,575

Contracts let in 1988

Scheme	Contractor	£
A35 Charmouth bypass	A. E. Farr Ltd.	10,725,435
A36 Beckington bypass	A. E. Farr Ltd.	2,983,063
A46/A17 Newark Relief Road	A. F. Budge (Contractors) Ltd.	31,478,637
A550 Ledsham Station diversion	A. McFadden & Co. Ltd.	880,938
M5 Catshill & M42/M5 Northern Link	A. Monk Building & Civil Engineering Ltd.	20,572,186

Scheme	*Contractor*	£
M62 Climbing Lane Greater Manchester	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	10,075,245
A69 Newcastle Western bypass Contract 3	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	24,854,460
M40 Banbury Contract 4	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	51,712,702
M25 Junctions 10-13 widening	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	30,060,635
A417 Birdlip bypass	Biwater Construction Ltd.	1,926,589
A49 Prees bypass	C. J. Pearce Ltd.	1,193,125
A406 Chingford to Hale End	Cementation Construction Ltd.	60,587,621
A1 Coldstone Lane to B6267	Colas Roads Ltd.	316,743
M62 Climbing Lane West Yorkshire	Cumbrian Industrials Ltd.	2,089,000
A303 Sparkford bypass	Davies Middleton & Davies Ltd.	7,654,577
A11(T) High Road Leytonstone	Gabriel (Contractors) Ltd.	597,872
A34 Tidbury Ring improvement	Hampshire County Council DLO	852,773
A1 Dishforth interchange	Henry Boot (Northern) Ltd.	6,790,485
A41 Rodney House roundabout	J. J. Gallagher Ltd.	275,688
M40 Banbury Contract 2	John Mowlem Construction Ltd.	17,910,558
A47 Guyhirn diversion	Kier Construction Ltd.	3,656,000
A16 South Haven Bridge diversion	Kier Construction Ltd.	2,567,174
A19/A1290 Downhill Lane	M. J. Gleeson Group plc	1,238,401
A21 Robertsbridge bypass	M. J. Gleeson Group plc	3,595,802
A11 Thetford bypass	May Gurney & Co. Ltd.	8,545,654
A435 Sedgeberrow	Mowlem Regional Construction Ltd.	1,738,362
A23 Brighton Road/Purley Road improvement	Percy Bilton plc	312,538
A35 Bridport Link	R. C. & G. Coles Ltd.	428,337
M40 Gaydon Section	R. M. Douglas Construction Ltd.	33,985,302
A36 Steeple Langford bypass	Rush & Tomkins Ltd.	1,324,847
A565 Derby Road improvement	Shand Northern Ltd.	1,588,794
A6 Barton Le Clay bypass	Shanks & McEwan (Contractors) Ltd.	6,959,596
A52/A6005 improvement	Shephard Hill & Co. Ltd.	4,590,613
M40 Banbury Contract 1	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	24,197,510
M40 Banbury Contract 3	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	52,199,044
M27 Swaythling Link	Walcon Construction Ltd.	326,125
A41 Harwoods Close roundabout	Wrekin Construction Co. Ltd.	446,467
Total 1988		431,238,898

Rail Privatisation

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 14 December, *Official Report*, column *32*, if he will make it his policy to make the draft guidance to be given to the franchising authority available to hon. Members before the Second Reading debate on the British Rail privatisation legislation.

Mr. Freeman: We intend to make the draft guidance to be issued to the franchising authority available to hon. Members at the commencement of the Committee stage of the Bill.

Expenditure (London Boroughs)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give his Department's expenditure, by London borough, for each of the past five years, on *(a)* major trunk roads, *(b)* local main roads via transport supplementary grant, *(c)* bus improvements, *(d)* rail improvements and *(e)* cycle facilities.

Mr. Norris: This information is not held in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Red Routes

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the expenditure, by borough, of funds from his Department on roads adjacent to red routes in London.

Mr. Norris: The latest estimates of expenditure on approved works on roads adjacent to the pilot red route are:

	£
(a) Haringey	717,000
(b) Islington	690,000
(c) Hackney	229,000
(d) Tower Hamlets	954,000

Private Car Ownership

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his Department's projections on the increase in private car ownership in *(a)* Greater London, *(b)* England and Wales and *(c)* Scotland over (i) the next five years, (ii) 10 years and (iii) 15 years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The number of private cars alone is not forecast. The Department's forecasts of the number of cars normally kept in *(a)* Greater London and *(b)* England and Wales and *(c)* Scotland are:

Millions

	(a)	[1]*(b)*	*(c)*
1991	2·4	18·7	1·5
1997	2·7 to 2·8	21·1 to 22·0	1·7 to 1·8
2002	2·9 to 3·1	22·9 to 24·6	1·9 to 2·0
2007	3·0 to 3·4	24·5 to 26·9	2·0 to 2·2

[1] (b) includes (a).

The range in the forecasts is associated with the expected range in GDP growth and fuel prices.

Cycles

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department has held with *(a)* Westminster city council and *(b)* the City of London regarding their policies on cycling and parking of cycles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: My Department discusses cycling issues with the London boroughs collectively through the London Cycling Forum, chaired by the London Planning Advisory Committee. We have given advice in a series of local transport notes on provision for cyclists, including cycle parking.

Parking

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's estimate of the number of *(a)* on-street, *(b)* public off-street and *(c)* private off-street parking facilities in inner London; what the figures were for 1988; and what he expects to be the provision in 1994.

Mr. Norris: My Department has not made any estimates of parking provision in inner London. However, a survey conducted for the London Planning Advisory Committee in 1990 found *(a)* 81,000 on-street parking places, and *(b)* 42,000 places in off-street public car parks. These estimates cover all boroughs in inner and central London except Islington and the London Docklands Development Corporation who did not respond to the survey, and Hackney who did not provide information about on-street parking. Information on *(c)* private off-street parking facilities is not available.

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list *(a)* the total number of residential properties owned by his Department, *(b)* the number of such properties which are empty, and *(c)*, *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Norris: Yes. On 30 September 1992, when the last return was compiled:

(a) the total number of residential properties was 3,283: apart from 15 used by coastguard services they were held as a result of road schemes;

(b) 666 were empty; and

(c) the empty properties were 20·4 per cent. of the total. However, of these, 597 (18·3 per cent.) either have been in the Department's ownership for three months or less; are awaiting demolition; are in the process of being sold or are vacant for other good reasons, for example, because they are uninhabitable or are specialised and particularly difficult to let. Only 69 properties (2·1 per cent.) remain unlet without good reason.

British Rail Rolling Stock

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish details of all locomotives and rolling stock that British Rail *(a)* has moth-balled, *(b)* intends to declare surplus to requirements or to dispose of for scrap and *(c)* has disposed of, or sold for scrap, during the past year.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail has provided the following information:

(a) InterCity has 40 coaches in store, with plans to store another 35; 40 surplus sleeper coaches are also in store, and a purchaser is being sought for these; 74 damaged or defective locomotives are in store awaiting a decision.

(b) About 300 locomotives have been withdrawn and are awaiting sale by competitive tender.

(c) Sixty-seven locomotives were sold during 1992, of which 12 went to preservation societies or other private users. In the past two years InterCity has disposed of 235 life-expired coaches for scrap; a further 100 coaches have been sold to the private sector or transferred to other parts of BR.

Some life-expired electric and diesel multiple units are becoming surplus as new rolling stock is introduced on Network SouthEast regional railways. Detailed figures are not readily available.

BR is always interested to hear from those who wish to be included in tender lists for surplus rolling stock. Stock which contains asbestos may require the attention of a special contractor.

Driving Tests

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what reasons differing provisions apply in respect of the consequences of failure to pass a test within two years to *(a)* holders of provisional motorcyclist licences and *(b)* car drivers holding provisional licences; and what plans he has to bring the two provisional licences into line with each other.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A provisional motorcycle licence is valid for a maximum period of two years and may not be renewed within a year of expiring. Provisional car driving licences remain valid until the holder reaches the age of 70. The reason for these differing provisions is that the holder of a provisional motorcycle licence is entitled to ride unaccompanied and, without this limitation on the period of validity of such a licence, there would be no incentive to attain the standard required to obtain a full licence.

A2 (Dualling)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of the design consultancy project for the dualling of the A2 between Lydden and Dover; and when, how, and for how long the public consultation process is to operate.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The design consultants are continuing to investigate route options for the A2 Lydden to Dover scheme. Public consultation is planned for late spring 1993. It will include the distribution of information leaflets with questionnaires, a press notice, advertisement in the local press and a public exhibition. A six-week period is proposed for receipt of comments from the public.

Road Schemes

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those road schemes added to the Government's roads programme since the publication of the White Paper, "Trunk Roads: England into the 1990s."

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The 32 schemes which have been added to the national roads programme since the 1990 White Paper are as follows:

National roads programme entries

A303—Ilminster bypass

A41—Christleton bypass
A428—Turvey bypass
A39—Kilkhampton bypass
A49—Woofferton bypass
A65—West of Gargrave bypass
A3—Thursley—Milford
A65—Chelker Bends
A1079—Bishop Burton bypass
A39—Stratton diversion
A31—Sturt Lane—Red Post
A59—Skipton bypass—Low Lodge Skeffington Bends
A64—Malton—Seamer
A41—Aylesbury: prop. junction improvement
A2—Honeywood junction
A650—Airedale Route: section 4
A259—Guestling Thorn/Icklesham bypass
A205/A2212—Burnt Ash hill
A1—Willow Burn—Denwick
A1—Hitchcroft—Cawledge
A1—Wetherby bypass
A1—Bramham—Wetherby
A1—Stamford—Newark
A1—Newark—A1(M) south of Doncaster
A49—Marshbrook improvement
Manchester outer ring road re-signing
M25—Slip road—Clacket lane motorway service area
M5—Junction 29-30
M23—Widening junctions 9-10
M27—Widening junctions 4-12
M25—Second stage widening

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the trunk road and motorway schemes that have been through a formal period of public consultation during the last 12 months and indicate those schemes where comments on a no-road option were specifically invited.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The following trunk road and motorway schemes have been through a period of formal consultation within the last 12 months:
M1—Widening of junctions 6A-10.
M1—Widening of junctions 10-15.
M1-M62 link.
M3—Widening of junctions 2-4.
M6—Widening of junctions 11-16.
M6—Widening of junctions 16-20.
M25—Junctions 12-15 improvement.
M40—Widening of junctions 1A-3.
M56-M62—Greater Manchester western and northern relief road stage 2*.
M62-M606 link.
M63—Widening of junctions 6-9.
A1(M)—Redhouse to Ferrybridge.
A1—Gateshead western bypass.
A2-A282—Dartford improvement.
A3—Hindhead improvement.
A3—M40 to B4031 improvement.
A12—Pakefield to Kessingland.
A16—East Keal bypass.
A17—Leadenham to Sleaford improvement.
A19—Norton to Parkway improvement.
A19—Shipton-by-Beningbrough bypass.
A19—Thormanby bypass.
A21—Silverhill improvement.
A26—Beddingham to Itford Farm diversion.
A27—Lewes to Polegate improvement.
A30—Woodleigh junction.
A36—Beckington to east of Bath.
A39—Allins to south Penlean improvement.
A41—No Mans Heath and Macefen bypass.
A41—Milton Green bypass.
A46—Newark Widmerpool improvement.
A49—Woofferton bypass*.
A50—Blythe Bridge Queensway Meir section.
A51—Improvement at Burford and the Green bypass.
A52—Radcliffe-on-Trent to Grantham improvement.
A54—Kelsall bypass to A556 improvement.
A57-A628—Mottram/Hollingworth/Tintwistle bypass*.
A63—Castle street.
A63—West of A1.
A64—Malton-Seamer.
A64—York-Malton.
A65—Coniston Cold bypass.
A66—Longnewton grade separated junction.
A259—Walland Marsh improvement.
A303—Ilminster bypass dualling.
A516—North of Etwall improvement.
A523—Improvements Poynton-Macclesfield*.
A595—Duddon Bridge improvement.
A1079—Shiptonthorpe bypass.
A6120—Seacroft and Crossgates bypass.

While none of the public consultations had a "no road" option, those schemes marked with an * did contain a question of whether a new road/bypass was necessary. It is, however, our policy to put forward only routes which we consider feasible and are prepared to build.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those road schemes deleted from the Government's road programmes on *(a)* economic, *(b)* environmental and *(c)* other grounds since the White Paper, "Trunk Roads: England into the 1990s".

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: One scheme, A59 Copster Green bypass, has been deleted from the national roads programme since the White Paper, "Trunk Roads, England into the 1990s". This was on economic grounds. The A6 Market Harborough to Desborough scheme has been transferred from the national programme to the regional programme of under £5 million schemes.

National Parks

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made concerning transport policy implications in respect of the Countryside Commission's proposals to strengthen national parks for the 21st century; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Government made a full response to the Countryside Commission's national parks review in January this year.

My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Transport and for Wales are responsible for policy on trunk roads in national parks. The Government's policy remains as it has been: no new trunk roads will be constructed or an existing road upgraded unless there is a compelling need which cannot be met by any reasonable alternative means. This policy has been most recently reflected in our announcement in September that the A628/A616 would not be upgraded to dual carriageway through the Peak district national park.

Other transport needs are a matter for local authorities, passenger transport executives and British Rail, in consultation with the national park authorities where appropriate.

Nuclear Material

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 8 December, *Official Report*, column *599-600*, relating to the transport of small quantities of plutonium, what was the mass of the largest single small quantity exported for which he has records; and whether his answer encompasses all nuclear materials transported from the United Kingdom since such transport began.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Individual shipments of small quantities of radioactive material are not notifiable to the Department.

The previous response referred to shipments made by British Nuclear Fuels plc and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority since 1981.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to re-establish his Department's advisory committee on the safe transport of nuclear materials.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No: ACTRAM was disbanded because its work was completed. Any future issues relating to the transport of radioactive waste will be covered by the Department of the Environment's radioactive waste management advisory committee.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received over the transport of nuclear materials to, from and within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norris: Forty-three parliamentary questions (including this one).

Freight Traffic

14. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about his plans to implement his policy of encouraging freight to transfer from road to rail.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government want to see freight moving by rail wherever practical. If rail freight is to flourish it must be competitive with road and other forms of transport. The introduction of private sector skills and access to new sources of funding is the best means of securing an efficient and competitive rail freight industry in the United Kingdom.

Heavy Lorries

15. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made of the increase in heavy lorries registered outside the United Kingdom on United Kingdom roads after the opening up of the single market; and if he will make a statement on the steps taken to ensure the roadworthiness of such vehicles.

Mr. MacGregor: The number of foreign lorries on our roads has risen by 19 per cent. in the past five years. This compares with a 52 per cent. increase in the number of British lorries travelling to the continent in the same period. British and foreign vehicles are checked at ports and at the roadside for compliance with the law on safety, weight limits and drivers' hours.

Transport Supplementary Grant

16. **Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what level of financial support he will give to local authorities through the transport supplementary grant.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: As explained in my right hon. Friend's statement to the House on 15 December 1992, the funds available through transport supplementary grant for 1993-94 total £1,047 million. Of this, £431 million is transport supplementary grant and the rest is allocated as borrowing approvals.

Jubilee Line Extension

17. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the most recent state of the arrangements for the commencement of work on the Jubilee line extension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: We have made provision for the Jubilee line extension to be constructed subject to a satisfactory agreement being reached with the administrators of Olympia and York Canary Wharf on the terms on which they are to contribute towards its cost. Negotiations with the administrators are continuing.

Roads (Private Investment)

18. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on the measures which he is taking to attract private investment in capital spending on roads.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall publish this year a Green Paper on the basis for charging for the use of inter-urban roads. One option to be considered is direct charging, for use of such roads, which would greatly increase opportunities for private investment. The Green Paper will also examine the scope for attracting more private finance through joint ventures and through contracts for the design, build and operation of roads.

Rail Fares

19. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take the necessary steps to ensure that the fares charged for travel on British railways are broadly in line with those which apply in other EC member states; and what assessment he has made of the service provided by such railways.

Mr. Freeman: Meaningful comparisons are difficult to make, given the very different operating conditions in each country. However, it is clear that fares could be reduced only if subsidies were increased. It would be wrong to ask taxpayers to fund bigger subsidies. Passengers, who are the main beneficiaries of rail services, should bear as much as possible of the costs.

Passengers Charter

20. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to meet the chairman of British Rail to assess the effectiveness of the passengers charter.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend and I meet the British Rail chairman frequently and discuss a range of issues including the operation of the passengers charter.

InterCity Services (Gloucestershire)

21. **Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effects of British Rail privatisation on InterCity services to and from towns in Gloucestershire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Freeman: Involving the private sector in the operation of the railways through franchising will lead to an improvement in the quality of all passenger rail services, including InterCity services to and from Gloucestershire.

Road Lighting

22. **Mr. Peter Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to reduce the level of pollution from road lights in rural areas.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In future, trunk road lighting in rural areas will use lanterns designed to limit light pollution. General guidance will be published to make lighting more environmentally sensitive.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the increased energy costs that will arise as a result of increased street, road and motorway lighting over the next five years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The energy costs for road lighting over the next five years will depend on a number of factors such as the type of lamp used, increases in the road length lit, and any changes in the unit costs of electricity.

By far the largest users of energy for street and road lighting are local highway authorities and no central records are kept. On all-purpose trunk roads and motorways, detailed plans are subject to change according to circumstances, but on present assumptions the overall energy consumption seems likely to rise in the order of 20 per cent. over the next five years.

Networker Trains (Kent)

23. **Sir Roger Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail about the ordering of the proposed networker express trains for the Kent coast services.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of British Rail regularly to discuss current issues. The Chancellor's autumn statement enables BR to order on lease an additional £150 million of new rolling stock over the next three years. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) on 17 December, *Official Report*, c. *337-38*.

Drink-driving

25. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress in reducing deaths linked to drink-driving.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Considerable progress has been made in our continuing campaign against drinking and driving in changing public attitudes and so reducing the number of deaths caused by those who drink and drive.

The percentage of drivers/riders killed who were over the legal limit has fallen from 30 per cent. in 1981 to 19 per cent. in 1991. In 1991 some 700 people were killed in accidents where a driver or rider was over the legal limit compared with 1,540 in 1981 and 800 in 1990.

London Buses Ltd.

27. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements he has made for the disposal of assets held by London Buses Ltd.

Mr. Norris: Following my announcement on 4 December that we intend to proceed with early privatisation of London Buses Ltd., we shall be working up our proposals in more detail, including their implications for the assets held by the company, over the coming months.

EC Environmental Rules

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last had discussions with the European Commissioner for the Environment on the application of the Community's environmental rules to the United Kingdom road programmes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: During the United Kingdom presidency, my right hon. Friend met Mr. van Miert, then Commissioner for Transport and the Environment, on a number of occasions to discuss various matters including the national road programme in England. Trunk roads in the rest of the United Kingdom are the responsibility of the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland.

A20 (Dualling)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current progress of the A20 road dualling between Dover and Folkstone and the expected date for completion.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The A20 Folkestone-Dover scheme is being constructed in three contract lengths. The scheme is expected to be completed by late summer 1993.

Submarine Notification Scheme

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on the responsibility of Commander Ancona with respect to the Subfacts scheme; to whom he is directly responsible; and what is the working relationship of Her Majesty's Coastguard with the Royal Navy and the Ministry of Defence in the operation of the scheme;

(2) what representations he has received concerning the comments of Commander Ancona of Her Majesty's Coastguard regarding the operation of the Subfacts notification scheme; what action he has taken as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Commander Ancona as Chief Coastguard is head of Her Majesty's Coastguard which, as part of marine directorate of the Department of Transport, is responsible for the initiation and co-ordination of civil maritime search and rescue (SAR). He is directly responsible to the director of marine emergency operations. Responsibility for fishing vessel safety rests with the surveyor general's organisation within the Department.

Following the sinking of the fishing vessel Antares in November 1990, the Chief Coastguard, agreed to HM Coastguard broadcasting Subfacts information for the inner Clyde submarine exercise areas on behalf of MOD. The scheme was subsequently extended to the outer Clyde, and Rona and Raasay exercise areas. The Royal Navy under the aegis of the Ministry of Defence provides HM Coastguard rescue centres Clyde, Oban and Belfast with Subfacts information, which is broadcast on marine VHF 6 times per day at staggered four-hourly intervals from several aerials. Subsequently consideration has been given to the most appropriate way of continuing to promulgate this information to fishermen.

Infectious Waste (Imports)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of all shipments of infectious clinical waste for disposal from Germany to the United Kingdom in the last 12 months, including tonnage, port of entry, packaging, labelling and temperature-controlled conditions.

Mr. Norris: The details of individual shipments of clinical waste are not normally recorded by the Department. In these instances, permission has been given for the importation of certain goods subject to stringent conditions.

The packages are of a type designed and tested to comply with standards laid down by the United Nations Economic and Social Council's Committee of Experts' Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and those of the German Federal Institute for Material Research and Material Tests. Packages are labelled and marked "WASTE, INFECTIOUS SUBSTANCES AFFECTING HUMANS" UN 2814, Class 6.2 and carried in refrigerated containers where the temperature is kept below 5 deg. C. We have been informed that about 400 tonnes have been shipped through Harwich during the last 12 months.

Baggage Reconciliation

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with the airlines on baggage reconciliation.

Mr. Norris: The Department has had considerable discussion and consultation with the airlines and their representative bodies over a number of years.

Manchester Airport

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on the ownership of Manchester airport.

Mr. Norris: It is for the local authorities who own the airport to decide, taking into account the needs of those who live in the area and the customers who use the airport. Manchester airport has developed over the last decade into one of the major world airports. We understand the airport company has plans for substantial further development, including in particular a second runway and the second phase of the new terminal. In view of our desire to see more private sector participation in airport provision, supplementary credit approvals will not be granted for such development work. So if the owners wish to see the airport continue to develop, they will need to use their own resources or look to the private sector to fund major expansion, either through a joint venture or outright sale.

Harrogate Western Bypass

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will order an official environmental impact assessment of the chosen route for the western bypass for Harrogate adopted by the North Yorkshire county council.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I understand that an environmental statement will accompany a planning application for the Harrogate western bypass to the county planning authority. In the event that no statement is provided, reserve powers are available to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to require its preparation. A decision on the use of such powers would be taken at the time.

Loan Capital

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the extent to which local authorities plan to obtain capital receipts from the sale of share or loan capital in airport companies between 13 November and 31 December 1993.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend has made no estimates. All capital receipts by local authorities from the disposal of share or loan capital in public airport companies realised during the period referred to will be usable to finance expenditure for capital purposes.

West Coast Main Line

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the estimated cost of the British Rail proposals of essential investment in the west coast main line over the next three years.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that British Rail intends to commence work soon on renewing infrastructure on the west coast main line. The timing of this work, and therefore the cost over the next three years, will be decided in the spring when British Rail have completed its next corporate plan.

Compulsory Purchase

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account he takes of householders' mortgage debts in the compulsory purchase of property required for road schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Mortgage debts are not a factor. Compensation is assessed at full market value and may be used to release an outstanding mortgage debt. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning is actively reviewing what action might be necessary in the event of compensation for properties acquired by compulsory purchase orders falling short of the mortgage debt. We have no evidence of such cases at present.

Coach Accidents

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the statistics for *(a)* serious injuries and *(b)* minor injuries incurred in accidents involving coaches in the last 10 years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The attached table shows the number of people killed, seriously injured and slightly injured in road accidents involving buses and coaches in Great Britain from 1982 to 1991.

Casualties in accidents involving bus and coaches, by severity: Great Britain 1982-1991

				Casualties
	Killed	*Seriously injured*	*Slightly injured*	*Total*
1982	279	2,508	13,803	16,590
1983	263	2,376	13,669	16,308
1984	245	2,263	13,867	16,375

	Killed	Seriously injured	Slightly injured	Total
1985	211	2,397	13,666	16,274
1986	227	2,204	13,234	15,665
1987	199	2,179	13,040	15,418
1988	188	2,214	13,321	15,723
1989	223	2,088	14,467	16,778
1990	225	2,000	14,232	16,457
1991	189	1,771	12,637	14,597

M6

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the estimated cost of the widening of the M6 motorway from junctions 11 to 20.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The estimated works cost is £570 million.

Electric-powered Cars

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his policy towards the Coventry city council plans to introduce a public network of electric-powered cars.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 17 December 1992]:* I welcome Coventry city council's efforts to seek involvement in a trial of a limited rental fleet of electric cars under the collaborative European THERMIE programme.

The results of such trials should help inform customers, who ultimately determine the success of any vehicle development, and give useful data to those with specific technical, research and commercial interests.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Market Testing

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will undertake a review of market testing in the light of the European Court of Justice rulings on the validity of Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on public sector activities which have been or could be contracted out.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The general position in relation to the services which are being market tested by central Government Departments and agencies is unaffected by recent decisions of the European Court of Justice—it remains the case that in some cases the regulations will apply if the service is subsequently supplied by an outside contractor; in others they will not.

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list *(a)* the total number of residential properties owned by his Department, *(b)* the number of such properties which are empty and *(c)*, *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Jackson: The Office of Public Service and Science does not own any residential properties.

AIDS

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the present and past members of the AIDS-directed programme committee.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The present members of the Medical Research Council AIDS-directed programme steering committee are:

Dr. G. C. Schild (Chairman)
Dr. J. Karn
Professor J. Neil
Dr. D. Tyrell FRS
Professor A. J. McMichael
Professor J. Almond
Professor G. Dodson
Dr. J. Darbyshire
Professor A. C. Minson
Professor A. Rickinson

There are three vacant positions on the Committee at present in the process of being filled.

Past members of the Committee are:

Professor T. Blundell
Dr. M. Crumpton
Dr. R. Dwek
Professor W. Jarrett
Professor K. Murray
Dr. M. Perutz
Dr. D. A. Rees
Professor C. B. Reese
Dr. P. Greenaway
Dr. J. Skehel
Professor A. Williams

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total spending on the Medical Research Council AIDS-directed programme; to which research projects grants have been made under this programme; what is the amount of each grant awarded; and who are the heads of the research groups for each project funded by this programme.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Between 1987-88 (when the programme began) and 1991-92, the Medical Research Council has spent £27·8 million on its AIDS-directed programme.

A list of research project grants made under this programme, the amount of each grant awarded and the heads of the research groups for the projects funded by this programme has been placed in the Library.

Research Vessels

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consultations he has had with the Natural Environmental Research Council on *(a)* the deficit in the budget of the Institute of Oceanographic Sciences, *(b)* the laying up of research vessels and *(c)* the proposed relocation of the research vessels service from Barry to Southampton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Jackson: None. These are matters for the Natural Environment Research Council.

Civil Service

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide, by outlet, a breakdown of the amount spent on recruitment advertising for the civil service in the ethnic minority media in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not centrally held. The majority of civil service recruitment is undertaken by individual departments and agencies who are responsible for selecting their own advertising media.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the guidelines governing the appointment of full-time civil servants to be non-executive directors of private companies; how many full-time civil servants are non-executive directors of private companies; what studies he has undertaken into potential conflicts of interests involving such appointments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: One of the principles of conduct which binds the civil service, set out in the personnel management handbook, is that civil servants must not take part in activities which might conflict with the interests of their Departments; or impair their usefulness as public servants; or be inconsistent with their position as public servants. It is for the Departments and individuals concerned to ensure that these requirements are met in each case.

In addition, my Department is publishing this month a new guidance note on the appointment of civil servants as non-executive directors to supplement the rules and procedures followed in departments. I will arrange for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The Government continue to support and encourage this and other forms of interchange between the civil service and outside organisations. Approximately 65 full-time civil servants are currently non-executive directors of private companies.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

English Tourist Board

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the reasons underlying the decision to reduce the English tourist board's grant for the coming financial year.

Mr. Key: I refer to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn, Hatfield (Mr. Evans) on 13 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *997-98*. I believe that the case is now much less strong for central Government funding of the promotion of tourism in England. The English tourist board (ETB) has done a great deal over the years to raise standards, to improve access to information, and to show the industry how their products can be developed and marketed. As the industry matures, and the regional tourist boards develop, it is appropriate for other bodies to carry on many of the ETB's central activities. That is reflected in the allocations of Exchequer grants for tourism over the next three years.

However, I also believe that central Government support for the regional tourist boards should continue. I believe that this support should be targeted much more closely than at present on areas of need where tourism might be an instrument of economic regeneration. The English tourist board is currently working on proposals for support to the regional tourist boards.

Works of Art

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) pursuant to his answer, 30 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *43*, what definition is used of works of art;

(2) pursuant to his answer, 30 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *43*, when the computerised inventory of the works of art in the occupied royal palaces was begun; and when it is expected that the exercise will be completed;

(3) if he will publish an inventory of the contents of the occupied royal palaces, excluding works of art, which are public property and not owned by the sovereign.

Mr. Brooke: Work on preparing a computerised inventory of the royal collection, which is being carried out by the royal collection department of the royal household, began in early 1991, and it is expected that the exercise will be completed in 1997. This is a major undertaking, involving the individual inspection, numbering and recording of every object. Information about the contents of the royal palaces, other than works of art, is not available.

The inventory will cover pictures, drawings, books, furniture, sculpture, metalwork, textiles and ceramics.

Sports Fields

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has in regard to the number and areas of public sports fields that have been sold to the construction of buildings over the past two years.

Mr. Key: No such information is held centrally. That is why the Great Britain Sports Council's grant in aid settlement from the Government for 1991-92 included £500,000 to enable the establishment of a register of recreational land, in conjunction with the National Playing Fields Association, and Central Council for Physical Recreation. We will then, for the first time, know the number and size of playing fields in England. The register should be up and running by June 1993.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales will be considering with the Welsh Sports Council whether the register of recreational land should be extended to Wales.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Benefits

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the number and proportion of people who were *(a)* claiming and *(b)* receiving supplementary benefit or income support in 1979 and 1991 in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie, who replied to the hon. Member on 23 December 1992.

Letter from Mr. Wylie, to Mr. Graham Allen, dated 23 December 1992:

As I am responsible for social security operational matters your recent Parliamentary Question on the number and

proportion of people who were claiming and receiving Supplementary Benefit or Income Support in 1979 and 1991 has been passed to me for reply.

I regret that there are no statistics available on the number and proportion of people who were claiming Supplementary Benefit or Income Support as the data held does not distinguish new claims from repeat claims. I hope however that the following information will be helpful.

Year	*Number of new and repeat claims for supplementary benefit or income support*	*Number of customers receiving supplementary benefit or income support*	*Proportion of population receiving supplementary benefit or income support Percentage*
1979	42,098	115,359	[1]10·75
1991	146,563	201,265	17·00

[1] Estimated figures can only be given for 1979 as there was no census held that year.

A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report* and copies will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the number and proportion of children who were in families receiving supplementary benefit or income support in 1979 and 1991 in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. However, I understand that the information is not available in the form requested.

Waterways

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to develop *(a)* the Newry canal and *(b)* other waterways in Northern Ireland for recreational and tourist use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The future development of the Newry canal for tourism and leisure use will be considered upon completion of the feasibility study which I understand is to be commissioned shortly by the four councils through whose area the canal flows. The Department of Agriculture, as the drainage authority for Northern Ireland, and the Northern Ireland tourist board will contribute to the cost of the study. The tourist board is prepared to consider reasoned proposals for the tourism and leisure development of Northern Ireland's heritage waterways where the investment of public funds will yield commensurate benefit to the local economy without damage to the environment.

Ferry Service (Ballycastle)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made towards provision of roll-on, roll-off facilities at Ballycastle; and if it will make it his Department's policy to introduce ferry services between Ballycastle and Scotland.

Mr. Atkins: Ballycastle harbour is owned by Moyle district council. Subject to the availability of a Government grant the council hopes to undertake improvements at both Ballycastle and Rathlin harbours to enable the upgrading of the Rathlin island ferry service. The council's plans include the construction of a roll-on/roll-off ramp at Ballycastle. It has not been possible to allocate the necessary resources to these proposals within the current public expenditure round.

It is the Government's view that the introduction of ferry services between Ballycastle and Scotland is a matter for the commercial judgment of ferry operators.

Lone Parents

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in how many cases, where income support is being paid to a single mother, the absent parent is paying maintenance.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie, who replied to the hon. Member on 5 January 1993.

Letter from Mr. Wylie to Mr. Seamus Mallon, dated 5 January 1993:

As I am responsible for Social Security operational matters your recent Parliamentary Question on the number of cases where income support is being paid to a single mother and the absent parent is paying maintenance, has been passed to me for reply.

The most recent information available is set out below.

Year	*Court Order paid direct to single parent*	*Voluntary Payment paid direct to single parent*	*Court Order diverted to Department*	*Voluntary Payment diverted to Department*	*Total*
1990	3,640	660	580	80	4,960

These figures include a small number of single fathers for whom there is no separate data available.

I hope you find this information helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report* and copies will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many single parents are in receipt of income support; and how many of these are *(a)* male and *(b)* female.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie, who replied to the hon. Member on 5 January 1993.

Letter from Mr. Wylie to Mr. Seamus Mallon, dated 5 January 1993:

As I am responsible for Social Security operational matters your recent Parliamentary Question on the number of single parents in receipt of Income Support and how many of these are *(a)* male and *(b)* female has been passed to me for reply.

The most recent information available is set out below.

Year	Total number of one parent families	Total fatherless families[1] (female claimants)	Total male claimants[2]
1990	27,060	26,020	1,040

Notes:

[1] the total number of female single parents includes 860 widows and 160 partners of prisoners,
and

[2] the total number of male single parents includes those who are widowed or divorced, for which there are no separate statistics.

I hope you find this information helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report and copies will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to ensure that single parents, in receipt of state benefit, will not be penalised either because the absent parent fails to pay maintenance, or because the absent parent cannot be identified because of a perceived threat to the child or its mother.

Mr. Hanley: It already is Government policy to ensure that whenever the child support scheme is introduced in April 1993, parents with care who are in receipt of benefit and who have co-operated with the Child Support Agency in providing information about the absent parent, will not be penalised as a result of the absent parent failing to pay maintenance.

Similarly it is already Government policy to ensure that parents with care in receipt of income support, family credit or disability working allowance are not penalised for refusing to name the father of the child if they can show to the satisfaction of the Child Support Agency that to do so would carry the risk of causing harm or undue distress to the parent with care or to the child.

Electricity

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what statutory right of access for third parties there will be to the proposed Scotland-Northern Ireland electricity interconnector.

Mr. Atkins: During the first 15 years the capacity of the interconnector is reserved to NIE plc. Thereafter, subject to the interconnector having spare capacity and the regulator establishing a suitable trading system, direct trade across the interconnector will be possible.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what capacity in megawatts is presently proposed for the Scotland-Northern Ireland electricity interconnector; and to what extent this proposed capacity is sufficient to allow third party access.

Mr. Atkins: The capacity of the proposed interconnector is 250 megawatts. All the available capacity is reserved to NIE plc during the first 15 years. Thereafter, subject to the regulator establishing a suitable trading system, generators, NIE and its supply competitors will be able to trade across the interconnector up to its maximum capacity.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the agreement between Northern Ireland Electricity and Scottish Power on the proposed Scotland-Northern Ireland electricity interconnector constitutes a formal contract.

Mr. Atkins: NIE and Scottish Power have entered into legally binding heads of agreement and formal contracts are being drawn up.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what calculation his Department has made of the differential in electricity prices for large industrial users in Northern Ireland as opposed to the rest of the United Kingdom following *(a)* the introduction of the new bulk supply tariff, *(b)* the application of the transitional arrangements to the BST and *(c)* the expiry of these arrangements in 1994-95.

Mr. Atkins: Terms to supply consumers using more than 1MW of electricity are contained in individual commercially confidential contracts. It is not, therefore, possible for the Department to make such comparisons.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Birmingham Airport

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to increase the numbers of customs officers at Birmingham airport engaged in anti-smuggling activities in 1993; and what plans he has to respond to the proposed introduction of flights from the United States of America.

Sir John Cope: The Birmingham collection executive unit, as part of its ongoing analysis of staffing needs, has increased from 1 January 1993 the anti-smuggling staff based at Birmingham international airport. This is to take into account the perceived increase in risks in relation to the new American traffic.

Discussions are also taking place with both the airport authority and the major operator of transatlantic flights for provision by Customs of the appropriate number of staff for duties other than anti-smuggling.

Eurofed

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer at what stage are negotiations on the location of the Eurofed; when a final decision is to be made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: No decision has been taken on the location of the European Monetary Institute or the European Central Bank and there is no firm timetable for this decision.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what efforts he has made to support the case for locating all or part of the proposed Eurofed, or the EMI which precedes it, in Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: I have consistently drawn the attention of my EC colleagues to the advantages for the Community in establishing the new monetary institutions in the United Kingdom.

Alcohol Tax

Sir David Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to move towards a uniform method of drinks taxation, and to eliminate the higher rates of duty on Scotch whisky and other United Kingdom spirits.

Mr. Lamont: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) on 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, col. *377*.

Bonus Payments

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce proposals for higher rate tax bands for bonus payments in excess of £6 million per year.

Mr. Dorrell: No.

Family Incomes

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table which sets out for a two-child family on *(a)* half average earnings, *(b)* three quarters average earnings, *(c)* average earnings, *(d)* one and a half average earnings, *(e)* twice average earnings, *(f)* five times average earnings and *(g)* 10 times average earnings the increase in net income to be derived from (i) a 1p cut in the standard rate of income tax in the 1993-94 financial year, (ii) an increase in personal allowances, over and above indexation, which incurred the same cost as a 1p cut in the standard rate of income tax and (iii) an increase in child benefit which incurred the same cost as a 1p cut in standard rate income tax, both assuming and not assuming similar increases in the income support and family credit children's rates separately.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate, on the same basis as the ready reckoner published in the autumn statement, what is the effect on a one-earner, two-child family of spending in 1993-94 the same sum on *(a)* a 1p cut in the basic rate of income tax, *(b)* raising income tax thresholds above their indexed levels, *(c)* raising child benefits assuming (i) no change in income support and family credit rates and (ii) corresponding changes in income support and family credit rates.

Mr. Dorrell: The effects of the various changes to income tax and child benefit on a married man with two children are shown in the table. Each of the changes would cost £1·5 billion a year, that is the cost in a full year of a 1p cut in the basic rate of income tax. Estimates are based on projections of the 1990-91 survey of personal incomes.

Increase in income after tax[1] (£ per week) compared with indexation[2] in 1993-94 for a married man[3] with two children

	Multiple of average earnings[4]						
	½	*¾*	*1*	*1½*	*2*	*5*	*10*
Increase derived from							
(i) 1p cut in basic rate	0·39	1·29	2·20	4·02	4·31	4·31	4·31
(ii) 10·25 per cent. increase in personal allowances	1·16	1·16	1·16	1·16	1·84	1·84	1·84
(iii) increase in child benefit							
(a) £3·35 per week per child[5]	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70
(b) £2·15 per week per child[6]	4·30	4·30	4·30	4·30	4·30	4·30	4·30

Notes:
[1] Disregarding any change to entitlement to social security income—related benefits except in item (iii)b.
[2] Calculations based on the standard assumption that 1992-93 allowances' lower rate band and the basic rate limit have been indexed by 3·25 per cent. for 1993-94.
[3] Assumed to have no tax reliefs and allowances other than the personal allowance and the married couple's allowance.
[4] Average earnings assumed to be £363·3 per week.
[5] Assuming no change in income support and family credit children's rates.
[6] Assuming corresponding changes in income support and family credit children's rates.

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide figures for 1979 and 1989 showing, on an equivalent income basis, the proportion of households consisting of *(a)* one adult with children, *(b)* two adults with children, *(c)* non-retired without children and *(d)* retired in each quintile of *(a)* original income and *(b)* post-tax income, as defined in the annual articles in *Economic Trends* on the effects of taxes and benefits.

Mr. Nelson: The information is not available in the precise form requested because only one method of ranking is used to produce the annual article in *Economic Trends* and this uses equivalised disposal income. The data for 1979 were first published on an unequivalised basis and have been reworked on an equivalised basis. The figures are given in the table:

Percentage of household types within each quintile group of eqivalised disposable income, 1979 and 1989

Household type	*Quintile groups of equivalised disposable income*					
	Botto m	*2nd*	*3rd*	*4th*	*Top*	*All house holds*
1979						
1 adult with children	6	3	2	2	1	3
2 adults with children	16	32	43	33	18	28
Non-retired without children	11	23	33	51	73	38
Retired	65	33	10	4	4	23
3 or more adults with children	2	8	12	10	5	8
	100	100	100	100	100	100
1989						
1 adult with children	10	6	3	1	1	4
2 adults with children	15	20	33	29	22	24
Non-retired without children	19	24	40	55	67	41
Retired	52	45	17	9	7	26

Household type	Quintile groups of equivalised disposable income					
	Botto m	2nd	3rd	4th	Top	All house holds
3 or more adults with children	3	6	7	6	3	5
	100	100	100	100	100	100

The figures in the table are rounded and may not add up to 100.
Source: Central Statistical Office, based on Family Expenditure Survey.

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* working families with children and *(b)* childless people in work had incomes below the tax threshold at the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Dorrell: There are an estimated 450,000 working families with children and 1·1 million childless people at work who have incomes below the income tax threshold and are therefore not liable to income tax in 1992-93. For this purpose, income is calculated as total income for income tax purposes, excluding any non-taxable social security benefits, less tax reliefs and is compared witht he appropriate levels of personal tax allowances. The estimates are based on information projected from the 1990 and 1991 family expenditure surveys and are therefore provisional.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Straw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has made of the effect on levels of employment and prices and on the balance of payments of *(a)* an additional £2 billion of local authority revenue expenditure financed by (i) local taxation and (ii) additional revenue support grant and *(b)* an additional £2 billion of local authority capital expenditure financed by (1) the use of set aside capital receipts and (2) borrowing.

Mr. Portillo: The effects on levels of employment, prices and on the balance of payments of the measures mentioned would depend on a number of assumptions about economic behaviour at both local and national level, as well as the precise details of these measures.

EC Spending

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of spending by the EC, expressed in pounds sterling in 1992; and what percentage increase in this spending is envisaged by 1999 following the Edinburgh Council of 11-12 December.

Sir John Cope: Following the adoption of the third supplementary and amending budget, the budget of the European Communities for 1992 amounts to 63,907 million ecu in commitment appropriations, or £52 billion, at the exchange rate prevailing on 30 November 1992 (£1 = ECU 1·2290) and 61,097 million ecu in payment appropriations, or £49·7 billion. The Edinburgh European Council agreed a financial perspective for the next seven years which provides ceilings for spending in 1999 of 84,089 million ecu, £68·4 billion, for commitment appropriation and 80,114 million ecu, £65·2 billion, for payment appropriations—all in 1992 prices. These represent increases of 31·6 per cent. and 31·1 per cent. respectively over spending in 1992.

However, the 1999 figures are ceilings for the budget, not targets for spending levels. Actual spending in 1999 will be set in the budgetary procedure for that year and will reflect the rate of economic growth achieved in the next seven years, as well as other factors such as enlargement of the Community. Spending is constrained by the legally binding ceiling on own resources for payment appropriations, which will be 1·27 per cent. of Community GNP in 1999.

Personal Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much in real terms the average annual tax payments of a man with no allowances and reliefs other than the married couple's allowance earning *(a)* £5,000, *(b)* £10,000, *(c)* £15,000 and *(d)* £20,000 have changed since 1978-79.

Mr. Dorrell: Income tax for a married man as a percentage of gross income is as follows:

Income in 1992-93 £	Income tax[1] 1992-93 per cent.	1978-79[2] per cent.
5,000	0	0
10,000	11·1	11·9
15,000	15·7	18·9
20,000	18·0	22·4

[1] Assuming that the only allowances and reliefs available are the married man's allowance in 1978-79 and the personal allowance plus the married couple's allowance in 1992-93. In each case the wife is assumed to have no income.
[2] Calculations for 1978-79 are based on the income tax regime for that year applied to levels of income adjusted from the 1992-93 figures in line with the change in average male earnings.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements are to be made for the publication of statistics of trade with the European Community in 1993.

Mr. Nelson: With the completion of the single market on 1 January, most border formalities for goods traded with other member states are abolished. As the associated documentation forms the source of the current visible trade statistics, normal publication of figures for trade with the European Community will be suspended while a new system for the collection of the statistics, Intrastat, becomes established. The monthly press notice published on 28 January, showing December's trade figures, will be the last in the present form. Details of our trade with non-EC countries will continue to be published monthly.

Aggregate figures for whole world trade, including that with the European Community, for the first quarter 1993 balance of payments and GDP will be published in mid-June 1993. Shortly thereafter it is planned to resume the publication of the monthly "Balance of Payments—Current Account" press notices with aggregate figures for intra-Community trade.

The initial pattern of publication of detailed figures for visible trade with the European Community will be a quarterly volume containing monthly details at eight-digit commodity code level, which should be available shortly after the resumption of the monthly press notices. The monthly information will also be available from Customs and Excise-approved marketing agents.

This initial delay in the publication of figures is planned to be reduced as the year progresses.

Unit Trust Holdings

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes are proposed to the tax rules which apply to unit trust holdings owned by life assurance companies.

Mr. Dorrell: On 30 December 1992 I announced changes to the new charge to tax on life assurance companies brought in by the Finance Act 1990. The charge arises on the deemed disposal of their holdings in authorised unit trusts and certain offshore funds.

For most companies the charge is due to come into effect for accounting periods beginning on 1 January 1992. We propose to defer the charge for one year so that it relates first to accounting periods beginning on or after 1 January 1993.

The existing measures can, however, produce a higher tax charge than was intended; and we propose to bring forward amending legislation in the 1993 Finance Bill to counter this effect. There will also be amendments to the transitional provisions.

The Inland Revenue press release of 30 December 1992 containing the text of my announcement, and further details of the proposals, has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Employee Share Schemes

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how soon he expects to announce details of the introduction and operation of approved employee share schemes up to the end of March 1992.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimated figures for the year ended March 1992 will be issued shortly in an Inland Revenue press release.

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Inland Revenue next intends to revise and update its booklets and leaflets on approved employee share schemes to include in particular reference to buy one get one free matching share offers and the single company PEPs facilities.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue is planning to issue revised versions of these booklets and leaflets, reflecting recent changes in legislation, in the course of this year.

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will review the actions of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in respect of its dealings with Matrix Churchill to assess whether compensation should be paid to the ex-employees of Matrix Churchill.

Sir John Cope: The Government have already established an independent inquiry under Lord Justice Scott with broad terms of reference which will enable Her Majesty's Customs and Excise actions in the Matrix Churchill case to be fully examined. It would be inappropriate for me to undertake a separate review.

As regards the issue of compensation, I would draw the hon. Member's attention to the advice of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to the House on 10 November 1992, *Official Report*, c. 746-47, that if there is a prosecution which subsequently fails or is withdrawn for any particular reason, representations can be made, but is has never been the policy for there to be formal compensation in these circumstances.

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list *(a)* the total number of residential properties owned by his Departments, *(b)* the number of such properties which are empty and *(c)*, *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Sir John Cope: The only residential properties owned by the Chancellor's Departments are two owned by Customs and Excise. Both are fully occupied.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding the implications for staffing levels and confidentiality of Inland Revenue services being offered to private tender; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received a number of representations about the market testing of services in the Inland Revenue. Any implications for staffing levels will depend on the outcome of particular market tests; we believe that, if work is contracted out, there are sufficient safeguards to ensure that the privacy of information about taxpayers will continue to be properly protected.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many claims have been submitted in the former deposits of BCCI under the provisions of the Deposit Protection Board; how much has so far been paid to them; and how much is to be paid.

Mr. Nelson: As at 7 January 1993 some 16,700 claims had been lodged with the Deposit Protection Board. Of these the claims so far processed have given rise to compensation payments totalling £60·5 million. The size of the eventual payment to these claimants will depend on the scale and nature of claims still to be processed.

Redundancy

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what guidelines he has established for the use of non-disclosure agreements as part of redundancy and early retirement settlements in the public service; if he will set up a study into how many former officials of non-departmental public bodies have signed such agreements in such circumstances; and what premium was paid to them for signing such agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Employees generally have an implied duty not to misuse confidential information which they have

obtained in the course of their employment. In most situations, this would restrict disclosure of confidential information without proper authority. The duty continues to apply even after they have left.

There are no central guidelines or instructions which require former employees of non-departmental public bodies not to disclose the terms of their redundancy or early retirement settlements. My right hon. Friend has no plans to set up a study of the kind suggested. I should not expect redundancy or early retirement arrangements to include an agreement restricting disclosure of the terms of any financial settlement. Details of such settlements will in any event be available to the Comptroller and Auditor General in the course of any audit or inspection he undertakes of a body's records.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Financial Management

35. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what developments have taken place in financial management and scrutiny of House expenditure in the current financial year.

Mr. Beith: As well as the establishment of the domestic committees and the Finance and Services Committee, good progress has been made in improving financial management systems in House Departments. These include the allocation of departmental budgets and delegation of authority to incur expenditure and approve payments. Further improvements are planned by the Director of Finance and Administration.

Contracting Out

Mr. David Evans: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will make a statement on policy towards contracting out of House of Commons services.

Mr. Beith: Services are contracted out where this can meet the requirements of the House and provide benefits in quality, efficiency and value for money.

Next Steps Agencies

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission if he will make a statement on the resources available to the National Audit Office to undertake effective auditing of all projected next steps agencies.

Sir Peter Hordern: The Comptroller and Auditor General is the statutory auditor of all the agencies. The National Audit Office's corporate plan for 1993-94 to 1997-98, considered and approved by the commission in July 1992, includes resources for the audit of existing agencies and those expected to be established over the next five years.

Domestic Committees (Oral Questions)

42. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to allow time for answering of oral questions by Chairmen of the domestic Committees.

Mr. Newton: None. Oral questions are already answered on behalf of the House of Commons Commission, and now that the Finance and Services Committee has been nominated, arrangements will be made for its Chairman also to answer oral questions as appropriate. For the other domestic committees, there are no plans to go beyond the existing provision for their Chairmen to answer written questions.

PRIME MINISTER

Scottish Constitution

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the people whom he has consulted in connection with his stocktaking exercise about Scotland's constitutional position.

The Prime Minister: I have had frequent opportunities to hear views from people of all political persuasions and from many backgrounds, including the church, the law, business, academic life, the arts and the media.

India

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister which cities he intends to visit on his next visit to India.

The Prime Minister: I shall visit Delhi as a guest of the Indian Government on republic day on 26 January. I shall also visit Bombay.

UN Population Conference

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Prime Minister (1) in which country the United Nations conference on world population will be held; and on what dates;

(2) what proposals the Government have to involve relevant non-governmental organisations in preparation for the 1994 United Nations conference on world population;

(3) what proposals the Government have to enable *(a)* relevant non-governmental organisations and *(b)* hon. Members to attend the 1994 United Nations conference on world population;

(4) which Government Department is to be responsible for the 1994 United Nations population conference.

The Prime Minister: The international conference on population and development will take place in Cairo from 5 to 13 September 1994. A decision will be taken shortly on which Government Department will also take prime responsibility for United Kingdom preparations for the conference. The Government will make proposals shortly for how hon. Members and relevant non-governmental organisations might be involved in the preparations.

Committee of Permanent Representatives

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals he has to apply the decision to improve transparency in the activities of the European Council to the availability to Parliament of *(a)* the minutes of COREPER and *(b)* proposals prepared by COREPER for the Council prior to their consideration by the Council.

The Prime Minister: There are no such plans.

EC Monetary Reserve

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister why the European Council in Edinburgh concluded that the EC's monetary reserve should be halved between 1994 and 1995; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The decision was taken in the light of the recent reform of the CAP, which involves a shift away from price support towards direct payments to producers. That should make CAP expenditure progressively less susceptible to the impact of fluctuations in the dollar/ecu exchange rate.

EC Agriculture Spending

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister why the European Council concluded on 11-12 December that agriculture spending by the EC would fall between 1993 and 1994; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The figures to which my hon. Friend refers are those for the agricultural guidelines in constant 1992 prices. The guideline is calculated in real terms by up-rating the 1988 baseline figure by 74 per cent. of the estimated growth in real Community gross national product (GNP) between 1988 and the year in question. This calculation takes place when the Commission submits its preliminary draft budget. For 1993, therefore, the guideline was calculated in May 1992. Subsequently, the estimate of Community GNP was revised downwards. Although the decision was too late to affect the 1993 figure it will be reflected in the guideline for 1994 and thereafter. The estimate for the guideline for 1994 to 1999, used by the European Council in its future financing plans, takes account of this latest information.

European Environmental Agency

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what arrangements were agreed at the Edinburgh summit for the siting of the European Environmental Agency.

The Prime Minister: It was agreed at the European Council that the siting of the European Environmental Agency will be decided by common agreement between member states at a forthcoming European Council, giving appropriate priority to member states who do not at present provide the sites for Community institutions.

Edinburgh Summit

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if section A (Citizenship) on page 5 B of part B of the "Conclusions of the Presidency" in Edinburgh was designed by the Council to apply to all member states.

The Prime Minister: The section referred to by the hon. Member was designed to meet Danish concerns but it represents an interpretation of the provisions of the Maastricht treaty relating to citizenship of the union which was agreed by all member states and is true for all of them.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what procedures he proposes for ratification of the intergovernmental agreement reached at Edinburgh on Danish qualifications to the Maastricht treaty.

The Prime Minister: The decision does not require ratification.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on how Her Majesty's Government propose to implement the decision set out at paragraph 7 of the Edinburgh declaration on the conclusions of the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council to increase public investment in decision-making.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom will work closely with other members of the Council, the Commission and Parliament to ensure that the measures on transparency agreed in Edinburgh are put into practice as soon as possible.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister why the European Council in Edinburgh concluded that there should be no increase in the provision of loan guarantees between 1993 and 1999; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Edinburgh European Council endorsed the conclusions of the ECOFIN Council in October that the Community's growing international responsibilities had led to an increase in the level and scope of lending to non-member states backed by guarantees on the EC budget, and that considerations of prudent budgetary management and financial discipline called for the establishment of a new financial framework, including an appropriate form of provisioning. The European Council accordingly agreed that a guarantee fund should be established, with a target size of 10 per cent. of the Community's outstanding liabilities arising from external loans and guarantees; and that this should be financed by a reserve in the financial perspective not exceeding 300 million ECU in each year from 1993 to 1999 (in 1992 prices), from which payments would be made into the fund in proportion to the value of new loans agreed. This framework will be sufficient to allow continuing significant levels of new lending to non-member states guaranteed on the EC budget.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give the names of the persons signing their names as plenipotentiary of each relevant state to the intergovernmental decision relating to Denmark at the European Council meeting in Edinburgh.

The Prime Minister: The decision relating to Denmark was not signed. This does not affect its character as an agreement binding in international law between the parties to the treaty on European union on how certain of its provisions are to be interpreted and applied.

Princess of Wales

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Prime Minister what advice he received from sources outside the Government concerning the constitutional position of the accession to the throne of the Princess of Wales, before making his statement to the House of 9 December.

The Prime Minister: The advice which I took on this matter is confidential.

Gambling

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will describe the process by which concerned people can contribute to and respond to Government ideas on maintaining, abolishing or changing the restrictions on stimulation of gaming or gambling.

The Prime Minister: The processes are the same as those for any other aspect of Government policy. As necessary, the Government issue consultation documents on particular aspects of the gambling controls. In addition, interested parties may at any time make their views known direct to Government or via Members of Parliament.

Iraq (Equipment)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Prime Minister what information he has on the comparative sales of machine tools to Iraq from *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the United States of America, *(c)* France, *(d)* Italy and *(e)* COMECON countries in 1987, 1988 and 1989.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* The information requested for the first four countries is set out in the following table:

US $000s

	SITC (Standard International Trade Classification) Code	*United Kingdom*	*United States of America*	*France*	*Italy*
1987	728·1	359	116	63	208
	736[1]	5,130	33	1,161	5,224
	Total	5,489	149	1,224	5,432
1988	728·1	529	168	111	1,287
	731	53,951	n/a	239	10,920
	733	2,160	n/a	5,922	7,306
	735	6,436	n/a	4,711	2,754
	Total	63,076	168	10,983	22,267
1989	728·1	991	43	61	1,601
	731	18,990	2,272	609	1,545
	733	1,208	1,857	1,385	6,890
	735	3,138	7,080	2,637	4,391
	Total	24,327	11,252	4,692	14,427

Code *Description*
728·1 Machine tools specialised for particular industries.
731 Machine tools operated by laser or other light beam process.
733 Forging or die-stamping machines (including presses) and hammers.
735 Tool holders and self opening dieheads.
736 Metal working machine tools.

[1] Replaced by codes 731, 733 and 735 from 1988 onwards.

Source: OECD.

The corresponding information for COMECON countries is not available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who will be responsible for paying compensation as a result of the late delivery to St. Helena of a new power generator.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A 1 MW diesel generator was provided last year for the use of St. Helena's public works and services department at a cost of £562,000 to aid funds. It was supplied by Mirrlees Blackstone Ltd., shipped on schedule abord the RMS St. Helena arriving on 4 May 1992, and taken over by the public works and services department on 21 July 1992 following installation and commissioning tests. No delay in delivery occurred and the question of compensation does not arise.

Southern Africa

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the current and forecast rains on the prospects for the drought-affected areas of southern Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

Initial reports of the rains are encouraging for most parts of the region, but good rains over the next two months are critical. We shall continue to monitor the situation closely with the relevant international organisations and NGOs; and are ready to assist, particularly in areas where the rains have failed or where for other reasons people have been unable to plant.

Timber

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to ensure that timber imported into the United Kingdom has not been logged from tribal people's land without their free and informed consent.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Except as provided for under the convention on international trade in endangered species, the United Kingdom does not restrict timber imports and has no plans to do so. Questions of land and forest ownership rights are primarily the responsibility of the Governments of the countries where the forest lie. We are prepared to consider requests from developing countries for aid in forest resource conservation and management.

Malagasy Republic

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress the Minister for Overseas Development has made in sourcing the most appropriate items of equipment, and identifying suitable people to fill the supporting personnel requirements, to implement the Food and Agriculture Organisation consultant's recommendations on locusts in the Malagasy Republic.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Sources for the provision of equipment have been identified. The specification and frequency acceptability of the telecommunications equipment is still being cleared with the Food and Agriculture Organisation co-ordinator and the Madagascan authorities. As soon as these matters are formally cleared procurement of all the equipment will be undertaken and the associated training input put in hand.

Debtor Countries

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total amount of debt interest payments made to the United Kingdom in the past 10 years by each of the severely indebted countries, according to the UN definition; and how much was received by each of them in aid over the same period.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will write to the hon. Member.

Forests

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how he plans to address the question of tribal people's ownership of their land and resources in the United Kingdom's national plan for forests.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Questions of the ownership of land and resources by tribal peoples are primarily the responsibility of the Governments of the countries in which they live. The United Kingdom national plan for forests will concentrate on activities within this country.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Argentina (Fisheries)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it the policy of Her Majesty's Government to oppose the proposed fishery agreement between the European Community and the Argentine Government unless and until it has agreed to the joint management by Britain and Argentina of stocks of illex squid in the waters of the south west Atlantic.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We support the principle of an EC fisheries agreement with Argentina. We have obtained several improvements to the original proposals and shall discuss them further with Community partners. We have now reached a bilateral interim agreement on fisheries management with the Argentine Government. We shall continue our dialogue with them to achieve adequate conservation measures which protect the economic interests of the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make an estimate of the cost to the Exchequer of contributing to the 28 million ecu financial assistance programme to Argentina under the proposed EC fishery agreement to enable Spanish and Portuguese vessels to fish in Argentinian waters.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply.

The draft EC/Argentina Fisheries Agreement provides for the granting of 27·5 mecu in technical and scientific assistance to Argentina over a five year period; at the normal rate of United Kingdom contributions to the Budget the cost to the Exchequer would be about £800,000 per annum. Additional sums will be paid to EC vessel owners and their Argentinian partners for joint ventures involving EC vessels fishing in Argentinian waters and the cost would depend upon the number of boats taking up the opportunities. The fishing opportunities available under the draft agreement are not confined to Spain and Portugal but are available to vessel owners throughout the Community.

British Consular Offices

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British consular offices there are in each Latin American country; if he will list their locations; and what was the number of such offices in 1987.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In Latin America there are currently 41 British consular offices, including honorary consular offices. A list follows. In 1987 there were 33 such offices. The increase in the number of consular offices is the result of the extension of the honorary network. Honorary consuls provide assistance and advice to British national at minimal cost.

British Consular Offices in Latin America—1992

Country		*Location*	*Position*
Paraguay	1	Ascuncion	
Columbia	4	Bogota	
Columbia		Barranquilla	Honorary Consul
Columbia		Cali	Honorary Consul
Columbia		Medellin	Honorary Consul
Brazil	13	Brasilia	
Brazil		Belem	Honorary Consul
Brazil		Manuas	Honorary Vice Consul
		Rio De Janeiro	
Brazil		Belo Horizonte	Honorary Consul
Brazil		Fortaleza	Honorary Consul
Brazil		Recife	Honorary Consul
Brazil		Salvador	Honorary Consul
Brazil		Sao Paulo	
Brazil		Porto Alegre	Honorary Consul
Brazil		Rio Grande	Honorary Consul
Brazil		Santos	Honorary Consul
Brazil		Curitiba	Honorary Consul
Venezuela	3	Caracas	
Venezuela		Maracaibo	Honorary Vice Consul
Venezuela		Merida	Honorary Vice Consul
Guyana	1	Georgetown	
Bolivia	2	La Paz	
Bolivia		Santa Cruz	Honorary Consul
Peru	6	Lima	
Peru		Arequipa	Honorary Consul
Peru		Cusco	Honorary Consul
Peru		Iquitos	Honorary Consul
Peru		Piura	Honorary Consul
Peru		Trujillo	Honorary Consul
Uruguay	1	Montevideo	
Ecuador	4	Quito	
Ecuador		Guayaquil	Honorary Consul
Ecuador		Cuenca	Honorary Consul
Ecuador		Galapagos	Honorary Consul
Chile	5	Santiago	
Chile		Arica	Honorary Consul
Chile		Concepcion	Honorary Consul
Chile		Punta Arenas	Honorary Consul
Chile		Valparaiso	Honorary Consul
Argentina	1	Buenos Aires	
TOTAL	41		

Kazakhstan

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings he, or his officials, have had with the President of Kazakhstan; and what was discussed.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met President Nazerbayev of Kazakhstan during his visit to Britain in October 1991 and during his visit to Alma Ata in January 1992. The development of relations between the United Kingdom and Kazakhstan, including the good prospects for trade and other matters, including regional and security matters, were discussed.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current diplomatic link between the United Kingdom and Kazakhstan; and when he expects to appoint a British ambassador to Kazakhstan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom recognised Kazakhstan on 31 December 1991. Sir Brian Fall, who resides at Moscow, is accredited as Her Majesty's

ambassador to the Republic of Kazakhstan and presented his credentials in Alma Ata on 27 October 1992. We have established a small British embassy in Alma Ata, headed by a resident chargé d'affaires.

Cyprus

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress made in implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 789 of 24 November on Cyprus; and what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on Cyprus.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Inter-communal negotiations chaired by the United Nations Secretary-General will resume in New York in March. Security Council Resolution 789 sets out a series of confidence-building measures. These have been accepted in principle by President Vassiliou of Cyprus, but not yet by the Turkish side.

We continue to play a full part in supporting the efforts of the United Nations to achieve a negotiated settlement to this tragic dispute.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to station British forces in Macedonia in former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom was not asked to contribute forces to this operation and has no plans to do so. United Nations Security Council resolution 795 authorised deployment of troops and observers in Macedonia which has initially involved Canadian troops pending the arrival of Scandinavian forces.

CSCE

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe Council meeting in Stockholm of 15 and 16 December.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, represented the United Kingdom at the Council Meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe which took place on 14 and 15 December in Stockholm.

The Stockholm meeting marked a further stage in the transition of the CSCE from an organisation primarily involved with setting standards of behaviour in the fields of human rights and international security to one whose task is also to prevent and if necessary end conflicts.

The Council endorsed the work of the international conference on former Yugoslavia. It agreed a detailed policy intended to help prevent the spread of the fighting into other parts of the former Yugoslavia and to tighten sanctions. The CSCE missions in Kosovo, Sandjak and Vojvodina will be reinforced.

The Council took steps to promote long-term solutions to the conflict in Moldova. The CSCE will continue to press for agreements to be concluded on the early and complete withdrawal of foreign troops from the territories of the Baltic states and will also dispatch a mission to Estonia to address human rights issues between the different communities in Estonia.

Plutonium Shipments

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations from other Governments the United Kingdom Government have received concerning the sea shipment of plutonium from the European Community.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom has received few such representations from other Governments. It is for those Governments to decide whether to make their views public. Any shipments of plutonium from the United Kingdom would meet or exceed the relevant international safety standards.

UNESCO

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the Government now have to rejoin UNESCO; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No decision has yet been taken on a possible resumption of membership.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 16 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *490-91*, if he has signed a certificate under section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 since his answer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has signed no such certificate since my previous answer, Vol. 209, c. *491*.

Turkey

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the British Government are making to the Government of Turkey on the recognition of the rights of minorities and people of non-Turkish origin.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are in regular contact with the Turkish Government on the subject of human rights.

The issue was more recently discussed during the visit of the Turkish Prime Minister in November. Mr. Demirel reiterated his Government's commitment to their programme of reforms which aims at improving human rights, including those of members of minorities, and increasing democratisation in the country.

We welcome this commitment on the part of the Turks and look forward to the early implementation of the Government's programme.

Russia

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what complaints have been received from United Kingdom students now studying in Russia; and what action has been taken by the British embassy.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In May 1992, during a routine visit by the student liaison officer of the British embassy in Moscow, British students studying at Voronezh state

university complained about poor conditions at their hostel. Representations were duly made to the university in May, and again in September by the student liaison officer.

The student liaison officer next visited the university on 9 December 1992, accompanied by the embassy doctor. The doctor judged that the repairs satisfied the minimum requirements for student accommodation.

Angola

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Nations is continuing its efforts to secure full implementation of the Bicesse peace accords. We strongly support these efforts and deplore the recent violence in Lubango and elsewhere in Angola. Dialogue between the government of Angola and UNITA based on respect for the Bicesse accords and the outcome of the elections of 29 and 30 September is now essential if progress is to be made towards peace and democracy in Angola.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current state of relations between Her Majesty's Government and Angola; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have a good working relationship with the Government of the Republic of Angola.

Somalia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held with the current and incoming United States Administration on the role and objectives of the United States and other troops in Somalia, their command structure, and their date of evacuation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We maintain close contact with United States authorities and the coalition forces on all aspects of the Somali crisis. The United States authorities have made clear that United States troops will not be withdrawn until the objectives of Security Council resolution 794 have been achieved.

EC Summits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the *(a)* security costs and *(b)* total costs of holding the (i) Birmingham and (ii) Edinburgh summits.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The costs for the two European Councils are as follows:

		£ million
(a) Security costs:	Birmingham	0·35
	Edinburgh	2·50
(b) Total costs:	Birmingham	2·65
	Edinburgh	9·30

These figures are approximate as not all bills have been received.

Maastricht Treaty

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each of the subject areas of EC legislation that may fall within the negative assent procedure under the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Under the Maastricht treaty the negative assent procedure applies to the following areas:

Article 49:	Free movement of workers
Article 54(2):	Right of establishment
Article 56(2):	Treatment of foreign nationals
Article 57(1):	Mutual recognition of qualifications
Article 57(2):	Right of establishment
Article 100a(1):	Single market legislation
Article 126(4):	Education incentive measures
Article 128(5):	Culture (with unanimity)
Article 129(4):	Public health
Article 129a(2):	Consumer Protection
Article 129d:	Trans-European networks
Article 130i:	R & D framework programmes (with unanimity)
Article 130s(3):	Environment multiannual action programmes

Thailand

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current position relating to Karyn Smith, convicted of drug smuggling in Thailand.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Karyn Smith is serving a 25-year prison sentence in Klong Prem women's prison, Bangkok. She was sentenced on 20 December 1990. With the support of our embassy in Bangkok, Miss Smith has submitted an appeal for clemency to the King of Thailand.

EC Legislation

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each of the subject areas of EC legislation that are now subject to qualified majority voting.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The articles under which the Council of Ministers may currently act by qualified majority, together with the subject areas to which they apply, are set out in the treaty of Rome as amended by the Single European Act.

Alois Brunner

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Prime Minister's answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *755*, what representations he has received calling for actions by the United Kingdom Government in respect of Alois Brunner.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Apart from the hon. Member's previous question, we have received no recent representations in respect of Alois Brunner. Brunner was recently reported to have died, although we have no confirmation of this.

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visas at each British overseas post have been *(a)* applied for, *(b)* granted, *(c)* refused and *(d)* have a decision pending since visa requirements were introduced upon certain former Yugoslav nationals wishing to visit the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The method of collecting statistics at posts worldwide does not normally allow us to establish the number of applications by nationality. For an initial period, however, we are monitoring the effect of the visa regime on former Yugoslav nationals on the visa sections at Belgrade, Vienna, Zagreb, Budapest, Sofia, Rome, Milan, Florence, Naples, Dusseldorf and Paris. At these posts 1,715 applications were received from former Yugoslav nationals: 1,251 were granted, 238 were refused and 203 have a decision pending.

Spain

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff of the British embassy in Madrid monitor the enforcement of EC legislation relating to animal welfare in Spain.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There is one agricultural attaché in the British embassy in Madrid who is responsible for the full range of agricultural matters, including animal welfare.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *357*, in how many instances the Governor of St. Helena has refused a request to enable any public officer to be qualified for election to the Legislative Council.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs under what arrangements fishing vessels from member states of the European Community can fish in St. Helena waters; and what reciprocity there is for British fishermen.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are no arrangements for European Community vessels to fish within the fishery limits of St. Helena. There is no agreement with the Community over fishing rights in these waters.

Chile

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his discussions in Santiago on the case of Jonathan Moyle during his official visit to Chile.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is in Santiago today. He intends to discuss the Moyle case with the Chilean Government.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requests he has received for co-operation with the inquiry handled by Judge Alejandro Solis in relation to the death of Jonathan Moyle.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have been in regular contact with Judge Solis since the beginning of his inquiry. On 9 December 1992 the judge expressed his gratitude to our embassy in Santiago for the help he had received. On 4 January 1993 Her Majesty's ambassador asked the judge whether there was anything we could do to assist him. Judge Solis expressed his thanks but had no request for further assistance.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who will represent the United Kingdom at the chemical weapons convention signing conference in Paris; what is Her Majesty's Government's attitude toward the preparatory commission and its method of operation; what initiatives are proposed by the United Kingdom to advance the elimination of chemical weapons at the conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey will represent the United Kingdom at the chemical weapons convention signing ceremony in Paris. We look forward to the establishment of the preparatory commission and expect to make a full and positive contribution to its work.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell), 4 November, *Official Report*, column *308*, what will be the proportional increase over current stockpiles of *(a)* reprocessed uranium and *(b)* plutonium by 2000 over the current stockpiles; and to what use the additional plutonium and uranium to which he refers will be put.

Mr. Eggar: The quantities of uranium and plutonium that will arise from the reprocessing in the thermal oxide reprocessing plant of spent fuel from nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom represents some 20 per cent. of stocks currently held by British Nuclear Fuels plc on behalf of the generating companies as owners of the material. It is expected that the material will ultimately be burnt in reactors to generate electricity.

Greenhouse Gases

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what resources have been made available to the British Coal Corporation to assist in the retention of methane gas from mines to avoid adding to the release of greenhouse gases.

Mr. Eggar: The process of mining frees the methane contained in coal; for reasons of mine safety, it has to be released from the mines. British Coal work to the practical limits of current technology and make use of about 10 per cent. of this methane. Availability of finance is not a limitation.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to propose amendments to the existing proposals to establish a multilateral trade organisation set out in the draft final act of the Uruguay round of GATT to secure *(a)* explicit commitments to the protection of the environment and incomes of the poor in Third-world countries and *(b)* revisions to the dispute procedures enabling increased accountability of panel members.

Mr. Needham: The GATT already allows for measures to be taken to protect the environment. The proposed Multilateral Trade Organisation (MTO), which is intended to provide the vehicle for the implementation of the results of the Uruguay round, would strengthen the ability of the international trading system to respond to environmental concerns. The Community has made proposals to improve the references to the environment, including wording on sustainable development in the preamble, a ministerial declaration on the environment with a work programme, and giving permanent status to the working party on trade and environment. The members of GATT dispute settlement panels do not act in their own right, but advise the GATT contracting parties, and are accountable in this way to national Governments.

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the documents released to the defence at the Matrix Churchill trial.

Mr. Needham: No.

Record Industry

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimates his Department have made as to the contribution made by the British record industry to British exports.

Mr. Needham: Such estimates are not made by the Department. Exports of the finished product reported by Customs and Excise and published by the British Phonographic Industry Ltd. (BPI) were £196·3 million in 1991. Invisible earnings in the form of royalties returning from overseas were assessed in a report published by British Invisibles to be £486 million in 1988-89. Figures for all exports are shown in the Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics published by the Central Statistical Office.

Toy Imports

Mr. Cox: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer on 11 December, *Official Report*, column *838*, if he will name the two member states of the EC who impose national quotas on the import of toys made in China.

Mr. Needham: The two member states are Germany and Spain.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to publish his estimate of the average avoidable costs of electricity generation by different means.

Mr. Eggar: The relative costs of electricity generated from different sources are being considered as part of the coal review. The Government intend to publish the conclusions of the review in a White Paper shortly.

Caminus Energy

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when Caminus Energy was appointed as consultants to his Department's energy review; what are its full terms of reference; when he expects to receive their report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 20 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *433*.

Industrial Competitiveness

Mr. Hendry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to announce the results of the review being conducted by the industrial competitiveness division of his Department into lessons that can be learnt from other leading industrialised countries.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade receives frequent reports from the industrial competitiveness division, and these are taken into account when considering Government policy.

Trawsfynydd Power Station

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many representations he has had on matters concerning Trawsfynydd nuclear power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have received some 10 letters from hon. Members forwarding representations from their constituents about the safety of Trawsfynydd nuclear power station. As I have made clear in my replies there is no question of the power station commencing operation until the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate are convinced that it is safe to do so.

Coal Mines

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the amount of investment in new capital machinery at each of the 10 pits currently in the 90-day consultation period in the financial year 1990-91 to 1991-92 and April to September 1992.

Mr. Eggar: The amount of investment in new capital machinery at individual pits is a matter for British Coal.

Miners' Redundancy Payments

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Coal about extending the corporation's present redundancy terms beyond 31 March 1993.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend has had no such discussions. British Coal's redundancy terms are a matter for British Coal. It would, however, seem reasonable for the corporation not to determine their redundancy arrangements from 1 April 1993 until at least the outcome of the coal review is known.

Colliery Visits

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the collieries that he and his ministerial colleagues have visited, and the date upon which the visits were made, since taking their present offices.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on 4 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *314*. No further visits have taken place since.

Waste-to-energy Schemes

Mr. Stern: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made in his review of energy policy of the economic contribution in terms of job creation and private capital investment which waste-to-energy schemes could make.

Mr. Eggar: The coal review is taking full account of the contribution renewable energy sources can make to meeting the United Kingdom's energy needs.

Personal Protective Equipment

Mr. Butler: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will establish the necessary validation procedures to enable United Kingdom manufacturers of personal protective equipment to obtain a CE mark for their products as required under directive 89/686/EC which came into effect on 1 January 1993.

Mr. Leigh: The Personal Protective Equipment (EC Directive) Regulations 1992, Statutory Instrument 3139, came into force on 1 January 1993. Bodies approved to undertake testing and certification work in relation to the categories of personal protective equipment (PPE) required under the Directive to undergo type examination, will be appointed and notified to the EC Commission in Brussels very shortly. Manufacturers of PPE of simple design protecting against minimal risks are able to self-certify conformity and do not need third party approval to affix the CE mark to such products.

Exporters

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance his Department provides for exporters in the north east; how many firms benefit from such assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Under overseas trade services my Department provides a wide range of assistance to companies. In conjunction with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office we are able to offer exporters access to market information facilities and a range of services designed to meet precisely the requirements of business. In the North East there is close co-operation with the chamber movement which has benefited from extra resources through the Department's active exporting initiative and with the Northern Development Company which is responsible for a DTI assisted outward missions programme.

Northern companies may also access the Department's overseas trade divisions, particularly its country desks, its market information services and its major project sections in London. The Department's overseas trade service operates throughout the United Kingdom with various access points, and therefore separate figures are not readily available for take-up by North East firms.

Coal/Water Mixtures

Mr. Dowd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will consider applying for funds under the European Commission's THERMIE programme to finance further research into coal/water mixtures as fuel.

Mr. Eggar: It is for industry, rather than member state Governments, to apply for financial support for projects under the THERMIE programme. The Commission may invite proposals for demonstration projects using coal/water mixtures later this year in the last call for proposals under the THERMIE programme.

Export Licences

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many applications his Department received since 1990 for export licences of *(a)* machine tools and *(b)* weapons; and how many of these were (i) approved and (ii) covered by export credit guarantees.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* Following is the information:

Applications from 1 January 1990 to 8 December 1992

	Received	*Licences issued*
Machine tools	1,028	926
Weapons	29,670	27,937

Note: For this purpose "machine tools" is taken to cover any applications falling within headings IL 1075, IL 1088, IL 1091, IL 1370, PL 7027 or ML 18 of the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1991 as amended. "Weapons" is taken to cover all ML headings in the Order except ML 18.

Under arrangements applying up to privatisation of ECGD's Insurance Services Group in December 1991, the vast bulk of ECGD's business was underwritten on a basis which did not involve identification of the nature of the goods. It is therefore not possible to provide the information requested in respect of export credit guarantees.

Weapons Exports

Mr. Peter Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total amount of weapons exported to *(a)* Iraq and *(b)* Iran in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 8 December 1992]:* No lethal defence equipment was exported to either country in 1991, the latest year for which figures are available.

Official Engagements

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the official engagements he attended in October and November before 9 am.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* The engagements were as follows: on 13 October a Cabinet Committee meeting; on 14 October a meeting with United States trade representatives; on 15 October a Cabinet Committee meeting; on 6 November a meeting with the

head of the efficiency unit; on 9 November a regional visit to Folkestone; on 10 November a visit to Yorkshire and Humberside; on 11 November departure for the Anglo-German Summit; on 17 November a regional visit to Liverpool and Manchester; on 24 November departure for Brussels and a briefing session for the Industry Council; and on 25 November a working breakfast with business men in the North West.

EDUCATION

Secondary Heads Association

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to meet the Secondary Heads Association; and how many times he has met the Secondary Heads Association since April.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend expects to meet representatives of the Secondary Heads Association in due course to hear their views on the second report of the School Teachers Review Body. Since April 1992 he has met representatives of the Secondary Heads Association on at least three occasions.

School Visits

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* county infant schools, *(b)* county primary schools and *(c)* high schools he has visited since April.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has visited a total of 16 maintained schools since April, including one special school and:

(i) *First/Infants*
1 county; 1 voluntary controlled
(ii) *Primary*
2 county; 3 voluntary aided
(iii) *Middle*
1 voluntary aided
(iv) 3 county; 3 voluntary aided; 1 grant-maintained.

Teacher Organisations

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the teacher organisations he has met since April.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has met representatives from each of the six main school teacher associations: the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association; the National Association of Head Teachers; the National Association of School Masters/Union of Women Teachers; the National Union of Teachers; the Professional Association of Teachers; and the Secondary Heads Association.

Education Staff

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many full-time and part-time staff are available to each local education authority for education other than at school.

Mr. Forth: The total number of staff employed by local education authorities in England to provide education other than at school is estimated at 2,600 full-time equivalents in January 1992. Reliable figures for individual authorities are not available.

Examinations

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what methods and standards will be used to select pupils for the proposed level 10 examinations in 1994.

Mr. Forth: From 1994, all GCSE examination results will be awarded in terms of levels 10 to 4 instead of the present grades A to G. For each subject, there will be a set of tiered question papers each targeted on a range of levels between 10 to 4. Decisions on the appropriate tier of entry for each candidate will be matters for teachers' professional judgment.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of pupils passed *(a)* O-levels and *(b)* CSE for each year from 1980 to 1987; and what percentage passed GCSE in each year since 1988.

Mr. Forth: The available information is as follows.

The estimated percentages of school leavers in England who passed O-level and or CSE from 1980 to 1987 are shown in the table, together with the percentages for GCSE from 1988.

	Percentages of leavers who passed O-level and/ or CSE[1]	*Percentages of 16 year olds who passed GCSE*[1]
1980	87·7	—
1981	88·5	—
1982	89·3	—
1983	90·1	—
1984	90·2	—
1985	90·3	—
1986	90·0	—
1987	90·2	—
[2]1988	89·9	—
[3]1989	90·9	92·5
1990	91·5	92·7
1991	91·8	93·2

[1] The figures from 1980 to 1991 are based on sample surveys. For the years 1980 to 1987 the percentages relate to those school leavers who gained grades A to E in O-level and/or grade 1 to 5 in CSE examinations.

[2] The GCSE examination was introduced in 1988 and therefore the percentages from that year onwards include leavers who gained grades A to G in that examination and/or O-level or CSE.

[3] From 1989, the school examination survey also collected data for the 16 year old cohort. For these years the percentages of 16-year-olds are also shown.

Ethnic Minorities (Local Government Grants)

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will introduce a grant designed to meet the educational needs of the ethnic minority population of all ages similar to the previous section 11 funding.

Mr. Forth: The assumption that Home Office section 11 grant is to cease is incorrect. Section 11 grant will continue to support existing projects in 1993-94 at the current grant rate of 75 per cent. Thereafter, on current planning assumptions, grant will be available to support the same volume of posts albeit at a reduced rate.

A-level Appeals

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many appeals against A-level results were lodged in the last year for which figures are available; and what were their outcomes.

Mr. Boswell: Appeals against A-level results are made in the first instance to the GCE examination boards. Information on such appeals is not held centrally. If appellants remain dissatisfied they may pursue their concerns with the Independent Appeals Authority for School Examinations, IAASE. In 1991-92 the IAASE heard eight formal appeals on A-level matters. It rejected three, and required the relevant board to reconsider its decision in five.

Parent-Governor Meetings

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools in England hold annual parent-governor meetings which are attended by fewer than 10 per cent. of the parents entitled to attend.

Mr. Forth: All parents of pupils registered at a school are eligible to attend the annual parents' meeting. Information as to the numbers of parents attending annual parents meetings is not collected by the Department.

Further Education

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will set out the actual spending by Nottinghamshire county council on further education and sixth form colleges for the financial year 1991-92 and the planned expenditure for 1992-93.

Mr. Boswell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my predecessor gave to him on 8 December 1992, *Official Report*, cols. *563-65*, where the provisional further education adjustment in respect of Nottinghamshire county council is given as £50·874 million. Its actual expenditure in respect of 1991-92 is not available.

Teacher Education

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the future of existing teacher education in higher education institutions.

Mr. Boswell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) on 17 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *123*.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the bids for capital allocations from grant-maintained schools and the actual allowances for the 1993-94 financial year.

Mr. Forth: The information is contained in the following tables. Table A lists the applications received for named capital projects from schools with grant-maintained status as at December 1992. Decisions on allocations to these schools have not yet been taken. Table B gives details of the bids received and the actual allocations made to grant-maintained schools under the technology schools initiative. Schools which became grant-maintained on 1 January 1993 have been invited to submit bids by 25 January 1993 for named capital projects and for resources under the technology schools initiative.

Table A
Grant-maintained schools capital bids for named projects 1993-94
Complete list of bids

School	*Project*	*Total cost £K*
Acle	Conversion to provide technology facilities	145
	Single Classroom extension	75
Adams	Repair support & facade of main entrance	105
	Replace 2 temporary classrooms	100
Ancaster High	Roof conversion	106
Angley	Re-modelling of design/technology department	599
Archbishop's	Refurbishment of laboratories and classrooms	657
	4 new classrooms	147
Ash Green	Replacement of boilers	150
Audenshaw	2 new classrooms	120
	4 new classrooms	260
Avonbourne	Adaptations to technology and science departments	440
Avon Valley	Extension of science and technology facilities and refurbishment	457
	Refurbishment of sports hall/gymnasium	207
Aylesford	New 2-storey technology/art block	345
Bacup and Rawtenstall	Technology/science laboratory	66
	Convert solid fuel boilers to gas	68
Baines	New technology block and upgrade science facilities	750
Balcarras	Re-roofing of part of school	91
Bankfield	Re-fenestration	604
	Upgrade 6 science laboratories	275
Barnehurst Infants	2 new classrooms to replace mobiles	122
Barnehurst Junior	1 new classroom to replace mobile	66
Bassingbourne	Reorganisation and refurbishment to provide technology facilities	136
Baverstock	Design and technology centre	499
	Re-roofing of existing building	225
Beacon	Extend canteen facilities	34
	New cloakroom and office	38
Beaconsfield	Re-cover flat roofs of main building	190
	Replace 10 temporary classrooms	1,375
Beauchamps	Boiler replacement and energy conservation	118
	Upgrade design and technology rooms	90
Beaverwood	New technology block	348
Beechen Cliff	Refurbish and alter science block	1,161

School	*Project*	*Total cost £K*
	Urgent drainage to prevent subsidence	139
Belmont Primary	New hall, stores and changing rooms	178
	Replace school	2,227
Bingley	Phase 2 of science wing	400
Bishopshalt	Replace old boiler with gas heating system	46
Borough Green	2 additional infant classrooms	156
Borrows Wood Junior	Health and safety improvements	65
	Resource area	45
Boswells	New technology block and link	306
	New technology block and refurbish CDT block	607
Bourne Abbey	2 additional classrooms, science/ technology room and toilets	198
	Replace 7 flat roofs	60
Bournemouth	Replace technology facilities	487
Bournemouth School for Girls	New technology/business centre/IT block	1,050
Bradbourne	Technology provision	62
	Main network PC system	25
Bridgewater Hall	Redevelopment of technology block	128
Bridgewater Hall with Brindley Hall	Replace shared boiler	264
Bromsford	Major repairs to roof and walls	499
Brookmead	Shower block	53
Bruton Primary	Phase 2 of classroom extension	80
Budmouth	Refurbish science department	559
Bullers Wood	5 new laboratories	466
Burgate	2 new science laboratories	266
Burntwood	Replace rotten windows	453
	Upgrade science classrooms and fire escape	458
Caistor	2 new rooms for design technology and IT	265
Canterbury	New block of laboratories and toilets	383
	New block of laboratories, toilets and refurbishment of 3 laboratories	512
Cardinal Vaughan	Technology unit	408
Carres	Re-roof laboratory and main blocks	67
Castle Hills	Extend technology block and science laboratory alteration	404
	Kitchen and dining room extension	105
Chalfonts	Extension of science laboratories	312
Chalvedon	Phase 3 of middle school refurbishment	850
Charles Darwin	Phase 3 of re-wiring of school	120
Chatham Girls	New technology block	327
Cheam	New technology block	306
Chelmsford Girls	New science department	1707
Chosen Hill	Alterations to form science laboratories	250
Christchurch	New classroom	90
City of Portsmouth	Refurbish 4 science laboratories	220
	Convert 2 classrooms to science laboratories	75
Claremont High	Phase 2 technology block to relieve temporary accommodation	350
	Refurbish home economics and CDT accommodation	200
Clitheroe Royal Grammar	New science block and 6 classrooms	820
Collingwood	External fabric refurbishment	294
	Refurbishment laboratory and science block	432
Colyton	Replace central heating system	145
Coopers	New technology block	335
Copland	Refurbish 4 science laboratories	173
Cornwallis	Refurbish science laboratories	310
Costessey High	Extend and adapt technology suite	350
	Extension for 2 science labs	240
Cotswold	Boiler replacement	113
	Insulation and heater replacement	42
Cranbrook	Alterations for English and History departments	46
Crofton, Hampshire	8 new science laboratories to replace temporary accommodation	750
	6 new science laboratories to replace temporary accommodation	590
Crofton, Kent	New science room	96
Cromer Hill	Improvements to technology facilities and conversion to science laboratories	255
	Improvements to technology facilities	205
Crompton Fold	New classroom and changing room to replace temporary accommodation	125
	Repairs to heating installation	95
Crossgates Primary	New classroom base	50
Crossley Heath	Total refurbishment of laboratories	239
	Extension and alterations to technology block	417
Crypt	Extension for science/technology	475
Dartford Boys	New technology and science block	350
	Roof and guttering repairs	218
Dartford Girls	New technology block and adaptations	635

School	*Project*	*Total cost £K*
	New technology block and classrooms and adaptations	750
Denefield	New science laboratories	86
Dereham First	New classroom	63
Desborough	Refurbish and convert laboratories	332
de Stafford	Refurbish maths and science block	1,700
	Re-roof design and technology wing	91
Downham Market	Technology wing to replace mobiles	806
Downs	New laboratories and teaching wing to replace mobiles	476
Drayton Manor	Repair roof	77
Eastwood	Re-model and refurbish technology block	124
Ecclesbourne	Phase 2 of technology block	342
	Replace temporary accommodation with new build	591
Ellen Wilkinson	Replace window units in tower block	105
	Phase 1 refurbishment to extend science area	103
Elliot	Science accommodation and new corridors	548
	As above	327
Elmwood Primary	Replace temporary accommodation	832
	Replace temporary accommodation	514
Epsom and Ewell	IT development	219
Ermine Junior	New science and technology classroom	52
Francis Bacon	Refurbish science laboratories	238
	Up-grade fire resistance	68
Furtherwick Park	Replace boiler system	149
	Refurbish toilets and changing rooms	72
Gamlingay Village	Replace 4 temporary classrooms	234
	Re-model and refurbish science/ technology facilities	178
Gartree	Additional science laboratory and fire exit	223
Gleed Girls	Phase 1 of improvement works	423
Glyn	Phase 2 of new technology block	380
Gordons	Gymnasium	275
Great Barr	Fire prevention for 4 floor block	370
Great Tothyam Primary	Demolish temporary classroom, conversion and new block	308
Greenford High	Conversion and extension to teaching accommodation	1,076
	Repair and extend technology accommodation	510
Gresham Village	4 new classrooms and inside toilets	331
Handsworth	Specialist technology rooms	284
	General teaching space	334
Hardley	2nd phase of heating system	184
	Re-covering of flat roofs	176
Hartshill	Re-wire whole school	262
Haydon	New technology block/extend technology facilities/additional classroom	380
	Extend technology facilities/additional classrooms and additional laboratories	740
Hayes	Refurbish technology accommodation	277
	Refurbish science accommodation	146
Hayes Manor	Fire protection and ventilation	132
	Refurbish technology accommodation	440
Hayton	Extension and alteration to replace temporary accommodation	224
Heacham Middle	New technology room	75
Heathside	Refurbish 3 science laboratories	165
Heckmondwike	Phase 2 of repairs to old block	189
Hendon	Conversion for science/technology and maths	463
Herschel	Fire doors, alarms and replace fume cupboards	177
	Phase 2 of technology block and up-grade art	98
Highams Park	Refurbish gymnasium and changing rooms	56
	Re-route heating system	33
Highcliffe	Fire doors, escapes, alarms, fume extraction	165
Holy Trinity Primary	Classroom renovation	187
Homewood	New technology rooms	587
John Fisher	Additional storey to existing building	853
	Additional 2 storeys to existing building	1,175
Katherine Lady Berkeley	Major roof repairs	161
Katherines Primary	Conversion of teaching areas	92
Kelsey Park	New technology block	338
King Edward VI	Replace temporary accommodation by technology/art block	299
King Harold	Re-roofing and renew curtain wall sealing	210
King John, Northants	Replace slate roof and repair curtain walling	55
King John, Essex	Refurbish laboratories and prep rooms	193
Kings	Extension to science/IT block	475

School	Project	Total cost £K
Kingsley Park	Alteration of basement to kitchen/ canteen facilities	245
Kingswood	Replacement of main heating system	347
Kirbie Kendal	Phase 1 for science/technology facilities	950
Lancaster Girls	Replace temporary classrooms and new science/technology facilities	925
	Roof repairs	42
Langley Grammar	Extension for 2 science laboratories	252
Langley Park	Re-model and refurbish craft block	269
La Retraite	Final stage of kitchen refurbishment	69
	Conversion to music room	54
Lincoln Christ Hospital	Demolish temporary accommodation and extend technology/science facilities	199
	Alter and refurbish shower block	48
Loddon Middle	Conversion to create science room	24
	Improve administration accommodation	18
Lodge Park	Replacement of mobiles and refurbishment	675
London Nautical	Replace boiler and central heating system	399
	Refurbish design/technology facilities	218
London Oratory	Up-grade kitchen/dining facilities	453
Longfield High	Conversion to science laboratory and 2 classrooms	166
	Phase 3 of re-roofing	70
Manor	Replace oil with gas central heating system	125
	Renew roof covering	82
Manor High	Proposed technology suite	596
Manshead High	Replace oil with gas central heating	110
Magdalen	Heating system	65
	Upgrade of kitchen	29
Malling	Re-model technology block	357
Maplesden Noakes	Replace boilers	200
	Conversion to science laboratory and technology room	100
Marling	New science block	781
Marshland High	Extension and adaptations to technology suite	335
	New science laboratories and adaptations for art room	260
Mellow Lane	Major repairs and health and safety work	382
	New technology block	827
Meopham	Gas supply and new heating system	315
	Build caretaker's house	75
Minster College	Refurbish technology facility	364
Mosely Park	New science laboratories	283
Moulton	Phase 3 replacement of mobiles	200
Myton	Extend and refurbish existing workshops for design & technology	562
	Science extension and adaptations	1,163
Netherthorpe	Replace temporary accommodation by 4 room modern language block	345
	Re-construct 1801 teaching block	489
Newent Community School	Refurbish home economics	235
	Refurbish science laboratories	212
Newlands Spring Primary	Replacement of temporary classroom	49
Newstead Wood	New technology block	325
Newton Bluecoat	New changing rooms, medical inspection room and disabled toilet	55
Nonsuch	New classroom and re-model science labs	412
Northampton Boys	Improve science/technology facilities	343
	2 new laboratories and 2 new classrooms	596
North Crescent Primary	3 new classrooms	194
North Halifax	Technology suite	298
	Essential cladding repairs	164
North Kesteven	Re-wiring of lower school block	175
	Re-roofing	301
Northlands Junior	Esential perimeter security fencing	35
Northolt High	Partial re-roofing	344
Northwood	Re-roofing and repairs to rainwater goods	225
	Conversion of science laboratories and classrooms	65
Norwich Road	Roof renewal of main block	121
	Renewal of main boilers	45
Oakwood Park	Conversion and refurbishment for technology suite	615
Oldfield	2 new science laboratories and refurbishment of laboratories	363
Park Lane Primary	Re-roof	183
Parkside 1st	Phase 1 and 2 of front extension	184
	Phase 1 of front extension	141
Parkstone Grammar	New technology extension and re-model science facilities	1,191
Parmiters	IT building and conversion to science laboratories	1,663
Pates	Phase 3 of replacement building	1,986
	Phase 4 of replacement building	1,679
Philip Morant	Conversion to provide 3 laboratories	179

School	Project	Total cost £K
Plume	Re-model upper school and technology block	148
Priory	Resources unit, 4 classrooms and toilets	341
Queen Elizabeth, Aldford	Replace temporary wooden accommodation	495
Queen Elizabeth, Atherstone	Re-roof part of building	118
	Refurbish laboratory	84
Queen Elizabeth, Barnet	Replace windows in main block	99
	Upgrade water system	30
Queen Elizabeth, Penrith	Adaptations for new technology provision	400
	New laboratory building	462
Queen Elizabeth, Horncastle	New laboratory and re-model adjacent laboratories	154
	Re-roof flat roof	90
Queen Katherine	Roof and cladding repairs to 2 blocks	104
	Re-model and refurbish home economics block	50
Queens	Science department extension	303
Queensbury	Adapt and convert to reorganise science/technology	200
Queensmead	New technology block and re-model technology provision	300
Raines Foundation	New science laboratory	977
	Repairs and replace roofing	161
Rainham	New science block	344
Rauceby	Extension to provide classrooms, resource facilities and toilet	191
Reavensdale Middle	Structural repairs to craft areas	40
	Upgrade science laboratories and administration	140
Ravens Wood Boys	Technology extension	246
Reading	Conversion to biology laboratories	240
Rednock	New build and conversion to provide science laboratories and classrooms	665
	New build and conversion to provide science laboratories	395
Ribston Hall	New build to replace temporary accommodation	279
	Replace glazed aluminium cladding	197
Rickmansworth	New art and design block	510
	Remove asbestos, re-cladding and re-roof	217
Rickstones	Technology suite	450
Riddlesdown	Health and safety works	405
Robert Kett Middle	Repairs to roof and chimneys	90
	Extension and adaptation for 2 technology rooms	67
Robert Napier	New technology accommodation	358
Robert Pattinson	New science laboratories and re-model technology unit	530
	As above	290
Robinswood Primary	Waterproof school roof	26
	Rewire/update electrical system	78
Royal Grammar Lancaster	2 classroom block	124
	Replace water system	48
St. Aidan's	Re-model and refurbish science laboratories	300
	Refurbish food technology rooms	80
St. Augustine's	New technology block	338
St. Bartholomew's	Re-model to provide IT and business studies	282
St. Francis Xavier's	Phase 1 of 3 floor block for technology provision	1,173
	Phase 1 of 2 floor block for technology provision	802
St. George's CE	Modify technology block	329
	Alternative means of escape	40
St. George's Sleaford	Major repairs to 16 mobiles	110
	Replacement of 2 mobiles	236
St. Helen's Primary	Replace mobile with 2 classrooms and toilets	132
	New toilet block	53
St. James's	Re-roof flat roof of main block	135
St. Mary's Primary	Refurbish outdated toilets	31
St. Thomas More	New science block	695
	New technology block	702
Saffron Walden	Replace asphalt roofs and parapets	447
	Improve technology facilities	155
Salterlee	New toilets and storage	66
	Re-roofing in slate	44
Scotby Primary	Technology extension	40
Senacre	New technology block	325
Send First	3 classrooms and toilets	210
	Enclosure to provide IT room	55
Sexeys	Science department development	285
	Business studies and IT block	280
Sheringham High	Refurbish existing technology facilities	295
Simon Langton Grammar	Re-model art, design and technology centre and workshop	475
Sir Roger Marwood	Extension and improvements to laboratories	595

School	Project	Total cost £K
	New technology suite and improvements to existing laboratories	500
Skegness	Replace temporary classrooms and technology provision	605
	Increase in boarding accommodation	300
Skinner's	Technology building	203
Small Heath	Replace heating boiler and controls	55
Snodland Primary	New classroom block to replace mobiles	332
Southfield	Repairs to concrete frame, flat roofs and toilets	162
Southlands, Kent	Extension to replace maths accommodation	658
Southlands, Berkshire	Refurbish science laboratories	90
	Replace roofs	15
Stoneleigh	Replace classroom windows	46
Stratford	Re-roof upper school	231
Streetly	New technology block and staircase	396
	Repairs to flat roofs	87
Stroud	New technology block and adaptions	510
Sutton Grammar	New science laboratory block	419
Tewkesbury	Replacement boilers	258
	Design/technology facilities	388
Thamesview	Asbestos removal and boilder replacement	95
	Re-model technology and business studies	172
Thurstable	Re-model and extend technology department	460
Torells	New technology suite	289
Trinity	New science block	345
	Re-model technology suite and classrooms	198
Uxbridge	Phase 1 of structural and roof repairs	490
Watford Boys	New science/technology facilities	813
	Renewal of lead lined cornice and guttering	88
Watford Girls	Repairs to gym, swimming pool and 6th form	113
Westcliff Boys	Science room	170
	Music accommodation	88
West Flegg Middle	Adaptions to 6 classrooms	78
	Build 2 new classrooms to replace mobiles	130
William Farr	Refurbishment of computer room, science laboratories and classrooms	295
	As above	560
Wilmington Boys	Science block refurbishment	380
Wilmington Girls	New science laboratory and CDT room	376
	New CDT room	203
Wilsons	Food technology, design and art area	222
Wold Newton	Additional new classroom	59
Wolverhampton	Additional storey to existing blocks	386
Woodroffe	Science and technology expansion	1,150
	Partial expansion of science and technology	325
Wrotham	New technology building	484
	Refurbish Horsa huts	52
Wymondham College	Technology centre to replace temporary accommodation	488

Technology schools initiative 1993-94 bids from grant-maintained schools

School	Amount bid for £K	Amount allocated £K
Ash Green School	200	—
Baines School	205	205
Beacon School	185	185
Budmouth School	224	—
Charles Darwin School	238	—
Cornwallis School	208	207
Eastwood High School	213	—
Fulston Manor School	41	—
Furtherwick Park School	266	—
Gleed Girls School	100	—
Graveney School	300	300
Heathside School	316	—
Heckmondwyke School	266	—
Hendon School	190	—
Homewood School	176	176
King Harold School	197	—
Manshead School	252	252
Northolt High School	200	200
Oldfield School	755	—
Queensmead School	300	—
Ravenswood School for Boys	244	244
St. James CE School	200	—
Senacre School	193	—
Small Heath School	211	211
Southlands School	223	223
Stratford School	300	300
West Hatch High	192	—
Wymondham College	200	200

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools in England have held a ballot which resulted in a vote in favour of seeking grant-maintained status.

Mr. Patten: To date 640 schools have voted in favour of applying for grant-maintained status, on the basis of figures supplied by the Electoral Reform Society.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure an appropriate number of suitably qualified teachers for pupils with severe learning difficulties and sensory impairment.

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to increase the supply of specially trained teachers for children with severe multiple and profound handicap and with acute learning disabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Identification of the numbers and the training needs of teachers of children with special educational needs is best done by local education authorities, which can determine which categories of special educational needs training are required in their areas.

It is for the Department to provide funds to local education authorities under the grants for education support and training programme to support them with the costs of training. In 1993-94 grant support expenditure will be increased by almost 40 per cent. to £10 million and the previous restrictions on what the grant could cover will be relaxed.

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will now earmark a special element in the overall sum of grants for education support for training to be allocated to the training of teachers for children with severe learning disabilities.

Mr. Forth: The responsibility for training teachers of all children with special educational needs rests with the local education authorities. They are in the best position to determine their own teaching needs. The Government have provided for an increase of 40 per cent. from £7·2 million to £10 million in expenditure which may be supported in training teachers of children with special educational needs.

Schools (Capital Allocations)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the capital allocations to *(a)* county schools and *(b)* voluntary-aided schools for 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave on 16 December 1992 to my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), *Official Report*, columns *267-77*. This sets out for each local education authority in England its annual capital guideline for education expenditure in 1993-94, along with the limit of capital expenditure by the governors of voluntary-aided and special agreement schools in each authority's area on which the Secretary of State will be prepared to pay grant in 1993-94.

The annual capital guideline figures provided then did not include supplementary credit approvals to be issued to local education authorities during the course of the financial year. Nor did they include SCAs and grant allocations made under the technology schools initiative. Annex A sets out the SCAs to be given to local education authorities under the technology schools initiative for county and controlled schools and local education authority liability arising from successful voluntary-aided projects. Annex B sets out allocations for voluntary-aided schools.

Annex A

SCAs arising from awards under the technology schools initiative 1993-94

LEA	*£000s*
Barking	185
Barnet	270
Bedfordshire	190
Berkshire	395
Bexley	149
Birmingham	407
Bradford	330
Brent	385
Buckinghamshire	193
Calderdale	170
Cambridgeshire	466
Cheshire	198
Cleveland	407
Cornwall	210
Coventry	260
Cumbria	285
Derbyshire	207
Devon	888
Doncaster	438
Durham	221
East Sussex	205
Essex	682
Gloucestershire	185
Hampshire	141
Haringey	200
Harrow	210
Hereford and Worcester	186
Hertfordshire	200
Hounslow	147
Humberside	395
Kent	389
Kingston upon Thames	200
Kirklees	155
Knowsley	114
Lancashire	692
Leeds	580
Leicestershire	431
Lewisham	180
Manchester	200
Newcastle	225
Newham	273
Norfolk	419
Northamptonshire	589
Northumberland	711
North Tyneside	170
North Yorkshire	370
Oldham	180
Oxfordshire	145
Rochdale	200
Rotherham	180
Salford	150
Sandwell	185
Sefton	285
Sheffield	410
Shropshire	338
Somerset	284
St. Helens	336
Staffordshire	150
Stockport	235
Suffolk	415
Sunderland	185
Surrey	260
Tameside	205
Trafford	220
Wakefield	188
Waltham Forest	375
Warwickshire	200
Wigan	170
Wiltshire	103
Wolverhampton	244
Total	20,146

Notes:

1. The figures include awards to be issued by means of supplementary

credit approvals to LEAs for successful county and voluntary controlled schools and awards for LEA liability in respect of voluntary aided schools.

Annex B

Awards for voluntary-aided schools under the technology schools initiative

School name	*LEA*	*Award £000s*
Bishop Reindorp School	Surrey	70
William Temple CE School	Lancashire	120
St. Peter's Collegiate	Wolverhampton	140
St. Benedicts' RC School	Cumbria	75
St. Robert Newminster	Sunderland	20
TOTALS		425

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the bids for capital allocations from *(a)* county schools and *(b)* voluntary-aided schools for 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: Copies of lists of capital bids for county and voluntary controlled schools, voluntary aided and special agreement schools and for awards under the technology schools initiative have been placed in the Library.

School Transport

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to exercise his powers under section 55(1) of the Education Act 1944 to make directions with regard to the withdrawal of free school transport by Norfolk county council for many Norfolk children in respect of the failure of the council's information booklet for the year 1992-93 to carry a warning that changes to the arrangements may occur at a later stage.

Mr. Forth: None.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will take steps to require all local authority and grant-maintained schools to publish details of home-to-school transport facilities before each school term.

Mr. Forth: No.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to expand the system of collective home-to-school transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: None.

GCSE Results

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment his Department has made of the correlation between surplus places in schools, expenditure per pupil, and GCSE results.

Mr. Forth: As my right hon. Friend told the House on 15 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *284-85*, the Department is investigating these figures and their relationships. I will write to my hon. Friend when that analysis is available.

National Union of Students

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what responses he has had to the consultation exercise with higher education on changing the contribution arrangements of the National Union of Students; and if he will make these available to hon. Members;

(2) what further action he is proposing to take to change the basis on which contributions are made to the National Union of Students.

Mr. Boswell: In the course of the consultations initiated by the Government on student unions, my right hon. Friend has received a number of responses on campus unions and the National Union of Students. In the light of the consultations, the Government are now considering proposals for action. Affiliation arrangements to the National Union of Students are being considered within this framework.

Nursery Education

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list by local education authority the latest figures for the proportion of three and four-year-olds in nursery education.

Mr. Forth: The percentages of three and four-year-olds attending maintained nursery schools or nursery classes in maintained primary schools in each local education authority in England in January 1991, the latest date for which information is readily available, is given in Statistical Bulletin 5/92, copies of which are in the Library.

Youth Service

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish figures showing expenditure by each local education authority on the youth service for each year from 1988.

Mr. Boswell: The latest year for which information on actual expenditure is available is 1990-91. The table shows expenditure on the youth service by each local authority in each of the three years from 1988-89 to 1990-91.

Net recurrent expenditure on the youth service

(£000)

LEA	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
ILEA	35,377	40,408	—
City	—	—	28
Camden	—	—	2,041
Greenwich	—	—	1,909
Hackney	—	—	3,418
Hammersmith	—	—	1,563
Islington	—	—	4,664
Kensington	—	—	1,744
Lambeth	—	—	2,701
Lewisham	—	—	977
Southwark	—	—	2,087
Tower Hamlets	—	—	5,238
Wandsworth	—	—	2,444
Westminster	—	—	3,117
Barking	697	842	652
Barnet	966	919	1,039
Bexley	758	884	874

LEA	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Brent	2,377	2,023	2,147
Bromley	894	1,037	1,051
Croydon	1,054	1,207	1,594
Ealing	1,804	1,953	1,017
Enfield	796	960	999
Haringey	n/a	n/a	1,580
Harrow	648	791	611
Havering	845	1,025	1,060
Hillingdon	1,018	1,175	1,475
Hounslow	737	n/a	1,980
Kingston upon Thames	580	682	734
Merton	459	589	646
Newham	1,104	1,152	1,136
Redbridge	1,078	1,132	1,157
Richmond upon Thames	514	612	684
Sutton	517	576	768
Waltham Forest	1,336	1,579	1,544
Birmingham	4,396	5,252	3,056
Coventry	1,095	1,382	3,327
Dudley	983	1,137	1,342
Sandwell	736	826	1,004
Solihull	430	432	541
Walsall	2,305	2,917	4,204
Wolverhampton	2,070	2,477	1,982
Knowsley	666	980	2,100
Liverpool	2,392	2,846	3,138
St. Helens	328	287	260
Sefton	843	1,019	1,315
Wirral	1,512	1,813	1,793
Bolton	1,057	1,291	1,326
Bury	916	1,009	865
Manchester	n/a	n/a	2,557
Oldham	683	911	936
Rochdale	1,453	2,028	1,415
Salford	538	561	751
Stockport	598	747	645
Tameside	1,149	1,339	1,674
Trafford	677	834	991
Wigan	876	1,678	1,188
Barnsley	551	458	435
Doncaster	1,305	1,604	1,599
Rotherham	1,029	1,172	1,336
Sheffield	3,038	3,802	4,047
Bradford	3,127	3,225	3,751
Calderdale	1,103	1,274	1,363
Kirklees	1,426	1,600	1,769
Leeds	6,860	6,672	7,336
Wakefield	N/A	N/A	1,091
Gateshead	722	1,055	1,125
Newcastle upon Tyne	659	746	860
North Tyneside	585	N/A	664
South Tyneside	1,855	1,951	500
Sunderland	1,010	1,272	1,521
Isles of Scilly	0	-2	2
Avon	5,269	6,129	4,697
Bedfordshire	1,131	1,320	1,771
Berkshire	2,185	2,436	3,882
Buckinghamshire	2,370	3,166	4,016
Cambridgeshire	1,780	2,011	2,371
Cheshire	2,005	2,081	3,479
Cleveland	2,629	4,012	4,351
Cornwall	787	1,113	1,226
Cumbria	1,333	1,320	1,597
Derbyshire	5,066	8,739	10,928
Devon	2,913	3,548	3,469
Dorset	1,722	2,358	2,627
Durham	1,263	1,381	1,569
East Sussex	1,089	1,207	1,627
Essex	4,026	4,932	7,010
Gloucestershire	2,147	2,771	2,581
Hampshire	3,230	3,651	3,169
Hereford and Worcestershire	1,201	1,630	1,706
Hertfordshire	2,782	3,395	4,064
Humberside	3,839	4,584	5,211
Isle of Wight	467	499	559
Kent	2,708	2,925	3,072
Lancashire	5,179	6,222	6,954
Leicestershire	2,946	3,267	3,692
Lincolnshire	1,096	1,155	1,565
Norfolk	1,870	2,296	2,462
North Yorkshire	1,587	1,743	2,316
Northamptonshire	1,706	1,864	2,192
Northumberland	681	913	2,533
Nottinghamshire	5,233	5,643	6,113
Oxfordshire	1,325	1,583	1,979
Shropshire	1,788	2,264	2,538
Somerset	2,478	1,913	1,201
Staffordshire	2,599	3,188	3,961
Suffolk	2,124	2,404	1,034
Surrey	2,420	2,852	3,526
Warwickshire	1,434	1,584	1,774
West Sussex	1,599	1,872	2,164
Wiltshire	1,480	2,934	2,243

Note:

1. N/A indicates not received from local authority.
2. Net recurrent expenditure includes gross expenditure other than on capital, less income other than from specific grants. Figures are taken from local authorities' returns of their actual spending to the Department of the Environment.

Statutory Provision

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the total spending on statutory education provision per inner London borough for each year since 1988; what it is projected to be in 1993; and what the equivalent figure would have been if uprated by inflation from the 1989-90 figure.

Mr. Forth: The latest year for which information on actual expenditure on education is available is 1990-91. The table gives information for each of the three years from 1988-89 to 1990-91. It is for each inner London borough to determine its spending plans for 1993-94.

Net recurrent expenditure[1] on education

	1988-89 (£ million)	1989-90 (£ million)	1990-91 (£ million)
ILEA	1,086	1,085	—
City	—	—	5
Camden	—	—	66
Greenwich	—	—	103
Hackney	—	—	107
Hammersmith	—	—	57
Islington	—	—	83
Kensington	—	—	41
Lambeth	—	—	122
Lewisham	—	—	109
Southwark	—	—	104
Tower Hamlets	—	—	106
Wandsworth	—	—	103
Westminster	—	—	80

[1] Net recurrent expenditure covers all spending other than on capital, less income other than from specific grants. Figures are taken from local authorities' returns of their actual spending to the Department of the Environment.

Medical Education

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans he has to enhance the levels and quality of medical education in the United Kingdom;

(2) what arrangements are in place to monitor *(a)* the relative cost-effectiveness and *(b)* the relative quality levels of medical education courses in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Boswell: It is for universities as autonomous institutions to take steps to maintain and enhance the

quality of medical and other higher education. The General Medical Council has a statutory role to promote high standards of medical education through recommendations on the curriculum and monitoring of courses. The GMC has recently produced a consultation document on a revised medical curriculum. It will be for institutions to develop their courses within this framework.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England has a statutory duty to secure quality assessment of the higher education which it supports, including medical education. The council is taking forward work on the introduction of assessment across higher education and on the development of a range of performance indicators for all subjects, including indicators of relative costs.

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what estimates his Department has made of the relative costs of medical education courses provided in London and at other centres of medical education in the United Kingdom;

(2) what study Sir Bernard Tomlinson's committee made in the course of the preparation of its recent report of the relative costs of medical education courses in London and the United Kingdom regions.

Mr. Boswell: Details of the costs of medical and other courses for each university in the United Kingdom are shown in the latest volume of "University Management Statistics and Performance Indicators in the United Kingdom", published jointly by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Universities Funding Council in October 1992. Copies are available in the Library. Sir Bernard Tomlinson's report draws on the CVCP/UFC data on university costs in London and elsewhere.

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list *(a)* the total number of residential properties owned by his Department, *(b)* the number of such properties which are empty and *(c)*, *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Boswell: The Department owns no residential properties.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the schools which he and his ministerial colleagues have visited since April 1992.

Mr. Patten: I, my noble Friend the Minister of State and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), have visited 71 schools so far during our periods in office, made up of

1 Nursery school;
19 Primary schools, including 1 middle school;
43 Secondary schools, including 8 grant-maintained schools and 9 independent schools;
3 Special Schools;
5 CTCs.

The list of schools is as follows:

Secretary of State's Visits

Appleton CE Primary School, Abingdon, Oxford
Dunmore Infants School, Abingdon, Oxford
Greenvale Primary School, Croydon
Lyne & Longcross First School, Surrey
St. Edmund's RC Primary, Abingdon, Oxford
Thomas Reade Primary School, Abingdon, Oxford
Frideswide Middle School, Oxford
Archbishop Tenison's Secondary School, Croydon
Bishop David Brown Secondary School, Surrey
Cardinal Newman School, Hove, East Sussex
Cockshut Hill Secondary School, Birmingham
Compton Secondary School, Finchley
Culham European School
St. Peter's C of E School, Wootton, Oxford
Wimbledon College, Merton
Small Heath GM School, Birmingham
Marymount International Secondary School, Kingston
Mayville High School, Portsmouth
Nottingham High School, Nottingham
Radley College, Oxford
School of St. Helen & St. Katherine, Abingdon, Oxford
Netherlands Avenue Special School, Bradford
Bradford CTC, Bradford
Djanogly CTC, Nottingham

Minister of State's Visits

Caverstede Nursery School, Peterborough
Appleton Primary School, Humberside
Davenant Foundation School, Essex
Dean Grange Prep School, Cambridgeshire
Even Swindon Infant and Junior Schools, Wiltshire
Kingston Park Primary School, Newcastle
Wittering County Primary School, Peterborough
Aylward School, Enfield
Calderstones Community School, Liverpool
Chantry High School, Suffolk
Eastholm School, Peterborough
Gosforth High School, Newcastle
Hinchingbrooke School, Cambridgeshire
Keldholme School, Cleveland
Kesgrave High School, Suffolk
King David High School, Liverpool
Latymer School, Enfield
Verulam School, Hertfordshire
Beechen Cliff GM School, Bath
Christ Church GM School, Hertfordshire
Jack Hunt GM School, Peterborough
London Oratory GM School, Fulham
Sawtry Village GM College, Cambridgeshire
Southfield Girls GM School, Kettering
Bedford School, Bedfordshire
Reed's School, Surrey
Teesside High School for Girls, Stockton
Frederick Holmes Special School, Humberside
John Cabot CTC, Bristol
Macmillan CTC, Cleveland

Eric Forth's Visits

Balby Street County Primary School, Doncaster
Nabbotts County Infant and Junior Schools, Essex
Pott Shrigley CE Primary School, Cheshire
Puss Bank County Infant and Junior Schools, Cheshire
St. Stephen's CE First School, Hereford and Worcester
Winton County Infant and Junior Schools, Dorset
Abbey County High School, Hereford and Worcester
Droitwich High School, Hereford and Worcester
Ducie Central Boys' High School, Manchester
Glenmoor County Secondary School for Girls, Dorset
Hungerhill County Secondary School, Doncaster
King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys, Birmingham
Light Hall County Secondary School, Solihull
Chalvedon GM School, Essex
Maple Hayes Hall Independent Special School, Staffordshire
Wycliffe Independent College, Gloucestershire
Kingshurst CTC, Solihull.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the Government's policy on the European Commission's proposals on data protection in

relation to *(a)* manual files, *(b)* data subject consent, *(c)* first communication of personal data and *(d)* transfers to third countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government are opposed to provisions in the revised draft directive which go beyond the 1981 Council of Europe convention on data processing (Miscellaneous No. 19 (1981) Cmnd 8341) which it considers to represent a principled and practical balance between the interests of data users, data subjects and others. It is opposed to the inclusion of manual data within the scope of the draft directive and to the requirement that in certain specified circumstances data subject consent be obtained before data are processed or first communicated to others. It is broadly content with the provisions on transfers to third countries, but considers that they require further drafting amendments.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many copies of the revised proposal for a data protection directive from the Commission he has sent out; how many were sent to organisations representing data users and organisations representing data subjects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Nearly 400 copies of the draft Directive have been sent to organisations outside the public sector. The consultation list is based on the Data Protection Registrar's standard list, together with those bodies which have approached the Home Office. It is not possible to say, in every case, whether the body primarily represents the interests of data users or data subjects, or both.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what elements in the Commission's proposals for a data protection directive are additional to the Council of Europe convention on data protection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The revised draft directive goes beyond the Council of Europe convention by placing extra restrictions on data users most importantly in the following respects: the application of the data protection provisions to manual files; restrictions on the processing of sensitive data; and the requirement for the data subject's informed consent in various circumstances before data are obtained, processed or communicated to third parties. The Government are opposed to these additional provisions, which they consider would place unnecessary and unjustifiable burdens on data users, with little compensating benefit and in some cases added inconvenience for data subjects.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 19 June, *Official Report*, column *700*, if he has signed a certificate under section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 since his answer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has signed no such certificate.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will seek permission from the respondents to place in the Library their contributions to his consultation exercise on the revised proposal for a data protection directive from the Commission.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The presumption is that responses to the consultation exercise are confidential between the contributor and Government, but I shall place a list of respondents in the Library when the consultation is complete, and the hon. Member may wish to approach them direct to ask for a copy of their submission.

Betting Shops

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will receive a delegation of betting shop employees before making any decision on the relaxation in licensing hours for betting shops.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no present plans to do so. The views submitted by betting office staff following the consultation document published in October 1991 will be taken into account, along with those of all other interested parties.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the likely impact of the evening opening of betting shops on attendances at evening greyhound meetings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The likely impact is uncertain and would depend on many variable factors. This is one of the issues to which we have been giving careful consideration in the light of the views submitted by greyhoud racing and others during the consultation process.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many meetings Ministers or officials have had with members of the Betting Office Licensees Association since April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There have been no meetings with Ministers since April 1992, but one has been arranged for 13 January 1993. There have been two meetings with officials.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has had from employees of betting shops about the proposals to extend opening hours into the evening.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since the consultation document was issued in October 1991, we have received 213 representations from betting office staff. In addition, we have received the results of a survey by A. R. Dennis bookmakers in which 4,167 betting office staff took part.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many copies of the consultative document on the evening opening of licenced betting offices were sent out in *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* 1992; how many respondents there have been to the document; how many were in favour and how many were against.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Fifty-eight copies of the consultation document were issued in October 1991. No record has since been kept of the number of copies issued on request. Since October 1991, we have received 824 representations, of which 775 were against evening opening and 49 were in favour. We have also received three petitions with more than 2,000 signatures from greyhound racing supporters opposed to evening opening.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration has been given to the petition from Gordon Dennis and the survey carried out by A. R. Dennis among betting office staff concerning evening opening; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The material submitted by A. R. Dennis is being considered alongside the representations from all other interested parties. We will announce our conclusions as soon as possible.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received from members of the public since April over extending the licensing hours of betting shops; how many have been in favour; and how many against.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since April, we have received 199 representations from members of the public, mainly bookmakers, their staff, or those with an interest in greyhound racing. Of these, five were in favour and 194 were opposed. We have also received the results of a survey by A. R. Dennis bookmakers. Of 475 bookmakers who took part, 439 were opposed. Of 4,167 betting office staff who took part, 4,046 were opposed to evening opening.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that agreement should be reached amongst all affected parties before any relaxation in the licensing hours of betting shops takes place.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I do not consider that such a policy would be either practicable or reasonable.

European Parliament

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the six additional European Parliament seats will be allocated between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government are developing proposals on how the additional seats allocated to the United Kingdom could best be allocated.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what boundaries the 1994 European elections will be fought following the allocation of six additional seats to the United Kingdom at the Edinburgh summit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Consideration is currently being given to how the European parliamentary constituency boundaries may be re-drawn to accommodate the six additional seats allocated to the United Kingdom in time for the 1994 European parliamentary elections.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* adult and *(b)* juvenile remand prisoners are currently in prison establishments in County Durham.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The following table shows how many adults, young adults and juveniles held in Prison Service establishments in County Durham on 22 December, which is the latest date for which information is available in County Durham.

Male establishments

Establishment	*Adults* A	B	C	D
Deerbolt	0	0	0	0
Durham	279	44	80	96
Frankland	299	0	0	0
Low Newton	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	578	44	80	96

Key:
A Convicted sentenced inmates.
B Convicted unsentenced inmates.
C Unconvicted remand inmates.
D Unconvicted trial inmates.

Establishment	*Young persons* A	B	C	D
Deerbolt	302	0	0	0
Durham	1	0	0	0
Frankland	0	0	0	0
Low Newton	26	24	31	23
TOTAL	329	24	31	23

Key:
A Convicted sentenced inmates.
B Convicted unsentenced inmates.
C Unconvicted remand inmates.
D Unconvicted trial inmates.

Establishment	*Juveniles* A	B	C	D
Deerbolt	32	0	0	0
Durham	0	0	0	0
Frankland	0	0	0	0
Low Newton	4	7	7	3
TOTAL	36	7	7	3

Key:
A Convicted sentenced inmates.
B Convicted unsentenced inmates.
C Unconvicted remand inmates.
D Unconvicted trial inmates.

Female establishments

Establishment	*Adults* A	B	C	D
Durham	16	0	0	0
Low Newton	10	5	5	1
TOTAL	26	5	5	1

Key:
A Convicted sentenced inmates.
B Convicted unsentenced inmates.
C Unconvicted remand inmates.
D Unconvicted trial inmates.

Establishment	*Young persons* A	B	C	D
Durham	0	0	0	0
Low Newton	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0

Key:
A Convicted sentenced inmates.
B Convicted unsentenced inmates.
C Unconvicted remand inmates.
D Unconvicted trial inmates.

Establishment	Juveniles A	B	C	D
Durham	0	0	0	0
Low Newton	0	0	1	0
TOTAL	0	0	1	0

Key:
A Convicted sentenced inmates.
B Convicted unsentenced inmates.
C Unconvicted remand inmates.
D Unconvicted trial inmates.

Prostitution

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review the laws on prostitution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We consider that the criminal law is well placed to deal with the nuisance caused by prostitution and have no present plans to review the law in this area.

Prison Education

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many potential contractors have bid to provide prison education services in 1993-94; how many bids are from local education authorities; and how many are from colleges of further education.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A total of 155 bids have been received to provide future education services in one or a number of prison establishments. Of these, 121 are from colleges and institutions of further education, 30 from private sector organisations and four from local education authorities.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the consultancy study undertaken into the prison education service by staff from Coombe Lodge and others, earlier in the current year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 23 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *476*.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by individual prison establishment which contractor has been successful in winning the bid to provide education services in 1993-94.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The contracts for the provision of educational services in prisons and young offender institutions from 1 April 1993 have not yet been let.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the budgets on a constant price basis for the prison education service for the financial years 1991-92, 1992-93 and the proposed budget for 1993-94.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Expenditure on prison education services in England and Wales is shown in the table, at 1991-92 prices.

1991-92 £ million	1992-93 £ million	1993-94 £ million
		30·9 Provisional budget
29·5 Outturn	30·4 Budget	

United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the latest position regarding the management and funding of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The position remains as set out in my reply to a question from the hon. Member on 19 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *54*.

Yugoslav Nationals

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the 150 and 1,000 former Yugoslav nationals released from detention, and their dependants, announced by the Home Secretary last year, have, to date, been received in the United Kingdom; what arrangements his Department has made to accommodate these families; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government have undertaken, in response to a request from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to accept a total of 1,000 former Yugoslav nationals who have been released from detention camps and their dependants. An initial group of 79 former detainees together with 49 of their dependants arrived on 17 December. We are awaiting confirmation from the UNHCR of the size and timing of arrival of further groups.

We have invited the Refugee Council and the British Red Cross to provide initial reception accommodation for those who wish to take advantage of it. This is being funded by the Government. Following this initial reception period the Refugee Council will arrange more permanent accommodation in the community for the former detainees and their dependants. Some have joined friends or relatives who are already in the United Kingdom, either on arrival or after a short period in reception accommodation.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many former Yugoslav nationals visiting the United Kingdom have applied to extend their visit in the last six months, including applying to extend their visa; how many such applications *(a)* have been granted, *(b)* have been refused and *(c)* a decision is still pending; how many such visitors he now regards as overstaying; and how many such visitors have been removed from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Available information is given in the table. Comprehensive reliable information on the number of applications for extension of stay in this period, and on overstaying, is not available.

Variation of leave decisions[1] on, and removals under enforcement powers of, nationals of the former Yugoslavia, 1 April—30 September 1992

	Number
Extensions of stay as visitor[2]	
Granted	76
Refused	19

	Number
Extensions of stay on other basis[2,3]	
Granted[4]	1,117
Refused	93
Removed as illegal entrants[5]	3
Removed under deportation process because of a breach of conditions of leave to enter or remain[5]	2

[1] Excluding dependants.
[2] Figures may understate a little because of recording problems.
[3] Mainly as students, au pairs or on the basis of marriage.
[4] Excluding grants of settlement.
[5] Figures relate to all persons and not just those who have sought an extension of stay.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many former Yugoslav nationals have applied for political asylum on arrival in the last six months in the United Kingdom; how many such applications have been *(a)* granted, *(b)* refused and *(c)* are being considered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the six months June to November 1992 a total of 2,040 nationals of the former Yugoslavia (excluding dependants), applied for asylum in the United Kingdom at ports of entry. Aside from 40 applications refused on the grounds that they arrived from safe third countries, the remainder of the applications are still under consideration.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many former Yugoslav nationals have been removed or deported from the United Kingdom since August 1992; if he will list in each case the country to which the person was removed or deported; in how many cases the country had indicated prior to removal or deportation it was prepared to accept the person concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the period August to October 1992, 29 former Yugoslav nationals were refused leave to enter and removed at United Kingdom ports. The majority of these persons were seeking entry as visitors. The information requested on the receiving countries is not available centrally, except in respect of the asylum seekers removed. No asylum seekers have been returned to Yugoslavia since August; seven were removed to safe third countries—three to Germany and four to Sweden—in the period August to December 1992. It is not the usual practice to seek the receiving country's agreement to accept a person refused entry. No former Yugoslav nationals were removed as illegal entrants or under the deportation process in August or September 1992. Data for subsequent months are not yet available.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many former Yugoslav nationals, permitted to enter the United Kingdom as visitors since August 1992, have applied for political asylum; how many such applications have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused; how many are being considered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information is that in the period August to November 1992 a total of 1,490 nationals of the former Yugoslavia (excluding dependants) applied for asylum after entry to the United Kingdom. Comprehensive information on their immigration status on application, or date of arrival in the United Kingdom, is not available.

The large majority of these applications are still under consideration.

Probationers

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his plans for tackling unemployment levels amongst offenders under supervision by the probation service in the current financial year, 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Jack: The three-year plan for the probation service issued by my Department in December sets an objective for 1993-94 of ensuring effective provision for offenders in relation to employment, partnership with the independent and voluntary sector and others in the local community. Guidance issued in 1990 had already emphasised the importance of working with training and enterprise councils, the Employment Service and others, and in monitoring locally the employment status of offenders at the start and end of probation supervision.

It is for each of the 55 area probation services in England and Wales to draw up detailed plans to achieve this objective which best fits local circumstances within the resources available.

The Association of Chief Officers of Probation operates regional employment forums to discuss best practice in work with offenders to secure employment and training. The Home Office regularly discusses in a national forum with probation service representatives, the Employment Department and the voluntary sector ways of mobilising effective practical assistance for offenders. Discussions with the association and other interested bodies are also in progress about ways in which performance indicators for the work of the probation service should reflect success in ensuring assistance towards employment and training while under probation supervision.

Entry Clearance Officers

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will issue instructions to United Kingdom entry clearance officers regarding his proposed allowance of up to two consecutive applications per person; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The necessary instructions to give effect to the measures, which I announced on 8 December, to protect the interests of visitors when rights of appeal are removed will be issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office before the relevant provisions of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill are brought into force.

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* the total number of residential properties owned by his Department, *(b)* the number of such properties which are empty and *(c)*, *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of Home Office residential properties as at 1 January 1993 are as follows:
(a) 2,594 properties are owned by the Department.
(b) 290 (11.18 per cent.) properties are vacant for various

reasons. Of this number 209 (8.06 per cent.) are retained for redevelopment or security reasons, retained for essential reallocation or to be demolished and are not, therefore, available for disposal. The remaining 81 (3.12 per cent.) vacant properties are on the open market for sale.

The above figures do not include properties owned by the Metropolitan police or other police authorities.

Ex-offenders

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what correspondence he has had with the South Glamorgan Probation Service Ex-offenders Employment Forum; what report he has received of the Minister of State's visit to the forum on 11 November; if he will place a copy of such correspondence and report in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: After receiving a letter from the chief probation officer of South Glamorgan I was happy to visit his offices and Her Majesty's prison Cardiff in order to meet members of the offender employment forum and launch the future skills project.

I was most impressed by the successful initiative and co-operation by those involved locally and have thanked the chief probation officer on behalf of all those involved.

Drink Driving

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider increasing periods of driving disqualification and sentences available to the courts for those found guilty of driving motor vehicles with an alcohol content in their blood that exceeds the statutory limit.

Mr. Jack: There is no upper limit on the length of disqualification that a court can impose for offences relating to driving while under the influence of alcohol. We have no present plans to change the existing penalties which permit courts to impose prison sentences of up to six months and fines of up to £5,000 thus giving the courts the powers to impose appropriate sentences on those convicted of driving with excess alcohol in the blood. For the offence of causing death by drink driving we have announced our intention to raise the maximum penalty from five to 10 years imprisonment as soon a suitable legislative opportunity is available.

Crime Prevention

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the Government's crime prevention policy.

Mr. Jack: During the past decade, the Home Office crime prevention unit set up by this Government has generated many initiatives leading to successful crime prevention activity. This has been undertaken by individual people and individual businesses; by community groups like crime prevention panels and neighbourhood watches; by the police, local authorities and other statutory agencies; by multi-agency partnerships; and within specific Government schemes. These include not only the Home Office's safer cities programme, but also the urban programme and city challenge. All this activity is linked by the common thread of the partnership, or multi-agency, approach in which a diversity of interests work together in a local community or for a common cause.

The Government intend to build on this good foundation to develop a clear strategy for crime prevention involving all sections of the community.

The four key areas of activity will be as follows:

the number of safer cities projects will be doubled, with a broader management base to bring in a wider range of interests;

a new National Board for Crime Prevention will be set up, after wide consultation with business and voluntary sectors, industry, commerce and the retail world. This should generate new ideas for preventing crime and enable a wide range of expertise to be mobilised, while providing a focal point for smaller groups addressing specific problems. Car crime prevention year has shown how much can be achieved by this kind of approach; the Ministerial group on crime prevention, reconvened with new membership, will be tasked with overseeing the Government's crime prevention strategy and helping to ensure that Government Departments pursue crime prevention objectives in the implementation of their own policies.

there will be support for crime prevention initiatives which do not fall within the scope of safer cities and other Government programmes. The Government will continue to fund Crime Concern to provide a consultancy service for those who wish to set up crime prevention projects, to promote neighbourhood watch, to develop youth crime prevention and other similar activities; we will produce a good practice guide for local crime prevention practitioners; we will fund a number of innovative local projects intended to reduce the likelihood of people turning to crime; and we will encourage all sections of the community to work with the police to prevent crime.

I have placed in the Library of the House a statement providing further details of these new policies.

NHS Premises (Fire Safety)

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plan he has to remove Crown immunity from national health service buildings with respect to fire safety legislation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what research his Department has carried out into the cost of bringing national health service premises up to the standards required by fire safety legislation; and what cost was estimated.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to his reply, 17 December, c. 437]:* The Home Office has conducted no research into the cost of bringing national health service premises up to the standards required by the safety legislation. Individual health authorities and trusts are responsible for estimating and meeting the cost of remedial work.

HEALTH

Mental Illness

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance was given to district health authorities in each financial year since 1981-82 regarding the provision of community facilities for the severely mentally ill.

Mr. Yeo: The Department has issued the following guidance to district health authorities on the development of services for mentally ill people. Copies are available in the Library.

		Date
HC(84)2	Health Services Development Resource Distribution for 1984-85 Service Priorities, Manpower and Planning	January 1984
HC(85)5	Health Services Development Resource Assumptions and Planning Guidelines	January 1985
HC(86)2	Health Services Development Resource Assumptions and Planning Guidelines	January 1986
HC(88)43	Health Services Development Resource Assumptions and Planning Guidelines	July 1988
HC(89)5	Discharge of Patients from Hospital	February 1989
HC(90)23	Health and Social Services Development 'Caring for People' The Care Programme Approach for People with a Mental Illness referred to the Specialist Psychiatric Services	September 1990
HC(90)24	Specific Grant for the Development of Social Care Services for People with a Mental Illness	September 1990
HC(90)32	Supplementary Credit Approval for the Development of Social Care Services for People with a Mental Illness	December 1990
HSG(91)23	People with a Mental Illness: Local Authority Specific Grant for 1992-93	November 1991
HSG(91)25	People with a Mental Illness: Supplementary Credit Approval for Capital Funding in 1992-93	December 1991
EL(92)13	Implementing 'Caring for People'	March 1992
EL(92)65	Implementing 'Caring for People' Guidelines	September 1992
HSG(92)51	People with a Mental Illness Local Authority Specific Grant for 1993-94	December 1992
HSG(92)52	People with a Mental Illness Supplementary Credit Approval for Capital Funding in 1993-94	December 1992

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the different forms of support for the severely mentally ill which packages of community care can comprise.

Mr. Yeo: These are listed in paragraph 5 of "Development of Services for People with Learning Disabilities (Mental Handicap) or Mental Illness in England", the fourth report prepared pursuant to section 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 (House of Commons paper 342).

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were living in hospitals for the mentally ill in England in each district in each financial year since 1981-82.

Mr. Yeo: The information is not readily available centrally in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many community psychiatric nurses there were in England in each financial year since 1981-82; and how many of these were employed wholly or mainly in caring for the severely mentally ill in the community.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the number of community psychiatric nurses as at 30 September each year is given in the table.

Whole-time equivalents

	Community psychiatric nurses
1981	1,080
1982	1,240
1983	1,430
1984	1,880
1985	2,310
1986	2,530
1987	2,770
1988	3,080
1989	3,380
1990	3,600
1991	3,760

Note: Figures have been independently rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalents.

Data are not collected centrally on the number employed wholly or mainly in caring for the severely mentally ill.

Child Care

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to improve the effect of the day care registration system introduced in the Children Act 1989; and if she will issue more guidance to local authorities on this subject.

Mr. Yeo: A circular LAC(93)1 has been issued today to local authorities in England urging them to use the discretion that the legislation allows them to be less rigid in their approach to the regulation of private and voluntary day care services and childminders and to work to encourage increases in the supply of these services. Copies have been placed in the Library.

The circular sets a new climate for providers and registration authorities, emphasising that, in the interests of children and families, authorities must strike the right balance between ensuring standards and encouraging development of provision. In particular, authorities are reminded, first, that underlying the legislation is a presumption that registration should be granted unless the authority has good reason not to register; and, secondly, that the standards set in the Department of Health's earlier guidance are not legally prescriptive. They are points of reference to be taken into account by the registering authority in deciding whether an applicant and his/her premises are fit for the care of young children and, if they are to be registered, what conditions should be imposed.

The circular also announces that the Government propose to amend the Food Premises (Registration) Regulations 1991 to exempt childminders registered under the Children Act 1989 from the requirement also to register their premises with Environmental Health Departments.

Intensive Care Beds

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has carried out into computer systems for the allocation of intensive care beds; which systems have been identified as the most satisfactory; what guidance is given to health authorities and trusts; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The allocation of intensive care beds, where carried out by computer, is usually a function of the hospital patient administration system. The investigation of this area forms part of the on-going work of the Department.

Psychiatric Patients

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the Boyd inquiry on the homicides and suicides of discharged psychiatric patients.

Mr. Yeo: An up-to-date account of the confidential inquiry into homicides and suicides by mentally ill people is contained in paragraph 23 of the fourth report prepared pursuant to section 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 entitled "Development of Services for People with Learning Disabilities (Mental Handicap) or Mental Illness in England" which was laid before the House on 16 December 1992. Copies are available in the Library.

Oral Contraceptives

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will estimate how many women have received prescriptions for oral contraceptives in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the *(a)* lowest, *(b)* highest and *(c)* average cost per month of oral contraceptives prescribed by the national health service;

(2) what is the cost to the health service of all the oral contraceptives prescribed which cost more than the average;

(3) what is the total cost to the health service of oral contraceptive prescriptions per month.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information is not available in the form requested.

Figures are based on the net ingredient cost of oral contraceptives dispensed by; community pharmacists and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors, and prescribing doctors in England in 1991. The lowest net ingredient cost per prescription was £0·62, the highest £9·12 and the average £5·01. The annual net ingredient cost of oral contraceptives with a cost per prescription greater than £5·01 was £23·79 million.

The total cost of oral contraceptives to the health service per month was £3·14 million.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost to the health service for oral contraceptives for the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the annual net ingredient cost for oral contraceptives from 1987 to 1991. Figures for 1987 to 1990 are estimates based on a sample of about one in two hundred prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors. Figures for 1991 are actual costs and include all prescriptions dispensed by; community pharmacists and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors, and prescribing doctors.

Estimated Net Ingredient Cost for Oral Contraceptives For England from 1987 to 1991

Year	*£ Million*
1987	20·01
1988	23·97
1989	27·27
1990	32·09
1991	37·65

Immunisation

Sir Malcolm Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide the figures for the volume of medicines required by the NHS, the costs in administrative terms and the actual costs of the medicines in order to meet the immunisation targets for children for each year since the introduction of the general practitioners' contract; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Under central purchasing arrangements introduced on 1 April 1992, expenditure on vaccines for childhood immunisation is estimated at £40 million in the year 1992-93. This expenditure covers immunisation carried out in general practitioners' surgeries as well as in local clinics. Details of expenditure on childhood vaccines in the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 are not held centrally because prior to 1 April 1992 individual health authorities made their own purchasing arrangements.

Approximately 650,000 children enter the immunisation programme annually. From birth to five years, each child requires four doses of diphtheria, tetanus and polio vaccine, three doses of whooping cough and Hib vaccine and one dose of measles/mumps/rubella vaccine. Contracts are placed with vaccine manufacturers to ensure the required total volumes of vaccine are available to immunise each child.

Progress with the childhood immunisation programme since the GPs' new contract was introduced is set out in the table. These figures cover immunisation carried out in GPs' surgeries and in local clinics. Separate figures in this format are not available.

Immunisation against:	*Number of children immunised (England)* *1990-91*	*1991-92 (provisional)*
Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio	587,000 (92)	594,000 (93)
Measles, Mumps and Rubella	552,000 (86)	578,000 (90)
Whooping Cough	539,000 (84)	562,000 (88)

Note: The figure in brackets is the percentage of all children aged two who have been immunised.

Expenditure in England on payments to general practitioners for reaching immunisation targets amounted to £41·138 million in 1990-91 and £49·804 million in 1991-92. Administrative costs associated with the immunisation programme cannot be disaggregated from other NHS administrative costs.

The childhood immunisation programme has been one of the country's major successes in disease prevention. The most recent estimates from the Public Health Laboratory Service's survey show that 95 per cent. of all children by the age of 18 months have been immunised against diptheria, tetanus and polio, 91 per cent. at the same age against whooping cough, and 93 per cent. by the age of 24 months against measles, mumps and rubella. East Anglian

region has achieved the "Health of the Nation" target of 95 per cent. cover by 1995 for all diseases, and Oxford, South Western and Wessex have done so for all except whooping cough. There has been no reported death from acute measles since 1989, and reports of all the diseases for which immunisation is available are at record low levels.

Complementary Medicines

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been or is being done under EC programmes on how complementary medicines can be integrated within existing systems of health care delivery; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The scope of the current EC programme on biomedical and health research does not provide for such research and there are no plans to widen the remit of future EC health and medical research programmes to enable the consideration of such proposals. The United Kingdom Government have agreed to sign the memorandum of understanding for the implementation of a European research project on unconventional medicine sponsored by the co-operation on science and technology programme which involves EC and other European states. This project—which is designed to last for five years—will examine procedures for establishing the efficacy of complementary medicines.

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the single European market will affect complementary medicines.

Mr. Sackville: The United Kingdom's medicines licensing controls, including those for complementary medicines, are not immediately affected by the launch of the single market on 1 January 1993.

The European Council of Ministers adopted directives 92/73/EEC and 92/74/EEC in September 1992 and these provide for the partial harmonisation of the rules relating to the regulation of homoeopathic medicinal products for use by humans and in animals, respectively. These directives, which are due to be implemented in member states by 31 December 1993, will ensure the continuing availability of homoeopathic medicines within the United Kingdom while making it easier for manufacturers to market their products in other member states. The arrangements for implementing the directives within the United Kingdom will shortly be the subject of wide consultation by the Government with interested parties.

Hospital Admissions

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information she has concerning the imposition by coronary care units of age limits on admission;

(2) what guidelines her Department issues on the operation of age limits on admissions to hospital services.

Mr. Sackville: Decisions concerning the assessment and treatment of national health service patients are matters for the professional judgment of the clinicians involved in the individual case. A number of factors will influence such decisions, including the patient's ability to benefit from medical intervention; but we have always made it clear that treatment should not be withheld on the basis of age alone.

Free Prescriptions

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines exist for deciding which patients are entitled to free prescriptions.

Dr. Mawhinney: Entitlement to free prescriptions is governed by the provisions of paragraph 1 of schedule 12 to the National Health Service Act 1977, the National Health Service (Charges for Drugs and Appliances) Regulations 1989 [SI 1989 No. 419], as amended,. and the National Health Service (Travelling Expenses and Remission of Charges) Regulations 1988 [SI 1988 No. 551], as amended, copies of which are in the Library.

Smokers

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will estimate the total number of habitual smokers in each regional health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The estimated number in each regional health authority of people aged 16 and over who said in 1990, the latest year for which figures are available, that they "smoke cigarettes nowadays" is given in the table.

Estimated number of people aged 16 or over smoking cigarettes England 1990

Regional Health Authority	*Thousands*
England	11,280
Northern	790
Yorkshire	850
Trent	1,060
East Anglian	430
North West Thames	730
North East Thames	880
South East Thames	990
South West Thames	700
Wessex	670
Oxford	550
South Western	720
West Midlands	1,220
Mersey	610
North Western	1,090

Notes: Estimates rounded to nearest 10,000.

Schizophrenia

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her policy on the provision of long-term hospital and hostel places for schizophrenia sufferers; and on what basis the number of hospital beds and hostel places has been calculated.

Mr. Yeo: The Government recognise that there will continue to be a number of patients suffering from schizophrenia who will require sanctuary or long-term asylum. The national health service's responsibilities for providing continuing care have been clearly set out in the White Paper "Caring for People" and strongly re-iterated last year in letters to regional health authorities and social services departments from the deputy chief executive of the national health service management executive and the chief inspector of social services.

The form this continuing care should take and the number of places provided is a matter for local decision. Under the terms of the White Paper it is the responsibility of each health authority to agree with the relevant local

authorities the level of continuing care it proposes to provide or arrange for its own population so that health and local authority plans are compatible and comprehensive. Authorities should then publish their proposals as part of the local authority community care plans.

Human Growth Hormone

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Wallasey of 15 December, *Official Report*, column *184*, by what method pituitary-derived human growth hormone was extracted from the glands; how and when the method of extraction of human growth hormone changed between 1959 and 1985; and for what reasons, and on whose recommendations, each change took place.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am advised that all the processes followed the same basic principle involving the homogenisation of the pituitary glands in order to release the growth hormone which is found in the pituitary cells. Initially at Cambridge the Raben method was used whereby the pituitary glands were acetone dried, extracted in an acid solution and precipitated differentially with ammonium sulphate. Then, later in the 1960s with the adoption of the Wilhelmi-Hartree method, the pituitaries were extracted in a strong alkaline solution (pH 10). The Lowry method, developed at St. Bartholomew's, used frozen glands with extraction at pH 8·5, a Sephadex G-100 column stage, ion-exchange chromatography and isoelectric precipitation. The Centre for Applied Microbiological Research at Porton Down modified the Cambridge process by the introduction of a G-100 column stage. Kabi also received frozen glands and initially used a process based upon the Roos method which involved extraction at pH 6·5 and a G-100 column stage. From 1982, they moved closer to the Lowry method with a higher pH for initial extraction and an additional chromatography stage.

The changes were authorised by the Medical Research Council and, from 1977, the Department of Health and Social Security after consultation with the joint DHSS/MRC advisory committee for the national pituitary collection and the health services human growth hormone committee. They were intended to increase the yield, potency and safety of the growth hormone product.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) of 15 December, *Official Report*, column *184*, where the manufacture of the human growth hormone extracted from the pituitary glands obtained in mortuaries took place; between which dates the manufacture of human growth hormone from human glands took place in each location; and what steps were taken by the Medical Research Council and by the health services pituitary collection committee to prevent infected or diseased organs being used in the manufacturing processes in each location.

Dr. Mawhinney: Pituitary glands were processed to produce human growth hormone treatment at the following locations:

1959 to 1980
The laboratory of the Department of Biochemistry of Cambridge University

1977 to 1980
The biochemistry laboratory at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London

1980 to 1985
The Centre for Applied Microbiological Research at Porton Down

1980 to 1985
By Kabi A. B. (Sweden) at their laboratory in Stockholm.

Action intended to prevent the use of infected glands in the manufacture of the growth hormone treatment was required of hospital pathology departments. The Medical Research Council first issued guidance to pathology departments on the glands to be excluded from collection in 1958 and then laid down more stringent criteria in 1977. The joint DHSS/MRC advisory committee for the national pituitary collection issued its criteria in 1981.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many private advice organisations specialising in investigating child abuse and training such investigators are operating;

(2) what is the current system of regulation or accountability to public authority for private agencies specialising in advising on child abuse; and what plans she has for changes;

(3) what guidance she issues on the minimum qualifications necessary to practise as an advice agency to children who are being abused or adults who were abused in childhood;

(4) whether she will make it her policy to establish a national register of private agencies that carry out investigations of child abuse, training for investigators, or advice to persons who have been abused;

(5) if she will bring forward proposals to set up a general social services council with the responsibility of setting standards for private agencies offering advice or training in areas such as child abuse, and with powers similar to other professional bodies to suspend or expel members who fail to maintain acceptable professional standards.

Mr. Yeo: It is for the local authority, which has a duty to investigate under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, or for the National Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Children when authorised to act on behalf of the local authority under that provision, to satisfy itself that any person it employs to investigate allegations of child abuse, train investigators, or give advice to persons who have been abused, is appropriately qualified and trained.

There is no additional need for a separate system of regulation or national registration for private agencies involved in such activities. Information is not available centrally on the number of these agencies.

"The Health of the Nation"

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what budgetary provision has been made for 1992-93 and 1993-94 for the publication of the "Health of the Nation" targets.

Dr. Mawhinney: The cost of producing "The Health of the Nation" White Paper, together with nine other supporting and subsequent publications, and making these widely available will be around £2·4 million in 1992-93. This includes the cost of implementation activity such as the forthcoming publication of guidance on each of the key areas and 14 regional conferences taking place from January to March this year.

Allocations for publications, communications and publicity in 1993-94 have yet to be decided.

Bart's Hospital

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to respond to the request made by letter by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch to meet a delegation of Conservative, Liberal and Labour councillors from Hackney to discuss the future of Bart's hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: My office has written to the hon. Member to make arrangements for a meeting.

Medical Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the regulations which apply specifically to the work of chiropodists, dieticians, medical laboratory scientific officers, occupational therapists, orthoptists, physiotherapists and radiographers; and what plans she has to review them.

Dr. Mawhinney: State registered practitioners are subject to the provisions of the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960. State registration is a requirement for direct employment in these capacities in the national health service and local authority social services departments, by virtue of directions given under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 and the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970. We have at present no plans to review these arrangements.

Laparoscopic Surgery

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many surgeons practising laparoscopic surgery are certificated in the competence of such techniques;

(2) what representations from and discussions with the Royal College of Surgeons she has had concerning certification of competence for the practice of laparoscopic surgery;

(3) if she will consider the need for regulations to govern the practice of laparoscopic surgery; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no central certification scheme for surgeons using laparoscopic or other minimally invasive techniques. There have been no discussions with the Royal College of Surgeons concerning any such certification and we have no plans to introduce regulations to govern the practice of this surgery.

Pharmaceutical Prices

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations she has received from the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry during the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme negotiations;

(2) what proposals she has made in her negotiations with the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry on the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme; and when she expects the negotiations to reach a conclusion.

Dr. Mawhinney: Negotiations are now taking place between the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry and my Department on a successor agreement to the 1986 pharmaceutical price regulation scheme. Both sides have put forward various proposals and these are under discussion. Our aim is to reach an agreement which will provide a fair deal for the industry and for the taxpayer and it is not possible at present to predict how long the negotiations will take. In the meantime, the 1986 agreement continues to operate.

Tropical Diseases

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to provide specialist facilities for the diagnosis and treatment of tropical diseases in London and the south-east of England when St. Pancras hospital for tropical diseases is closed;

(2) what change is proposed in the number of beds and availability of specialist staffing for the diagnosis and treatment of tropical diseases in London;

(3) what estimate was made, in considering the future of St. Pancras hospital for tropical diseases, of the implications for the incidence of tropical diseases of the amount of travel by British citizens to tropical countries and the availability of making early diagnoses.

Dr. Mawhinney: The report of the inquiry into London's health service by Sir Bernard Tomlinson and his team recommended that the London hospital for tropical disease at St. Pancras be merged with University college hospital. I understand that his recommendation has been welcomed by the LHTD and its parent institute, the London school of hygiene and tropical medicine as offering significant medical and research advantages.

This, and the other recommendations of the Tomlinson report, is advice to Government. We will announce our response to the report shortly. All proposals on hospital closures or mergers arising from Sir Bernard's report will be subject to established national health service consultation procedures.

Mental Illness

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what specific provision has been made in the draft local authority care plans so far received for the care of those in the 16 to 25 years age group suffering from mental illness.

Mr. Yeo: Local authorities are not required to send copies of their draft plans to the Department.

Care Homes

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what sources of financial support the Government have provided for care home proprietors so that they can train their staff to the NVQ standards required from April 1993; and how much money is available from each of those sources.

Mr. Yeo: There is no requirement for staff of care homes in the independent sector, or the statutory sector, to have achieved national vocational qualifications by April 1993.

It is for employers to determine what training and qualifications are necessary for staff to carry out their duties to acceptable standards.

Correspondence

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to reply to the letters dated 27 October 1991, 18 December 1991, 19 February 1992, 17 July 1992 and 7 October 1992 from Dr. S. G. Bennett of The Surgery, 51 Hawthorn Drive, Wembury, Plymouth, Devon, about single-handed locum allowances for rural practitioners; why has he received no acknowledgement to any of these letters; for what reasons the letters have not yet been replied to; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Officials from the Department have replied to Dr. Bennett and I have written to my hon. Friend.

Prescriptions

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will state the average net ingredient cost of prescription items charged at the standard rate of £3·75, exclusive of prescriptions which are subject to charge exemption, charge remission or the use of prescription pre-payment certificates.

Dr. Mawhinney: The average net ingredient cost of chargeable prescriptions, excluding those covered by pre-payment certificates, in the family health services in England amounted to £8·37 in the six-month period ending 30 September 1992.

Auditors' Report

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all reports issued by auditors under section 20(3) of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 in the last six months; and if she will make a statement on the action she has taken in each instance.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received one auditor's report under section 20(3) of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. This relates to loans made by West Midlands regional health authority to a charitable company, Health Management Trust, to assist a subsidiary company, FIP Ltd. The report raises issues concerning the legal status of the loans, on which we are taking advice.

Hospital Beds

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital beds were closed in London teaching hospitals in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Aids Unit

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many organisations requested funding under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 from her Department's aids unit, for the current and previous financial years; what was the total amount of money requested; which organisations received section 64 funding; how much money the unit distributed in total; and what was the total money available for all projects from section 64 funding.

Mr. Sackville: Forty-one organisations requested section 64 funding from the Department of Health Aids unit in 1992-93, and 32 in the previous year. The total amount requested was £4.172 million in 1992-93 and £4.161 million in the previous year.

The following organisations received section 64 funding in 1991-92 and 1992-93: AIDS Ahead, AIDS and Housing Project, ACET, Aled Richards Trust (91-92 only), Barnardos, BHAN, Blackliners, Body Positive, CARA, Frontliners (91-92 only), Globe Centre, ISDD, Landmark, London East AIDS Network, London Lighthouse, LVSC, Mainliners, Mildmay Mission, National AIDS Trust, National AIDS Manual (92-93 only), NAZ project (92-93 only), Positively Women, SCODA, Streetwise Youth, Strutton Ground Housing Association, Terrence Higgins Trust, Turning Point.

The unit distributed £1.987 million in 1992-93 and £1.892 million in 1991-92.

The total amount of money available for all projects from section 64 was £17.8 million in 1992-93 and £15.855 million the previous year.

Motor Neurone Disease

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the evidence linking abnormally high levels of motor neurone disease to a high concentration of nitrates in tap water.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is not aware of any evidence of such a link.

Myodil

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps have been taken to ensure that general practitioners are aware of the possible side effects of the use of Myodil and its links with the disease arachnoiditis;

(2) what plans she has to withdraw the product licence for Myodil.

Dr. Mawhinney: Myodil was withdrawn from the market by the manufacturers in 1987 for commercial reasons and the product licence is no longer in force. Myodil would only have been administered by specialists. The product information for Myodil warned of the occurrence of post-myelography arachnoiditis. In view of this, and the fact that arachnoiditis is rare, it has not been considered necessary to issue additional warnings to general practioners about the side effects of Myodil and the possible association with arachnoiditis.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what support is being given to research efforts to determine the percentage of cases of arachnoiditis which arise from the use of the dye Myodil in myelography treatment.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are not currently funding research in this particular area.

Bloomfield Report

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she has yet received the Bloomfield report;

(2) on what date she will make the Bloomfield report available to hon. Members.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has now received the report and will inform the House of its contents shortly.

Abortion

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on how many and which district health authorities in England have run a centralised abortion referral service through community family planning clinic services; and what was the average waiting time between general practitioner referral and hospital appointment, where such centralised services existed, for the last available year.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally.

EC Doctors and Dentists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to encourage doctors and dentists from European countries to seek employment in England.

Dr. Mawhinney: Employment and recruitment of doctors and dentists are matters for the individual employing authorities. A 1991 survey of doctors from other EC countries showed that around 30 per cent. were actively recruited by English health authorities or trusts.

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list *(a)* the total number of residential properties owned by her Department, *(b)* the number of such properties which are empty and *(c)*, *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not held centrally on the properties in the ownership of the national health service. A survey in 1990 indicated that the NHS had some 93,000 units of accommodation, of which 14,000, 15 per cent., were vacant. 90 per cent. of the vacant units were rooms in hospital hostels or shared flats. A further survey is now being undertaken and the results will be made available to the Government's task force on empty residential property.

Raynaud's Disease and Scleroderma

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to improve facilities for research into and treatment of Raynaud's disease and scleroderma; what representations she has received from the Raynaud's Disease and Scleroderma Society in relation to the future of the Brompton hospital unit; what consultations she has had concerning the impact of the Tomlinson report on non-London originating patients suffering from Raynaud's disease and scleroderma; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has no current plans for research into Raynaud's disease and scleroderma. The main Government agency for the promotion of medical and related research is the Medical Research Council which receives its grant-in-aid through the Office of Science and Technology. We have recently received two representations regarding the Raynaud's Disease and Scleroderma Society in relation to future of the Royal Brompton hospital to which I will be replying. The views of the society will be taken into account, along with others relating to the specialist hospitals such as the Brompton, when decisions are made on the recommendations of the Tomlinson report. Those decisions will also take into account the implications for non-London originating patients for these and other diseases.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Quantock Staghounds

Mr. Meale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the terms and conditions of the permit issued to the Quantock staghounds to hunt on Forestry Commission land.

Mr. Curry: The terms and conditions set out in the permission given to the Quantock staghounds hunt by the Forestry Commission are as follows:

1. The permission is limited to scheduled hunting days only.
2. Vehicles may only be taken into the Great Wood on specified routes, and subject to a speed limit of 15 mph.
3. Priority of passage is given at all times to forestry and other traffic, and to pedestrians.
4. The Quantock staghounds hunt to indemnify the Forestry Commission in the sum of £500,000 in respect of claims for damage, loss, or injury to Forestry Commission employees and property, similarly third party claims arising from exercise of the permission.
5. The Forestry Commission cannot accept any responsibility for loss, damage or injury suffered by the hunt or their followers during their exercise of the permission—which is given on the basis that it is at the user's own risk.
6. The permission does not give or imply any exclusive or permanent user rights by the hunt and their followers.
7. Hunt followers to carry windscreen stickers or other means of identification.
8. Smoking to be prohibited.
9. No carcase to be gralloched within 30 ft of running water.
10. One landrover or similar vehicle will be allowed to travel on the general road network to collect carcasses as an exception to the general rule but for no other purpose.
11. The staghounds to be responsible for the observance of the commission's byelaws by members of the hunt and their followers.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many vehicle permits have been issued to hunt followers in the Quantocks area to enable them to follow the hunt on Forestry Commission land.

Mr. Curry: Somerset county council, in liaison with the Forestry Commission, has issued 126 vehicle permits to hunt staff and followers for the 1992-93 season. No separate record is kept of permits issued to hunt followers.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provisions are made for the ownership of the carcase or for payment when a deer is killed by the Quantock staghounds on Forestry Commission land.

Mr. Curry: The ownership of the carcase passes to the Quantock staghounds hunt without any payment.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what monitoring arrangements and procedures are in place to ensure that the conditions of the permit held by the Quantock staghounds are adhered to.

Mr. Curry: Senior members of the Quantock staghounds hunt attend at least one formal meeting each year with Forestry Commission staff. Contacts are also maintained, as necessary, between the commission and the hunt's vehicle steward. In addition, Forestry Commission staff carry out random checks on hunt days to ensure that the conditions of the permit are being followed.

Dairy Farmers

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the level of indebtedness among dairy farmers in each year since 1974.

Mr. Gummer: The following table shows the average level of total liabilities on dairy farms in England, together with the proportion that these represent of total assets, for each year from 1978-79. Comparable information for earlier years is not available. Data for 1991-92 will be published in "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom".

Dairy Farms in England: Indebtedness[1]

Accounting year ending on average mid-Feb	*Total External Liabilities (£'000 per farm)*	*External Liabilities as a percentage of Total Assets*
1978-79	15·4	8
1979-80	20·7	11
1980-81	24·6	12
1981-82	29·6	13
1982-83	32·6	13
1983-84	42·2	16
1984-85	43·3	16
1985-86	51·8	18
1986-87	54·2	19
1987-88	49·5	16
1988-89	50·1	15
1989-90	57·0	14
1990-91	63·1	14

[1] All data based on closing valuations.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his Department's assessment of the impact of sterling devaluation on farm incomes in 1992 in each sector of agriculture.

Mr. Curry: It is not possible yet to estimate the impact of the recent depreciation in the value of sterling on farm incomes in 1992. However, it is estimated that the fall in the value of sterling and the associated devaluation of the green pound should increase agricultural net product by around £700 million or 14 per cent. in a full year.

Veterinary Inspection Fees

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what consultation his Department had with abattoirs in the north west region prior to announcing the recent increase in veterinary inspection fees;

(2) what recent representations he has received from farmers in the north west region about increases in veterinary inspection fees and their impact upon competition in the meat trade.

Mr. Soames: Consultation took place earlier this year with interested parties, including organisations representing the interests of abattoirs and farmers, on the proposed Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992, in accordance with section 48 of the Food Safety Act 1990.

In the last five months the Department has received seven letters from Members of Parliament within its northern region about veterinary inspection costs. One of these concerned representations from two farmers. We have received no direct representations from farmers in northern region about increases in veterinary inspection fees and their impact on competition in the meat trade, but a number of representations have been made by other interests including abattoir owners and livestock auctioneers.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by how much in both cash and percentage terms veterinary inspection fees for abattoirs have recently been increased; what was the reason for that increase; upon what basis the fees for individual abattoirs are calculated; what estimate he has made of the net effect in overall annual average payments of such fees in both cash and percentage terms for an average-sized abattoir; what form the notification of the recent increase in veterinary inspection fees took to individual abattoirs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Veterinary inspection fees are charged to abattoirs under the Fresh Meat and Poultry Meat (Hygiene, Inspection and Examinations for Residues) (Charges) Regulations 1990, which provide for the recovery of costs incurred by local authorities in providing for inspection and supervision of abattoirs. Detailed information on charges for individual abattoirs is not available, but work carried out by independent consultants earlier this year on behalf of this Department estimated the cost of implementing the supervision requirements in the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992 as £33 million per annum, compared with £25 million previously. Both figures are based on 1991 costs and slaughterhouse numbers. The additional cost of veterinary supervision in medium-sized slaughterhouses was estimated to represent £5·4 million of this increase. However, we estimate that the guidance on veterinary supervision levels issued by the Department on 30 November would reduce this to £3·4 million. A copy of this guidance was placed in the Library of the House.

Local authorities are required to consult abattoir operators about the proposed charges at individual premises and to consider any representations made by the operator before determining the amount of the charge.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what implications the decisions taken at the Edinburgh summit in connection with the principle of subsidiarity have for the arrangements and fees for veterinary inspection of abattoirs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The basic principles and guidelines on subsidiarity which were agreed by the Edinburgh Council will apply to future Community action on the arrangements and fees for veterinary inspection of abattoirs, and in particular to Community discussions on proposals for amending EC directive 85/73 on the harmonisation of inspection costs.

Animal Transportation

Mr. Burden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek a derogation from the single market to permit the maintenance of the existing United Kingdom minimum standards on animal transportation from 1 January 1993.

Mr. Soames: As explained in the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kempton (Mr. Bowden)

on 10 December 1992, the United Kingdom will be maintaining national rules on protection of animals in transport, in the areas where further Community rules remain to be adopted.

Food Prices

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's estimate of the effect upon the food group retail prices index of the recent devaluation of the green pound.

Mr. Gummer: It is estimated that the devaluations of the green pound which took place between mid-September 1992 and 1 January 1993 may increase the food component of the retail prices index by about 2 per cent., once the effects of the increases in CAP support prices have worked through.

Broiler Hens

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what proportion of broiler hens stunned in United Kingdom slaughterhouses have both their carotid arteries severed;

(2) what proportion of broiler hens stunned in United Kingdom slaughterhouses are currently stunned using an average current of at least 150 milliamperes.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is not available.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from hill farming interests following his announcement to cut hill livestock compensatory allowances for sheep on 12 December.

Mr. Curry: A number of representations have been received on this matter from farming interests following my announcement on 10 December of the conditions for the 1993 HLCA scheme. The reductions in HLCAs were taken in the light of increased incomes in the hill sheep sector and will in any case be more than offset by increases in ewe premium payments next April resulting from green pound devaluations and decisions taken at the December Agriculture Council.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the impact in the reduction of HLCA payments on sheep farmers in *(a)* Northumberland and *(b)* Tynedale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The conditions of the HLCA scheme are determined on the basis of national statistical data and it is not possible to measure the impact on different localities. I have no reason to believe conditions for sheep farmers in Northumberland and in Tynedale are materially different from those obtaining elsewhere in the less-favoured areas in England. The HLCA reductions were taken in the light of increased incomes in the hill sheep sector and will in any case be more than offset by increases in ewe premium payments next April resulting from green pound devaluations and decisions taken at the December Agriculture Council.

Agricultural Training Board

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the present members of the Agricultural Training Board, their dates of appointment and length of appointment, relevant qualifications, any organisations they represent and the payments they receive from public funds in respect of these duties.

Mr. Curry: The national board of the Agricultural Training Board comprises a chairman, deputy chairman and nine members, one each representing employers and employees, three educational members and four members appointed under the Employment Act 1988. The details are as follows:

Name	*Position*	*Date of appointment*	*Length of appointment*	*Qualifications and organisations represented*	*Payment from public funds*
Andrew Stewart	Chairman	1 October 1992	2½ years	Farmer with extensive political and industrial experience.	£7,580/year if works an average of 1 day per week and travel and subsistence allowances.
Michael Curtis	Deputy Chairman	1 April 1992	3 years	Extensive industrial experience.	£6,950/year if works an average of 1 day per week and travel and subsistence allowances.
Rosemary Berry	Employment Act Appointee	1 April 1992	3 years	Practical farming background and Women's Farming Union Member.	Travelling and subsistence
Janet Buchanan-Smith	Employment Act Appointee	1 April 1992	3 years	Practical farming background and familiar with Scottish issues.	Travelling and subsistence
John Harries	Welsh Education Representative	1 April 1992	3 years	Senior Lecturer at Welsh Agricultural College.	Travelling and subsistence
Victor Hughes	Employment Act Appointee	1 April 1992	3 years	Former Principal at the Royal Agricultural College.	Travelling and subsistence.
Tom Jones	Employment Act Appointee	1 April 1992	3 years	Practical hill farming background in Wales.	Travelling and subsistence.

Name	Position	Date of appointment	Length of appointment	Qualifications and organisations represented	Payment from public funds
Nicholas Mallett	Employer Member	1 April 1992	3 years	Farmer. NFU representative on several education and training committees. NFU nominee.	Travelling and subsistence.
Ivan Monkton	Employee Member	1 April 1992	3 years	Represents Agriculture Trade Group on TGWU General Executive Council. TGWU nominee.	Travelling and subsistence.
Michael Pollard	English Education Representative	1 April 1992	3 years	Principal of Askham Bryan College of Agriculture and Horticulture.	Travelling and subsistence.
Philip Thomas	Scottish Education Representative	1 April 1992	3 years	Principal and Chief Executive of the Scottish Agricultural Colleges.	Travelling and subsistence.

Pig Disease Eradication Fund Ltd.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of whether the terms of his recent announcement concerning the use of remaining funds collected by levy by the Pig Disease Eradication Fund Ltd. to compensate producers of pigs slaughtered to eradicate Aujeszky's disease requires amendment to paragraph 2(a) and (b) and paragraph 8 of the agreement between his predecessor and the Pig Disease Eradication Fund Ltd. on 11 March 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The agreement of 11 March 1983 concerns the detailed operation of the financial arrangements for fulfilling the primary purpose of the Pig Industry Levy Act 1983, which was to meet the costs of eradication of Aujeszky's disease. It does not deal with the situation envisaged in subsection 2(b), (3) and (7) of the Act, where sums collected under the levy are surplus to the primary requirements of the scheme.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he expects animal welfare regulations to fall within the scope of the subsidiarity agreement reached at the Edinburgh summit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) on 17 December, *Official Report*, column *353*.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he will take to seek advice on the suitability of any transgenic animals produced for commercial keeping and rearing in terms of their health and welfare.

Mr. Soames: The Department is responsible for the health and welfare of all livestock on agricultural land. In our election manifesto we indicated that we would establish an ethical committee to look at the effects of advanced techniques in animal breeding, and we shall make an announcement about this as soon as possible.

Fish Inspectors

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fish inspectors are employed in the United Kingdom; and what information he has on the numbers employed in Holland, France, Germany and Spain.

Mr. Curry: The current total number of land-based sea fisheries inspectors employed by United Kingdom Agricultural Departments is 159. A further 65 officers carry out fisheries protection duties through aerial and surface surveillance operations.

Comparison with other member states is not straightforward. In some cases responsibility is devolved to regional authorities; in other cases, fisheries inspection duties are carried out by staff with other functions, such as police and customs officers. The following information on numbers of fish inspectors employed in the Netherlands, France, Germany and Spain is contained in a Commission report on monitoring implementation of the common fisheries policy, published in March 1992. The information relates to land-based staff; no figures are available for those carrying out duties at sea.

	Port-based	HQ
United Kingdom	132	27
Netherlands	180	[2]—
France	[2]—	[2]—
Germany	47	[2]—
Spain	[2]—	[1]32

[1]Includes recruitment of 15 inspectors which was taking place at the time the data was collected.
[2]Not available.

Pesticides

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that imported pesticides are identical in all respects to United Kingdom products that have approval under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986.

Mr. Soames: A consultation paper was issued on 16 November 1992 seeking views on the proposed control arrangements for indentical imports of pesticides. All views received will be considered carefully and an announcement made in due course.

Fishing Communities (Assistance)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the decision reached at the Edinburgh summit on the package of measures to assist fishing communities known as objective 6.

Mr. Curry: The Edinburgh Council decided not to introduce a new objective 6, but agreed that "Appropriate attention should be given to the needs of areas dependent on fishing, within the relevant objectives"—that is, the existing objectives of the European structural funds.

The European Commission's proposals for revised structural funds regulations are expected in the near future and should include proposals to bring the European Council's decision into effect. The regulations are due to enter into force on 1 January 1994.

During negotiation of the regulations, the Government will seek to ensure that proper account can be taken under the objectives of the needs of United Kingdom areas which are dependent on fishing.

British Embassy, Madrid

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many staff of the British embassy in Madrid have been seconded from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food currently has one member of staff on loan to Her Majesty's diplomatic service and based in the British embassy in Madrid.

Spanish Slaughterhouses

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make representations to the European Commission to make supervision of welfare standards in Spanish slaughterhouses more effective.

Mr. Soames: The Commission's attention is drawn to any evidence of contraventions of Community animal welfare legislation in other member states.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to ensure that British live animal exports to Spanish slaughterhouses meet all current standards on transport and slaughter regulations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: All member states are required to implement directive 91/628/EEC on the protection of animals in transport and directive 74/577/EEC on the humane slaughter of animals. As announced in the reply given to my hon Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 16 December, specific safeguards have been agreed with the Spanish authorities for ensuring that animals exported for slaughter in Spain are slaughtered in accordance with Community welfare legislation.

Dietary Supplements Directive

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what implications the agreement at the Edinburgh summit about the dropping by the Commission of proposals for a number of measures have for the proposed directive on dietary supplements; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he took at the recent Agriculture Council to seek the support of Ministers in other member Governments for his position on the forthcoming European directive on dietary supplements.

Mr. Soames: At the Edinburgh European Council the Commission presented the first fruits of its review of a range of Community legislation. The Commission's list will be subject to further discussion. Dietary supplements were not considered at the December Agriculture Council. Discussion, if and when it takes place, would be, as for other food matters, in the Internal Market Council.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the implications of the preliminary ruling of the European Court given on 28 October, published in the *Official Journal* on 21 November, on the meaning of medicinal product for the proposed directive on dietary supplements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Commission has put forward no proposal on dietary supplements. The ruling of the European Court in case C219/91 has the effect of applying the law relating to medicinal products to products which are described as having prophylactic or therapeutic properties, even if they are generally regarded as foodstuffs and have no known effect in the light of the current state of scientific knowledge. The ruling may narrow the scope of a proposal on dietary supplements should the Commission choose to make one.

Agricultural Products

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list exports of *(a)* grain and *(b)* all agricultural products from each EC country and the USA for each year since 1973.

Mr. Curry: Comparable statistics on the trade of EC member states and the USA are given in the Food and Agriculture Organisation trade yearbooks, which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Fishing Quotas

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with representatives of the Northern Ireland Fish Producers Organisation and the Anglo North-Irish Fish Producers Association concerning quota allocations and the application of the Hague preference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Although I am aware of their concerns, these organisations have not contacted me directly, but Lord Arran, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for fisheries in Northern Ireland, has been in close touch with me concerning these matters.

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list *(a)* the total number of residential properties owned by his Department, *(b)* the number of such properties which are empty and *(c)*, *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Curry: At 1 January 1993 the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food owned 143 houses of which nine, 6 per cent., were vacant.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the Forestry Commission.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer of 17 December 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

The Forestry Commission was reorganised in April 1992 with the aim of achieving a clearer distinction between its regulatory and advisory roles as a Government department and the management of its forests. The Government have no plans at present to make any further changes.

EMPLOYMENT

Energy Employment

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information she has on the number of people employed in *(a)* deep mining and *(b)* the offshore oil and gas industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information is as follows:

Employees in employment: Great Britain October 1992

	Number
Deep coal mines	53,000
Extraction of mineral oil and natural gas	48,000

Unemployment

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give the number and percentage of those unemployed and the numbers and percentage of those unemployed for 12 months and more in the west midlands and the Walsall travel-to-work area and the corresponding or nearest available information for May 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library. Data relating to the numbers of claimant unemployed by duration, is available from October 1983 and only on a quarterly basis.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment is she will set minimum conditions for the training and enterprise councils in England in relation to representation of manufacturing industry on the boards of the TECs; what proposals she has to encourage competition in the formation of the boards of TECs; what studies she has made of the representation of different sections of business on the boards of all the TECs; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: We expect the private sector directors of training and enterprise council (TEC) boards broadly to reflect the pattern of employment in their area and this includes the manufacturing industry. It is for individual TECs to appoint directors in accordance with the broad criteria which my right hon. Friend has set out in the contract with the TECs. Regional directors cooperate with TECs to ensure that the needs of each local community are adequately represented.

Women's Earnings

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of women who have earnings below *(a)* the tax threshold and *(b)* the national insurance threshold, broken down into married women, lone parents and single women at the latest date.

Mr. McLoughlin: Broad estimates, based on the new earnings survey and estimates of the number of employees in employment, are as follows: in April 1992 there were 2·75 million women employees earning less than the PAYE threshold; of whom 2·25 million earned less than the national insurance lower earnings limit. Using the results of the family expenditure survey it is estimated that approximately 75 per cent. of each of these categories were married women, 5 per cent. lone parents and 20 per cent. single women.

Social Affairs

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the social affairs achievements of the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The overall theme for the United Kingdom's Presidency in employment and social affairs was "A Community at Work".

Our key Presidency priority was to focus the attention of the Social Affairs Council more on the problem of rising unemployment throughout the European Community. As a result, a formal resolution on employment growth, proposed by the Presidency, was adopted unanimously by Employment Ministers at the Social Affairs Council in December, which is intended to pave the way for future discussions in the Council. The key elements of the resolution were:

- a commitment to economic growth, competitiveness and efficiency;
- a commitment not to impose unnecessary regulation which would hold back the creation and development of jobs;
- Community-wide practical help for unemployed people and the removal of obstacles to labour mobility;
- various ways in which the EC institutions and Member States can identify effective practice in tackling unemployment.

During the Presidency, we were also able to secure final agreement on the Directive on the Protection of Pregnant Workers, which will bring increased benefits to working women throughout the EC.

In addition, the following proposals were agreed or adopted by the Social Affairs Council: a Resolution on the acceptance of Member States' vocational qualifications throughout the Community; two Directives on minimum health and safety requirements in the extractive industries; a proposal for the introduction of a new, improved information system for the Community covering job vacancies, applications for work and living and working conditions in the EC; the introduction of a Community-wide labour force survey; and a Recommendation on promoting employees' financial participation in organisations for which they work.

The Social Affairs Council also agreed conclusions on the proper implementation and enforcement of Community legislation, which was another important theme of the United Kingdom Presidency.

Useful progress was also made on proposals on the free movement of workers, posted workers, the HELIOS II community action programme for people with disabilities, health and safety in work with biological agents, and work on board fishing vessels.

In addition, the United Kingdom Presidency hosted a productive Informal meeting of EC Employment and Social Affairs Ministers in Wales in October, at which employment and unemployment, implementation and enforcement, subsidiarity and the Pregnant Workers Directive were discussed; and also hosted a wide range of successful conferences and special events in many different parts of the United Kingdom, reflecting the United Kingdom's Presidency themes.

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list *(a)* the total number of residential properties owned by her Department, *(b)* the number of such properties which are empty and *(c)*, *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Employment Department at present has 21 residential properties. Thirteen of these properties are currently empty, representing 62 per cent. of the total.

Training

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consultations she has had with the chairmen and women of the training and enterprise councils concerning the 16 and 17-year-olds not on training schemes, or in full-time education; what statistics she has in relation to the numbers of such young people; how many were *(a)* on a waiting list for youth training places, *(b)* have already started and left a youth training place and *(c)* other; and what proposals she has to widen the coverage of youth training placement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Departmental officials are carrying out reviews on a weekly basis with TECs which are responsible for the delivery of YT. We receive regular reports on TEC performance in the delivery of the YT guarantee. My right hon. Friend announced the estimated numbers of young people seeking training at national level in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 1 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *127-28*. More recent figures will be published when they are available.

Restart

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, for each region and for Great Britain as a whole how many unemployed people have been referred to Restart courses by Employment Service counsellors since January 1991; how many of them were unemployed for over two years; how many attended and completed the course; what were the outcomes of the participants; how many had benefit penalties imposed for not attending or failing to complete their attendance at the Restart course; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[pursuant to his answer, 29 October 1992, c. 835-36]:* The Chief Executive of the Employment Service has written further to the hon. Member.

Letter from M. Fogden to Ms. Clare Short, dated 11 January 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about Restart Courses. These are matters which fall within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Unfortunately, due to an administrative error, our reply of 29 October did not include the figures about Restart Courses. This reply now contains the tables; please accept my apologies for any inconvenience this has caused.

As you will know from previous correspondence Restart Courses are short courses aimed at helping people who are having the most difficulty returning to work. They are not an alternative to regular job search or other employment or training programmes. Essentially they provide people with the opportunity to explore all the options open to them and give them confidence to take the next step back to work.

Since December 1990 people who have been unemployed for two years or more who at their Restart interview refuse or fail to take up a place on an Employment Department employment or training programme are required to attend a Restart Course.

As your question has raised a number of specific points, I am setting out the information you have asked for in the two tables attached—one deals with all Restart Course attenders, the other just those covered by the requirement to attend. As explained in my previous answer, we collect at a Regional level the number of people who are referred to the course who are also unemployed for years or more. We have however not felt it necessary to keep similar figures for all those referred. The Benefits Agency make the decision on whether an individual's benefit should be reduced for failure to attend or complete the course. Their figures are compiled by their Districts which have different boundaries from those of our Regions. To avoid confusion, I have given the national figure only.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

All restart course attenders January 1991 to June 1992

	Northern	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*East Midlands and Eastern*	*London and South East*	*South West*	*Wales*	*West Midlands*	*North West*	*Scotland*	*Total*
1. People referred to restart courses	'—	'—	'—	'—	'—	'—	'—	'—	'—	'—
2. Starters	17,672	20,420	13,681	31,671	9,612	10,029	22,302	36,248	27,006	188,641
3. Total completers	16,617	18,783	12,103	28,134	8,344	8,906	19,073	33,018	24,207	169,185
Completers who agreed to follow up:										
Jobs	3,707	4,638	3,531	5,617	1,552	2,209	4,645	6,800	12,647	45,346
ET	1,605	2,170	1,584	5,718	1,404	1,627	4,818	5,024	2,881	26,831
Jobclub	1,312	1,541	1,410	5,274	1,184	1,484	2,225	3,820	1,688	19,938
Other employment, training and related opportunities	9,765	10,327	7,209	16,360	4,374	4,530	8,630	16,379	9,865	87,439

	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands and Eastern	London and South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	North West	Scotland	Total
4. Total number of people with an outcome to follow up	14,396	15,317	10,714	24,925	6,930	7,533	17,026	28,341	21,516	146,698

[1] Not available.

Restart course attenders unemployed for two years or more January 1991 to June 1992

	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands and Eastern	London and South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	North West	Scotland	Total
1. People referred to restart courses	24,293	30,047	16,388	35,941	9,626	12,341	23,737	60,852	44,948	258,173
2. Starters	15,800	17,974	9,321	20,207	5,741	6,885	14,170	31,823	24,136	146,057
3. Total completers	14,930	16,619	8,252	17,900	5,042	6,176	12,290	29,071	21,764	132,044
Completers who had agreed to follow up:										
Jobs	3,291	3,970	2,433	3,394	784	1,473	2,911	5,845	11,402	35,503
ET	1,348	1,834	944	3,266	634	913	2,637	4,249	2,432	18,257
Jobclub	1,142	1,268	780	2,930	417	864	1,146	3,289	1,371	13,207
Other employment, training and related opportunities	8,819	9,379	4,927	10,284	2,226	3,185	5,531	14,430	8,771	67,552
4. People for whom a reduction in income support was made by benefits agency	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
5. Total number of people with an outcome to follow up	12,876	13,397	7,138	15,593	3,978	5,004	10,628	24,341	19,080	112,035

[1] Not available by ES region.

DEFENCE

Somalia

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many United Kingdom forces personnel are being made available to assist the United States humanitarian intervention in Somalia; and what is the total cost and time scale of the United Kingdom's military contribution.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The British contribution has taken the form of two RAF Hercules transport aircraft, accompanied by about 90 supporting personnel. Our aircraft are based at Mombasa in Kenya, and have been operating with US aircraft since 12 December in transporting humanitarian aid from Kenya to Somalia.

This deployment is based on an initial three-month period. It is too early to provide an accurate estimate as to the total cost of our military contribution.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the extent of United Kingdom armed forces commitment to the United Nations sponsored multinational relief operation in Somalia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom contribution is in the form of two RAF Hercules transport aircraft, accompanied by about 90 supporting RAF personnel.

Our aircraft are based at Mombasa, Kenya and are engaged in the transport of humanitarian aid to affected areas inside Somalia.

Overseas Exercises

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the overseas Army exercises in each of the past three years, and for 1992-93 to date, for which chartered airlift was used, showing the costs, the budget on which they were borne, and the reasons for the use of commercial aircraft.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table. All costs, except for one exercise, were borne in the centrally managed air charter budget. The exception was Exercise Medman, in May 1992, which was funded by the Army. Ordinarily airlift is provided by the RAF air transport force (ATF) although demand does exceed supply. Exercises which do not secure ATF support are, in most cases, not considered sufficiently important to warrant civil airlift.

Exercise name	*£million*	*Reason*
1990		
Ex Western Tamu	0·090	A
Ex Union Pacific	0·642	A
Ex Medman	0·840	B
Ex Holdfast/Lutzon Hunt	0·310	A
Ex Trumpet Dance	0·820	B
Total	2·702	
1991		
Ex Hutan Labi	0·0170	A
Ex Crossed Belt	0·470	A
Ex Holdfast	0·100	A
Ex Grand Prix	1·336	B
Ex Blue Flyer	0·105	A
Ex Eastern Tamu	0·170	A
Ex Seatrout	0·190	B
Ex Waterleap	0·070	B
Ex Warpaint	0·150	B
Ex Trumpet Dance 2	0·450	B
Ex Bass Rock	0·089	C
Ex Medman	1·075	B
Ex Grand Prix	0·26	B
Total	4·635	
1992		
Ex Kauri Pine	0·215	A
Ex Western Tamu	0·130	A
Ex Crossed Belt	0·120	A
Ex Union Pacific	0·201	A
Ex Kauri Pine	0·130	A
Ex Long Summer	0·130	D
Ex Medman	0·87	E
Total	1·013	

Note:

A = *Far East—out of theatre training*
It is less expensive to use local airlines for exercises in the Far East than to position ATF aircraft from the United Kingdom.

B = *Operation Granby*
The ATF was fully committed throughout the Gulf conflict and the subsequent withdrawal, necessitating use of commercial charter flights to meet exercise commitments.

C = *Substitution*
An unplanned VIP task for the then Secretary of State for Defence was met by the ATF, and a substitute aircraft was obtained from commercial sources for the exercise.

D = *Outsize load*
Civil Charter was procured to move an outsize load. The task was beyond the capability of ATF aircraft.

E = *Priority of exercise*
HQ British Army of the Rhine considered that the priority of the exercise, which had failed to secure ATF airlift, warranted air charter and met the costs from their own resources.

Regimental Bands

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received concerning the future of regimental bands; if he will make it his policy to encourage regiments to retain their regimental bands; and what is his policy on the future of the regimental system for the Army.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have received a small number of representations on the future of regimental bands. Consideration is being given to the future organisation of Army bands, but no decisions have yet been taken. We are fully committed to the preservation of the regimental system, which is so important to the fighting efficiency and morale of the units within it.

Bosnia

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provision has been made to equip the British forces in Bosnia with clothing and protection to enable them to operate and survive in sub-zero temperatures.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: British forces deployed with the UN in the former Yugoslavia have been provided with clothing and equipment appropriate to the conditions in country. Tented accommodation used on initial deployment is currently being replaced with portacabin-type facilities that can withstand the winter conditions. Action has also been taken to ensure that, if the weather conditions in Yugoslavia become harsher than expected, we can quickly provide troops with additional clothing and equipment.

Army Pensions

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many attributable pensions have been paid to former Army personnel by his Department in each of the last three years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is understood that this question was raised in connection with multiple sclerosis.

The number of soldiers medically discharged due to multiple sclerosis in each of the last three years is:

	Number
1990	4
1991	nil
1992	4

The number of soldiers awarded attributable pensions following medical discharge due to multiple sclerosis in each of the last three years is:

	Number
1990	4
1991	nil
1992	[1]2

[1] Final awards in 2 cases remain under consideration.

Trident Submarines

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consult the nuclear installations inspectorate before taking a decision on the siting of the facilities for the refitting of Trident submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Consultation with the nuclear installations inspectorate on the reprovision of facilities for refitting nuclear submarines will take place once a decision has been taken on where the facilities should be sited and when a licencing application has been formally submitted.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the proposals from Devonport Management Ltd. for the upgrading of existing facilities at Devonport dockyard for the refitting of Trident submarines have been approved by the nuclear installations inspectorate.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Neither the proposal made by Devonport Management Limited or that by Babcock Thorn Limited for provision of Trident facilities at Devonport or Rosyth have yet been formally submitted for approval by the nuclear installations inspectorate, nor would we expect them to be submitted until such time as a final decision is made on the future venue for refitting of nuclear submarines.

Service Pensions

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what would be the cost to Her Majesty's Government of raising henceforth the service retired pay of those servicemen who retired between 1950 and 1959, inclusive, to the level of the 1960 pension code.

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what would be the cost to Her Majesty's Government of raising henceforth the forces family pensions and attributable forces family pensions of widows of servicemen who retired or died between 1950 and 1959, inclusive, to the level of widows of servicemen who retired under the 1960 pension code.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The 1960 pension code is applicable only to officers and their dependants. It is estimated that the cost of increasing the service retired pay of officers would be in the region of £6 million to £7 million per annum and that the cost of increasing the pension payable to widows would be in the region of £2 million to £2·5 million per annum.

Otterburn Camp

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many jobs are directly and indirectly dependent on the Otterburn camp.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Some 143 civilian (including 15 seasonal casual) posts and six military posts are directly dependent on the Otterburn training area. A further eight civilians are employed by contractors, and there are 76 adult civilians on tenanted farms.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has to upgrade existing roads in the Otterburn camp to cope with increased activity.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: While there are no plans to upgrade roads within Otterburn camp itself my Department is considering a number of options for the roads in the training area as a whole. It is too early to say what our eventual requirements will be, but we will be consulting the Northumberland national park authority on these.

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list *(a)* the total number of residential properties owned by his Department, *(b)* the number of such properties which are empty and *(c) (b)* as a percentage of *(a)*, showing separate figures for service and civilian properties.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 30 September 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, the stock and vacancy position of residential properties in MOD ownership was as follows:

	Stock	*Vacancies*	*Percentage vacant*
Service married quarters	72,202	9,167	12·7
Civilian houses	744	154	20·7
Total	72,946	9,321	12·8

Many of these properties were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation, some were already allocated to Service families who were due to move in shortly and others were being considered for disposal. Of the vacant civilian houses 88 were leased properties at Faslane awaiting return to Dumbarton district council. In addition some 1,800 married quarters and some 780 civilian houses, mostly occupied, were in the process of being sold.

Submarine Notification Scheme

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what discussions his Department has had with fishermen and the coastguard service regarding the extension of the Subfacts notification scheme to all fishing areas; when he expects the extensions to take place; and if he will make a statement;

(2) why the extension of the Subfacts submarine notification scheme to the Minches and Hebrides has been delayed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The notification scheme has been operating successfully in the inner Clyde since December 1990 and has subsequently been extended to cover submarine exercise areas in the outer Clyde and at Rona and Raasay. Following discussions with representatives of the fishing industry in the fishing industry safety group, we are planning a further extension of the scheme to cover other regularly used submarine exercise areas off the west coast of Scotland and in the English channel. We are considering, in consultation with HM Coastguard and others, the detailed operating arrangements for the extended scheme, and will make an announcement as soon as possible.

Defence Research Agency

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the rationalisation of the Defence Research Agency.

Mr. Aitken: *[pursuant to his answer, 17 December 1992, c. 361]:* As I informed the House on 27 October, *Official Report*, column *851*, the Defence Research Agency has proposed a major rationalisation programme with a view to saving £90 million per annum in its running costs and releasing substantial areas of land for other uses. The DRA's support costs are disproportionately high and must be reduced to preserve the research capabilities we need to support smaller, better equipped armed forces. Following consultations with trade unions, a programme for rationalisation of the DRA's sites and services has been agreed. This includes:

a. Substantial DRA investment at:

- Farnborough
- Pyestock
- Fort Halstead
- Malvern
- Bincleaves
- Chertsey
- Haslar
- Portsdown West
- West Drayton
- Aquila
- Rosyth (South Arm)
- Winfrith

b. DRA withdrawal from:

- Alverstoke
- Bedford Airfield (enclave retained)
- Christchurch (enclave retained)
- Cobham
- Dunfermline (St. Leonards)
- Empress State Building
- Funtingdton (South)
- Holton Heath
- Horsea Island
- Portland (North and Southwell)
- Portsdown (Main)
- Royal Arsenal Woolwich (East and West)
- Slough
- Swynnerton
- Teddington

The planned dates for site closures and DRA withdrawal remain as set out in the DRA consultative document.

The Government are committed to developing the DRA as a centre of scientific excellence offering value for money. Rationalisation will involve a major upheaval but is essential to secure the DRA's future. Implementation of the programme will start immediately.

SCOTLAND

Peebles High School

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provision has been made for the updating of hutted accommodation at Peebles high school.

Mr. Lang: Decisions on the updating of accommodation at Peebles high school are for Borders regional council as the education authority.

Business Rate

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to implement a Scottish business rate comparable to that of England and Wales.

Mr. Lang: Our policy is to phase in aScottish business rate comparable to that in England and Wales in parallel with the phasing in of the effects of the 1990 revaluation and the national non-domestic rate in England and Wales. This is expected to be completed by 1995 or shortly thereafter. The value of the reduction made in Scottish rate poundages since 1990-91 is equivalent to a reduction of £280 million in this year's rates bill for non-domestic subjects and a further £68 million reduction will be made in 1993-94.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment has been made of the current and future financial implications for Scottish Nuclear Ltd. and for his Department in the future, of the establishment of a temporary store for waste nuclear fuel at Torness power station.

Mr. Stewart: I understand from Scottish Nuclear Ltd. that it expects that establishment of spent fuel storage facilities at Torness and Hunterston power stations would reduce charges to the profit and loss account by around £45 million next year. My right hon. Friend will not take a decision on SNL's proposals until he has considered the reporter's recommendations following the public inquiry now being held. The setting of SNL's external financial limit, which is a charge on the Scottish Office programme, takes account of the company's operating and other costs.

Homelessness

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many homeless households are currently living in temporary accommodation in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest complete information on numbers of homeless households living in temporary accommodation in Scotland is published in table 11 of the statistical bulletin HSG/1992/6, "Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland 1980/81 to 1991/92". The bulletin is available in the House Library.

Skye Bridge

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those bodies and individuals who have made representations to him in support of *(a)* the design of and *(b)* the high-toll principle on the proposed Skye bridge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: From extensive consultations conducted by means of presentations and public exhibitions attended by environmental bodies, elected bodies and the public there was clear evidence of support for the design of the Skye bridge. Highland regional council, Skye and Lochalsh district council, the Countryside Commission for Scotland and the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland all favoured the box-girder design, as did the public with a majority of two to one preferring the present design.

Before tendering for a privately funded toll bridge, with the level of tolls set no higher than existing ferry fares for a duration of up to 20 years, support was given by HRC, Skye and Lochalsh district council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise—formerly Highlands and Islands Development Board—and the majority of community councils of Skye and Lochalsh. Before accepting the winning tender in September 1991 the project was again presented to Highland regional council, which voted by a substantial majority to proceed with the toll bridge in preference to continuing with the ferries.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland under what circumstances it will be possible for the concessionaire of the proposed Skye bridge to increase tolls by more than the annual rate of inflation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* The concessionaire cannot increase the tolls above the rate of inflation except in the unlikely event that the average annual revenues, measured over a full three-year period, were to fall below the 1990 level. In such circumstances the concessionaire is permitted to increase the tolls above inflation by the same percentage as the revenue falls below the 1990 figure. Under no circumstances can the tolls be raised above the rate of inflation by more than 30 per cent. If traffic levels then return to 1990 levels or above, the increase over inflation requires to be removed. No increases above inflation can be introduced prior to November 1997. The full details of the arrangement are described in the made toll order for the scheme a copy of which my right hon. Friend has arranged to be placed in the Library.

Toll Bridges

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the current level of tolls in Scotland, on bridges for which he has a responssibility.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The current level of tolls in Scotland, on bridges for which my right hon. Friend has a responsibility is as follows:

Bridges	*Tolls*
Erskine Bridge[1]	60p
Forth Road Bridge[2]	
Cars	40p
Buses	70p
Heavy Vehicles	£1·00
Tay Road Bridge[2]	
Cars, light vehicles and scheduled buses	80p
Heavy Vehicles	£2·00

Motor cycles cross all 3 bridges free of toll.

[1] Concessions available for regular users.
[2] One-way toll (southbound)—northbound is free.

The Forth Road Bridge Joint Board and Tay Road Bridge Joint Board have statutory responsibility for their respective bridges. Erskine bridge is the responsibility of the Secretary of State.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the toll levels on bridges in Scotland for which he is responsible at the time of their opening *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* at current value, taking account of inflation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

	(a) Actual toll levels in cash terms on bridge opening	(b) Estimated toll levels at opening at current value (November 1992)
Erskine Bridge—Opened 2 July 1971		
Cars, light passengers and goods vehicles	15p	£1·05
Scheduled buses	25p	£1·75
Heavy vehicles	50p	£3·50
Forth Road Bridge—Opened 4 September 1964		
All vehicles (flat rate)	2s 6d (12½p)	£1·28
Tay Road Bridge—Opened 18 August 1966		
Motor cycles and cars	2s 6d (12½p)	£1·18
Buses and heavy vehicles	10s 0d (50p)	£4·71

Ferry Services

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will define the ownership of, and rights of access to, the ferry terminals at Kyle and Kyleakin.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The roads leading up to, and including, the slipways at Kyle of Lochalsh and Kyleakin are owned by my right hon. Friend and Highland regional council respectively. Traffic management, including the application of restrictions on the use of the slipways, is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend, as trunk roads authority, at Kyle of Lochalsh and of Highland regional council, as local roads authority, at Kyleakin. Additionally, Highland regional council, as harbour authority, may regulate the use of the slipways under the powers of the Highland Regional Council (Harbours) Order Confirmation Act 1991.

Criminal Inquiries

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines the Lord Advocate lays down for those conducting criminal inquiries, in substance, on his behalf, on the practice of giving interviews to the press.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The then Lord Advocate issued guidelines to chief constables on dealings with the press in relation to criminal inquiries in July 1983. These guidelines were also issued to procurators fiscal. They are kept under review in the light of changes and developments in the law. They cover what may be said at various stages of inquiries.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action the Lord Advocate intends to take as a result of the premature disclosure of the conclusions of the inquiry conducted by Mr. Nimmo Smith.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The conclusions of Mr. Nimmo Smith and Mr. Friel following their inquiry have not been disclosed. It is intended that their report will be published before the end of January, as my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has already made known.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether it was with the authority of the Lord Advocate that Mr. Nimmo Smith QC gave interviews to journalists about the inquiry that he is currently conducting for the Lord Advocate.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The remit of my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate to Mr. Nimmo Smith and Mr. Friel was that they should exercise the fullest possible independence of judgment in conducting their investigation. Authority to speak to journalists was not therefore sought by them.

Children (Special Needs)

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a list setting out the percentage of children recorded as having special needs in primary schools in each local education authority area in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* Information on the percentage of education authority primary school pupils for whom a record of needs is maintained is shown in the table. Information for 1992 is not yet available.

Percentage of recorded pupils in education authority primary schools as at September

	1990 per cent.	1991 per cent.
Scotland	0·3	0·4
Borders	0·3	0·5
Central	0·4	0·4
Dumfries and Galloway	1·1	1·0
Fife	0·1	0·1
Grampian	0·2	0·4
Highland	0·7	0·8
Lothian	0·2	0·1
Strathclyde	0·3	0·4
Tayside	0·2	0·3
Orkney	0·2	0·2
Shetland	0·4	0·3
Western Isles	0·4	0·3
Strathclyde divisions		
Argyll and Bute	0·9	0·8
Ayr	0·5	0·8
Dunbarton	0·1	0·1
Glasgow	0·2	0·3
Lanark	0·2	0·3
Renfrew	0·4	0·5

Prison Service

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total expenditure by the Scottish Office in the training and recruitment of professional staff for the Scottish prison service in each of the past three financial years; what innovations have been implemented in training and recruitment; and if he will make a statement on future plans and expenditure.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* Major changes have been made in training policy with substantially increased investment in prison staff training and innovative training programmes. Future expenditure plans for the Scottish prison service will be announced next February in the Scottish Office departmental report. No diminution is planned in the Scottish prison service's investment in training.

Total expenditure on training and recruitment of prison staff in each of the last three financial years:

	1990-91	1991-92	£000 1992-93 (budget
Training costs (trainer staff costs and GAE)	2,747	2,297	3,609
Staff time devoted to training person weeks (approx)	2,750	3,900	[1]4,250
Recruitment (staff and GAE)	451	72	158
(Numbers recruited)	(149)	(374)	[2](362)

[1] (estimated)
[2] (projected)

Total prison staff numbers have increased from 3,966 on 1 April 1990 to 4,405 (projected) on 1 April 1993 (excluding HQ staff).

Care and Repair Schemes

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what evaluation has been made by the Scottish Office of care and repair projects in Scotland; and what budget has been allocated by the Scottish Office for the continuation of such projects in the current and next financial year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 December 1992]:* I am pleased to say that on 7 December the Scottish Homes board agreed to take over central responsibility for care and repair from 1 April 1993, including the funding of local projects. This transfer was recommended in the consultants' evaluation report on the initiative, published in February 1992, and by the independent National Advisory Committee on Care and Repair. Scottish Homes' allocation for 1993-94 includes an estimated £70,000 for transitional costs relating to care and repair including £10,000 for a good practice guide.

Councillors

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many elected councillors in Scottish local authorities there are at present; and how many he plans there should be after the proposed changes to unitary councils.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* There are presently 1,682 councillors in local authorities in Scotland—445 regional councillors, 79 islands councillors and 1,158 district councillors. No decision has been taken on how many councillors will be required following the restructuring of local government. That will depend in part upon the size and number of single-tier authorities which are created. Before he reaches a decision on the appropriate number of councillors for the new structure my right hon. Friend will be considering carefully all the views which are expressed in response to the consultation paper "The Structure of Local Government in Scotland: Shaping the New Councils".

European Council, Edinburgh

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish *(a)* his estimate of expenditure on security and police expenditure in connection with the European summit to be held in Edinburgh on 10 to 12 December and *(b)* the eventual total expenditure; if he will reconsider his decision not to provide additional funding for Lothian and Borders police board to cover this additional expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 December 1992]:* Lothian and Borders police estimate that the cost of providing security and policing for the European summit will be £2·5 million. Total expenditure will not be known until around February 1993.

The Government will contribute to the costs of policing the summit through police specific grant. This is the usual arrangement and my right hon. Friend has no plans to review the financing of the policing of such major events. The rate of specific grant is 51 per cent., except in London where it is 52 per cent.

Ex-psychiatric Patients (Offences)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since 1980 the number of people charged with criminal offences who were formerly in-patients of psychiatric hospitals.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 December 1992]:* The information requested is not collected centrally.

EC Acquired Rights Directive

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the EC Acquired Rights directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* I have received a small number of representations on the EC acquired rights directive 77/187 and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations which implement this directive in the United Kingdom. The directive and regulations can apply to the contracting out of public sector services where it can be shown that there has been a transfer of undertaking. This has to be considered against the facts of each particular case.

SSSIs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current number of sites of special scientific interest in Scotland; and how many proposed designations for sites of special scientific interest are currently pending.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* A total of 1,353 sites of special scientific interest have been notified in Scotland. A further 11 cases are currently proposed for notification.

Betting Offices

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the evening opening of betting offices in Scotland *(a)* in general and *(b)* from Scotland's senior police officers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* Eight Scottish organisations submitted responses to the Home Office consultation document, "Evening Opening of Licensed Betting Offices", published in October 1991. Three further Scottish organisations made representations via Members of Parliament. The 11 organisations are listed in the table:

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland)
Association of Scottish Police Superintendents
Scottish Police Federation
Scottish SP Bookmakers' Association
Scottish Consumer Council
City of Glasgow Licensing Board

Wishaw Greyhound Stadium
Edgar Ramsay Bookmakers
East of Scotland Bookmakers Association
Shawfield Greyhound Racing and Leisure Company.

Hospital Closures

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list hospitals which have *(a)* partially and *(b)* wholly closed, during 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* The information requested on hospitals wholly closed is as detailed in the table. During the same period 31 health service buildings were opened at a total capital cost of £178 million. The information requested on partial closures is not available centrally.

1989

Braeholm Hospital
Bruntsfield Hospital
Beechmount Hospital
Cambusavie Hospital
Kilmarnock Maternity Hospital
Culduthel Hospital

1990

Drumshoreland Hospital
Fonthill Maternity Hospital

1991

Dunlophouse Hospital
Ayr County Hospital
Seafield Sick Children's Hospital
Thornyflat Maternity Hospital, Ayr
Heathfield Hospital
Drumlanrig Hospital, Hawick
Craigtoun Hospital
Summerfield Maternity Hospital
Duntocher Hospital, Clydebank
Wishaw Hospital
Longmore Hospital

1992

Stoneyetts Hospital, Chryston
David Elder Hospital, Glasgow
Darnley Hospital
Bangour General Hospital
Kelso Cottage Hospital
Lewis Hospital
County Hospital, Stornoway
Philipshill Hospital, Glasgow

Empty Office Buildings

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated number of empty office buildings in *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* Edinburgh on 30 November; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 15 December]:* No record is kept of the number of empty office buildings in city or town centres, but my right hon. Friend is kept abreast of general market trends drawing on sources such as external published research by property agents, developers and others. This indicates that available office floorspace is currently approximately as follows:

Glasgow City Centre—1·2m square feet
Edinburgh City Centre—1·87m square feet

Asbestos

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing *(a)* asbestos-related deaths and *(b)* asbestos-related disorders for each regional and island area since 1979.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* Since the tabulated information will be lengthy, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Health Service Contracts

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list each contract made with NHS trusts by *(a)* the Scottish Office and *(b)* the health boards for the most recent available year.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* The contracts made between NHS trusts and the Scottish Office in the financial year 1992-93 are:

Cardiac Surgery
Aberdeen Royal Hospitals Trust

The Reference Laboratory Services
Aberdeen Royal Hospitals Trust

Details of contracts between health boards and NHS trusts are not held centrally.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the contracts awarded by *(a)* the Argyll and Clyde health board and *(b)* the Greater Glasgow health board to outside parties in relation to the process of compulsory competitive tendering, in each of the past four yeaers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* The contracts awarded were as follows:

Type of contract	*Year*							
	1989		*1990*		*1991*		*1992*	
	[1]*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*
Hotel services[2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Domestic	—	9	—	—	—	—	—	3
Catering	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Portering	2	1	—	8	—	—	—	—
Painterwork	—	—	—	—	3	2	4	6
Grounds maintenance	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	6
Totals	2	11	—	8	3	2	6	15

[1]A—Argyll and Clyde Health Board.
B—Greater Glasgow Health Board.
[2]Hotel services is used in this contexst to describe a combined contract covering domestic, catering and portering services.

Since the introduction of the competitive tendering initiative in the NHS, Argyll and Clyde health board has awarded 40 contracts of which 11, 28 per cent., have been won by private contracts. Greater Glasgow health board has let 78 contracts of which 39, 50 per cent., were to outside firms. Throughout Scotland 86 out of a total of 351 contracts, 25 per cent., have been awarded privately.

The Government's White Paper "Competing for Quality" (Command Paper 1730), sets out a programme for extending market testing to a wider range of activities. As a result of market testing in the NHS in Scotland, over £90 million has been saved. This money has been retained by health boards for re-investment in patient care.

Ambulance Service

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table of ambulance services' response rates in relation to the patients charter; by what other criteria these services are assessed for effectiveness and efficiency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* The Scottish Ambulance Service measures its performance against national targets, often referred to as the ORCON standards. The targets in response to emergency and 999 calls have been set having regard to population density and are as follows:

Population density	*50 per cent. of calls responded to within (minutes)*	*95 per cent. of calls responded to within (minutes)*
High	7	14
Medium	8	18
Sparse	8	21

For the period 1 April to 30 September 1992 the Scottish Ambulance Service achieved the following response rates:

	Target	*Achievement*	*Target*	*Achievement*
High population density	50 per cent of calls within 7 minutes	44 per cent.	95 per cent of calls within 14 minutes	87 per cent.
Medium population density	50 per cent. of calls within 8 minutes	53 per cent.	95 per cent. of calls within 18 minutes	94 per cent.
Sparse population density	50 per cent. of calls within 8 minutes	47 per cent.	95 per cent. of calls within 21 minutes	89 per cent.

Response rates are currently the main measure of performance but level and nature of complaints is also an important indicator of the quality of service. The general manager of the Scottish Ambulance Service has been asked to consider devising further performance indicators which will measure effectiveness, efficiency and economy. In addition, the new consultant medical director will be conducting a medical audit of the outcome of pre-hospital care provided by ambulance staff.

During the last year the Scottish Ambulance Service has made significant improvements to the quality and speed of its accident and emergency response by the introduction of paramedic rapid response units mounted in either LandRover Discoverys or on motor cycles. Furthermore, recognising the special problems the service has in responding to calls in Greater Glasgow, the accident and emergency service has recently been enhanced by an additional 14 full-time qualified ambulance personnel.

From 1 April 1993, the service will be improving its overall level and speed of response across Scotland, particularly in rural areas, by introducing the United Kingdom's first integrated air ambulance service, which will employ three air ambulance helicopters and three fixed-wing aircraft.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice his officials give to those ambulance services which are deemed to be inefficient in relation to *(a)* the patients charter and *(b)* ORCON in relation to response rates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* The general manager of the Scottish Ambulance Service is accountable to the Common Services Agency for the performance of the Scottish Ambulance Service. However, my officials in the Scottish Office Home and Health Department hold regular meetings with senior staff of the Common Services Agency and encourage measures aimed to improve response rates having regard to the resources made available.

Drugs

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sums of money were expended by the Scottish Office in relation to the European Drugs Prevention Week, *(a)* additional to those in existing annual programmes and *(b)* in total; and for what specific purposes in each case.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* Final payments have not yet been made in respect of some activities, but total Scottish Office expenditure on European Drug Prevention Week is expected to be about £225,000. This includes expenditure on local activities and events organised by health boards and others (£75,000); the production by Strathclyde Education Department of an updated video package for use in Scottish schools entitled "Drugwise Too" (£50,000); television advertising before and during the week (£41,000); the production and provision of publicity and information materials for use during the week (£27,750); three Scottish conferences held during the week (£22,500); and the production and distribution of an information booklet entitled "Drugs —A Guide for Young People in Scotland" (£10,500). The costs were met from provision for publicity about the risks of drug misuse and printing of associated materials; no additional funds were provided.

Local Authority Contracts

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the contracts awarded to outside parties in relation to compulsory competitive tendering by *(a)* Inverclyde district council and *(b)* Strathclyde regional council in each of the past four years.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* This information is not held centrally.

Hypothermia

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have died of hypothermia in (i) the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow, (ii) Strathclyde and (iii) Scotland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* The figure requested are given in the table.

Deaths with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate 1987-91

		1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow	Male	1	4	1	1	1
	Female	1	—	2	1	—
Strathclyde	Male	39	36	35	35	21
	Female	41	36	33	32	23
Scotland	Male	77	62	66	63	49
	Female	76	76	86	74	52

Water Authorities

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much grant assistance was given to each water authority in Scotland in each financial year since 1989-90.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* Details of grant assistance to water authorities in the period from 1989-90 to 1991-92 under the Rural Water Supply and Sewerage Acts 1944 to 1970 and the Industrial Development Act 1982, and payment to water authorities under the European regional development fund are given in the tables. The table for ERDF includes payments to the Central Scotland Water Development Board.

(a) Grant payments to water authorities under Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Acts 1944-70

	1989-90 £ thousand	*1990-91 £ thousand*	*1991-92 £ thousand*
Borders	251	246	262
Central	107	90	102
Dumfries and Galloway	431	476	475
Fife	35	31	28
Grampian	999	1,000	1,196
Highland	757	913	1,039
Lothian	462	452	467
Strathclyde	321	356	297
Tayside	269	262	266
Orkney	167	165	165
Shetland	157	239	191
Western Isles	212	199	191
Total	4,168	4,429	4,679

(b) Grants to water authorities under Industrial Development Act 1982

	1989-90 £ thousand	*1990-91 £ thousand*	*1991-92 £ thousand*
Highland	0	0	10

(c) Payments to water authorities and the central Scotland water development board in respect of European regional development fund

	1989-90 £ *thousand*	*1990-91* £ *thousand*	*1991-92* £ *thousand*
Borders	0	0	2
Central	393	0	0
Dumfries and Galloway	4	0	684
Fife	47	397	0
Grampian	2	71	41
Highland	933	1,187	838
Lothian	453	910	274
Strathclyde	589	7,478	1,716
Tayside	0	786	0
Orkney	456	332	41
Shetland	41	382	33
Western Isles	4	22	15
Central Scotland Water Development Board	558	1,352	1,140
Total	3,480	12,917	4,784

A96

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will announce the route and commencement date for the Fochabers bypass on the A96.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* The Government have a very large rolling programme of improvements on the A96. An important element within this is the construction of major bypasses. Bucksburn is currently under construction and Kintore and Keith have also been announced as planned starts. The Government wish to target the maximum resources possible at construction, so preparation for further bypasses is, and will be, pursued in line with expectations for construction funding. The entry of Fochabers to the trunk road preparation programme will continue to be kept under review.

That said, Grampian regional council is currently undertaking a study to determine traffic management arrangements best suited to minimise delays to through traffic in Fochabers and Mosstodloch and also to consider the complementary need for traffic calming measures to establish an environment which supports pedestrian activity.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 17 December 1992]:* The combined use of public and private funds is of long standing in certain areas within my responsibility, for example, some of the functions of Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Homes. My Departments are now considering how, most effectively and most fully, to apply the private finance initiatives to other services on the basis of the guidance which has recently been published by the Treasury.

Care and Repair Schemes

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total Scottish Office funding allocation to date to care and repair schemes organised by Shelter in Scotland, listed on an annual basis per project.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 December 1992]:* The Scottish Office pays 100 per cent. of the costs of the national co-ordinating office for the care and repair initiative run by Shelter and 50 per cent. of the administrative costs of the local projects. The figures requested are as follows to the nearest £1,000:

	1987-88 (£)	*1988-89* (£)	*1989-90* (£)	*1990-91*[1] (£)	*1991-92*[1] (£)	*Grant allocation for 1992-93*[2]
Skye and Lochalsh	4,000	9,500	14,000	—	—	15,500
East Lothian	5,000	7,000	13,000	—	—	18,500
Aberdeen	3,500	8,500	11,500	—	—	14,500
Renfrew	4,500	8,000	9,000	—	—	13,500
Falkirk	3,500	8,500	10,000	—	—	13,000
Orkney	2,000	9,500	10,500	—	—	15,500
Glasgow	Nil	8,000	8,500	—	—	12,500
Clydesdale	Nil	4,000	8,500	—	—	12,500
National Co-ordinators Office	15,000	27,500	24,000	52,000	63,000	58,500
Total	37,500	90,500	109,500	115,500	125,000	174,000

[1] Breakdown of expenditure between projects not available centrally for these years.
[2] Grant not allocated between projects in earlier years.

ENVIRONMENT

Water

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the current EC directives relating to water quality and the compliance rates of each member state.

Mr. Maclean: Current EC directives are listed in the *Directory of Community Legislation in Force and Other Acts of the Community Institutions*, which is available in the Library of the House. This includes those on water quality. Information on member states' progress in transposing environmental (including water quality) directives into national law was published in the *Official Journal of the European Communities* (No. C 250) on 28 September 1992.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the findings of the recent Treasury review of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The review of the committee's staff support unit was commissioned by English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales, and Scottish National Heritage. The report's findings are available to all the staff concerned, but it is an internal management document and the councils have no plans to publish it more widely.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those conservations projects, programmes or contracts which were due to be carried out by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee in 1992-93 or 1993-94 which will no longer be carried out by the committee.

Mr. Maclean: These are matters for the committee and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member in respect of the 1992-93 work programme. The committee will decide its programme for 1993-94 when its budget for that year has been determined.

Homelessness

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to visit the homeless in *(a)* London and *(b)* Folkestone during the Christmas period.

Mr. Howard: I have visited and met homeless people in the past, and did so again during the Christmas period. But in general I do not consider it appropriate to publicise such visits.

Both Ministers and officials from this Department make regular visits to projects throughout England which give practical help to homeless people, with financial support from the Government.

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the cost to local authorities in England and Wales of providing bed-and-breakfast accommodation for those families officially registered as homeless in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Baldry: The final estimate of the net cost to local authorities of providing bed-and-breakfast accommodation to homeless households in England in 1990-91 was £66·6 million. Information for 1991-92 is not yet available.

For information about Wales, I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the total number of homeless households recorded as living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in each of the following years: 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Baldry: Estimates for calendar years of the average number of households who were being dealt with under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985 and were temporarily placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation are as follows:

Average for year ending December	*Households in bed and breakfast*
1989	11,500
1990	11,810
1991	12,470

For the year ending September 1992 the average number of households in bed and breakfast accommodation had fallen to 11,880.

Local Authority Accommodation

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the average cost to a local authority per household in *(a)* bed-and-breakfast accommodation, *(b)* local authority hostels, *(c)* local authority short-life accommodation and *(d)* temporary accommodation.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the average cost per unit of accommodation in *(a)* bed-and-breakfast accommodation, *(b)* local authority hostels, *(c)* local authority short-life accommodation and *(d)* temporary accommodation, to a local authority (i) in the Greater London area and (ii) elsewhere in England.

Mr. Baldry: Annual costs for bed-and-breakfast accommodation used and hostel places provided by local authorities, together with the related numbers of accommodation units, can be derived from the information published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in "Homelessness Statistics 1990-91 Actuals", a copy of which is in the Library.

The CIPFA publication contains insufficient information on short-life and other temporary accommodation to derive average costs per household.

Expenditure information on homeless households in other forms of temporary accommodation is not available centrally and my Department has no estimates.

Coal-fired Power Stations

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the tonnage of fly ash emitted daily to the environment from a typical 2000 MW coal-fired power station.

Mr. Maclean: Approximately 23 tonnes.

Council House Sales

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by district authorities the number and value of council house sales in Nottinghamshire in each year since 1983 and for the first two quarters of 1992-93.

Mr. Baldry: Information on sales of council houses reported by local authorities in Nottinghamshire in the period April 1983 to September 1992 is given in the table.

Number of sales and undiscounted value in Nottinghamshire (£000)

	Ashfield	*Bassetlaw*	*Broxtowe*	*Gedling*	*Mansfield*	*Newark and Sherwood*	*Nottingham*	*Rushcliffe*
1983-84								
Number of sales	381	467	231	247	306	341	1,267	179
Undiscounted value of sales	5,214	5,985	3,852	3,822	3,524	5,107	18,202	3,010
1984-85								
Number of sales	184	139	239	214	162	225	767	183
Undiscounted value of sales	n.a.	1,953	4,173	4,521	2,062	3,783	12,002	3,243
1985-86								
Number of sales	245	202	191	200	157	160	827	123
Undiscounted value of sales	2,753	2,892	3,489	3,685	2,065	2,794	13,636	2,408
1986-87								
Number of sales	198	209	235	220	137	153	893	118
Undiscounted value of sales	3,[illegible]	3,219	4,684	4,080	1,881	2,928	14,570	2,420
1987-88								
Number of sales	242	203	224	238	246	162	1,075	177
Undiscounted value of sales	4,350	3,356	4,662	4,887	3,871	3,366	n.a.	3,710
1988-89								
Number of sales	347	348	351	342	349	314	1,641	194
Undiscounted value of sales	6,829	6,719	5,144	8,095	5,545	8,448	n.a.	5,410
1989-90								
Number of sales	438	332	322	238	406	261	1,754	102
Undiscounted value of sales	9,580	8,660	10,009	n.a.	9,395	9,365	48,316	4,014
1990-91								
Number of sales	160	77	76	110	160	78	n.a.	51
Undiscounted value of sales	5,364	2,536	2,748	3,640	3,968	2,439	n.a.	2,199
1991-92 (Provisional)								
Number of sales	90	78	67	93	n.a.	56	344	37
Undiscounted value of sales	3,038	2,584	2,528	3,251	n.a.	2,183	12,838	1,611
April to September 1992 (Provisional)								
Number of sales	34	32	30	56	34	27	n.a.	18
Undiscounted value of sales	1,126	1,095	1,210	1,458	842	1,037	n.a.	799

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the basis for calculating capital receipts of council house and other asset sales for the next 12 months.

Mr. Baldry: Estimates of local authorities' capital receipts are based on information which authorities themselves supply to my Department. This information is provided in relation to financial years and no estimate has been made of receipts likely to arise over the next 12 months.

Housing

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account is taken in determining the housing investment programme allocation of the west midlands region, of the number of unsatisfactory houses in multiple occupation and unfit owner-occupied properties.

Mr. Baldry: Specified capital grant (SCG) resources for private sector renewal in local authority housing investment programmes (HIPs) are allocated to the west midlands and other regions using a formula based on the numbers of private dwellings classified as unfit or lacking basic amenities. These dwellings include both houses in multiple occupation and owner-occupied properties. Forty per cent. of SCG resources at regional level are then distributed to individual local authorities within the region using the same measures, with the remaining 60 per cent. of resources allocated at Ministers' discretion.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is *(a)* the number and *(b)* the proportion of (i) houses in multiple occupation and (ii) single household homes in England lacking adequate fire precautions or means of escape in case of fire.

Mr. Baldry: The information is not available.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total of capital and revenue expenditure by local authorities in England in respect of dealing with unsatisfactory houses in multiple occupation in 1991-92.

Mr. Baldry: In 1991-92 a total of £6·7 million was approved by local housing authorities in England for capital expenditure on mandatory grants for houses in multiple occupation (HMO), and £0·3 million on discretionary HMO grants. Figures for revenue expenditure incurred by local authorities in dealing with HMOs are not available.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect the existence of mandatory housing in multiple occupation grants has had on

improving conditions within multi-occupied houses and on the activities of local authorities in respect of the implementation of part XI of the Housing Act 1985.

Mr. Baldry: Grants for houses in multiple occupation (HMO) are mandatory where a statutory notice has been served. Since the new grant system was introduced in July 1990, mandatory grants for repairs and improvements to more than 1,750 HMOs at a total cost of £13·6 million have been approved by local authorities.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the number of houses in multiple occupation in the west midland region; and how many of these are below the standards set out in the Department of the Environment circular 12/92;

(2) how many people are currently living in houses in multiple occupation in England;

(3) how many houses in multiple occupation there were in England *(a)* in 1984-85 and *(b)* at the last date for which figures are available.

Mr. Baldry: The results of the 1991 Census, which provides information on the total number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), are not yet fully available. However, based on the 1981 Census results, the number of HMOs in the West Midlands is estimated at 5,250. This covers the counties of Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Hereford and Worcester and the Birmingham conurbation. Information is not held centrally on the numbers which are below the standards set out in circular 12/92.

There are no reliable figures for the total number of HMOs or for the total number of people living in HMOs. Research carried out for the Department showed that in 1983-84, local authorities in England and Wales estimated that there were approximately 300,000 HMOs. Figures from the 1991 census show that there were 59,000 "shared dwellings" in England and Wales.

As for the number of HMO residents, research carried out for the Department in the mid-1980s produced estimates of between 1·25 and 2·6 million in England and Wales.

More up-to-date figures on the number of HMOs and the number of HMO residents will be available from the 1991 English House Condition Survey, to be published later in 1993. Figures from the 1991 census on the number of HMO residents will be available in due course.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many notices were served by local authorities in England in the 12 months to June 1992 under sections 352, 358 and 372 of the Housing Act 1985; how many directions under section 354 were made in that period; how many of these notices were complied with; in how many cases local authorities carried out work in default of compliance with the notices; and how many prosecutions were taken as the result of failure to comply with notices.

Mr. Baldry: The following figures are taken from the Institution of Environmental Health Officers Annual Report 1990-91 survey of local authorities in England and Wales. 2,309 notices were served under section 352. 719 notices were served under section 372, 403 of which were complied with (including those complied with by means of the local authority carrying out the works). 90 convictions were obtained for failure to comply with section 369, and 12 for failure to comply with a notice requiring works under section 372. Of the directions in force under section 354 at 21 March 1991, 4,202 were complied with and 618 were not complied with. 640 directions were revoked by the local authority or by a county court, and 653 directions were made during the year. No figures are available centrally on the number of notices served under section 358.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the Estate Action, priority estatesproject and housing action trust budgets for each year from 1989 to 1993.

Mr. Baldry: Provision for the estate action and housing action trust programmes for the years in question is as follows:

£ million

	Estate action	*HATs*
1989-90	190	—
1990-91	190	—
1991-92	268	10·3
1992-93	364	40·1
1993-94	356	86·8

PEP is a company limited by guarantee. The value of work funded by my Department is as follows:

	£ million
1989-90	1·1
1990-91	1·2
1991-92	0·9
1992-93	0·9

Discussions with PEP are currently taking place with regard to applications for grant in 1993-94.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many comments he has received on the draft guidance manual for local authorities on how to develop and manage strategies for dealing with unsatisfactory houses in multiple occupation and when the final version will be published.

Mr. Baldry: The Department has received 48 written responses to the draft Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Management Guide. The guide is currently being revised and the final version will be published as soon as possible.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he is monitoring compliance with the duty under section 605 of the Housing Act 1985, periodic inspection of district by local housing authority, in particular as it applies to part XI of the Act: and whether he proposes to make any directions as to how local authorities should comply with that duty.

Mr. Baldry: Section 605 of the Housing Act 1985, as amended by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, requires local authorities to consider the housing conditions in their districts at least once a year. It is for each authority to determine how it meets this duty and this is not monitored by the Department. We have no plans to issue directions in relation to the duty.

Radon

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research Her Majesty's Government have carried our or commissioned into the risk of high radon levels in areas of Derbyshire where the geological profile includes carboniferous age shales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Following a survey of Derbyshire commissioned by my Department, the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) has designated parts of Derbyshire as radon-affected areas. The areas most affected are associated with carboniferous limestones. A copy of the relevant NRPB publication, "Documents of the NRPB", vol. 3, No. 4, was placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate, by regional health authority area, the total number of houses which may exceed *(a)* a radon level of 200 bq/sq m and *(b)* 20 bq/sq m; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The survey of radon in homes in England does not provide data in the form requested. A summary of the survey results by county, district and postcode sector is given in the NRPB report "Radon in Dwellings in England", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The NRPB estimates that there are about 100,000 homes in England above 200 bq/sq m and about 5·5 million above the average level of 20 bq/sq m.

Urban Programme

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environnment how many representations he has had concerning his decision to reduce future funding for the urban programme.

Mr. Robin Squire: Up to and including 4 January 1993, my Department received 97 letters about the new arrangements for the urban programme (UP). In 1993-94 there will be a substantial UP amounting to £176 million to enable us to honour existing commitments on approved UP projects and to provide £20 million for the urban partnership fund which will work alongside local authorities' newly released capital receipts to promote urban regeneration.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the table published in his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, columns *434-35*.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 17 December 1992]:* The table incorporates the new urban programme plan figures following the autumn statement:

Year	*Urban programme provision— outturn £ million*	*Urban programme as percentage of urban block*
1995-96	plan 80	10
1994-95	plan 91	11
1993-94	plan 176	18
1992-93	plan 245	24
1991-92	outturn 237	24

The provision for 1992-93 includes £11 million for the urban crime fund.

My Department's urban group of programmes are continuing to evolve to reflect current priorities.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much funding each urban programme authority received at 1992 prices for each of the last three years; how many projects have been supported; and how many people have been employed by them in jobs and in training schemes.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 17 December 1992]:* The funding figures are as follows:

Urban programme (UP) Funding

Local authority	*1990-91 £ million*	*1991-92 £ million*	*1992-93 £ million*
Newcastle/Gateshead	18·4	16·9	15·6
Hartlepool	2·0	2·0	1·9
Langbaurgh	2·2	2·0	1·9
Middlesbrough	5·8	5·4	5·0
North Tyneside	4·0	3·5	3·3
South Tyneside	5·6	5·0	4·8
Stockton-on-Tees	1·7	1·7	1·6
Sunderland	5·9	5·5	4·9
Manchester/Salford	21·9	19·5	19·7
Blackburn	4·5	4·2	3·8
Bolton	4·6	4·2	3·8
Burnley	2·2	2·2	2·0
Oldham	4·2	4·0	3·7
Preston	2·8	2·6	2·3
Rochdale	4·3	3·6	3·7
Wigan	2·9	2·8	2·5
Liverpool	19·2	18·7	17·1
Halton	1·8	1·6	1·5
Knowsley	4·5	4·4	3·9
St. Helens	2·2	2·0	1·8
Sefton	1·9	1·5	1·6
Wirral	4·0	3·7	3·4
Merseyside Special Allocation	1·3	2·0	1·0
Birmingham	24·2	22·3	20·4
Coventry	5·2	4·8	4·6
Dudley	1·9	1·7	1·6
Sandwell	5·2	4·9	4·4
Walsall	2·1	1·9	1·6
Wolverhampton	6·3	5·8	4·9
The Wrekin	1·1	1·0	1·0
Derby	4·2	1·3	1·3
Leicester	5·4	5·3	4·7
Nottingham	5·8	5·0	4·7
Barnsley	2·1	2·2	2·1
Bradford	4·5	5·0	4·5
Doncaster	2·2	2·4	2·2
Hull	5·4	5·1	4·8
Kirklees	1·2	1·2	1·1
Leeds	5·9	5·7	5·1
Rotherham	2·2	2·3	2·2
Sheffield	7·4	11·4	5·9
Hackney	4·2	4·8	4·6
Islington	8·8	9·2	8·1
Lambeth	8·1	7·8	7·9
Brent	2·6	2·7	2·5
Greenwich	1·4	1·3	1·4
Hammersmith and Fulham	2·7	2·5	2·3
Haringey	3·2	3·4	2·9
Kensington and Chelsea	1·8	1·8	1·6
Lewisham	2·2	2·1	2·4
Newham	3·2	3·1	3·0
Southwark	2·3	2·9	2·6
Tower Hamlets	3·0	3·3	4·1
Wandsworth	2·3	3·7	2·9

Local authority	1990-91 £ million	1991-92 £ million	1992-93 £ million
Bristol	1·6	1·7	1·6
Plymouth	1·4	1·4	1·3
Total	271·0	260·0	237·1

Notes:

1. Up funding figures for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are actuals, adjusted by GDP deflator indices. UP funding figures for 1992-93 are initial allocations, excluding District Health Authority projects.
2. The totals for these years have altered slightly from the figures given in the answer of 30 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *14*, due to a recent revision of the GDP deflator indices.

The total number of projects supported in 1990-91 was 9,855. The local authorities' forecasts for 1991-92 and 1992-93 are 6,911 and 8,782 respectively.

We do not have information on the numbers employed by urban programme authorities themselves on managing the urban programme or running training schemes. A total of 29,660 jobs were created or preserved through the urban programme in 1990-91, and 86,528 training places were supported. Local authorities forecast the following outputs in 1991-92 and 1992-93:

	1991-92	1992-93
Number of jobs created/preserved	34,242	33,973
Number of training places supported	68,551	74,097

Note: Figures for 1990-91 are obtained from UP annual reports from local authorities; those for 1991-92 and 1992-93 are derived from annual UP submissions from local authorities.

Councils (Capital Receipts)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines have been given to local authorities as to how expenditure on capital receipts should be distributed as between debt reduction and housing investment.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities are normally allowed to spend 25 per cent. of their receipts from council house sales and 50 per cent. of most other receipts, the balance being set aside as provision for credit liabilities, including debt redemption. Under a temporary relaxation in these rules, announced in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement, local authorities may spend virtually all of the capital receipts they receive between 13 November 1992 and 31 December 1993. Local authorities are free to spend such receipts on any kind of capital project, or to use them to make provision for credit liabilities.

Sewage (Phosphates)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what quantity of phosphate was recovered annually from United Kingdom sewage, each year since 1982; and what action he will take to encourage the recovery of phosphate from United Kingdom sewage.

Mr. Maclean: Information about the amount of phosphate recovered annually from United Kingdom sewage is not held centrally. Implementation of the recently adopted EC Directive concerning Urban Waste Water Treatment will require, in certain circumstances, the reduction of phosphorus in sewage discharges.

Local Government Pensions

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will delay implementation of the Local Government Superannuation (Membership) Regulations 1992 until the results of the Goode report on pension security are made known.

Mr. Robin Squire: If changes to the local government superannuation scheme are required following the publication of the pension law review committee report, statutory consultations will take place with the interested parties. Meanwhile, necessary amendments to the scheme will proceed.

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in deciding when to commence implementation of the Local Government Superannuation (Membership) Regulations 1992, he will assess *(a)* the time required to set up mirror image funds, *(b)* the loss of rights experienced by employees resulting from any changeover, *(c)* the extent to which preserved benefits have been adequately indexed to reflect increases in earnings and *(d)* the extent to which transfer values represent the total worth of members' investments.

Mr. Robin Squire: These matters, together with the other representations received following the recent statutory consultation exercise, will be given careful consideration before decisions are taken on the final form and content of our amending regulations.

Newland System Homes

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total amount of investment made by each local authority in repairs to Newland system homes since 1979.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of Newland system properties currently owned by local authorities.

Mr. Baldry: From local authority returns it is estimated that as at April 1992 there were 1,200 Newland properties in the ownership of local authorities in England.

Caravan Sites Act

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to introduce legislation to reform the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Mr. Baldry: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave on 9 December to my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown), *Official Report*, column *833*.

Poll Tax Registers

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many adults appear on the poll tax register in each of the London boroughs.

Mr. Robin Squire: The latest information available to the Department on the number of adults, including students, shown on community charges registers is given in the table.

London borough	Number of adults subject to a personal community charge on 1 June 1991
Barking and Dagenham	109,220
Barnet	213,447
Bexley	165,383
Brent	184,478
Bromley	225,220
Camden	139,904
City of London	3,474
Croydon	238,094
Ealing	210,382
Enfield	197,341
Greenwich	157,987
Hackney	128,784
Hammersmith and Fulham	121,182
Haringey	163,062
Harrow	149,521
Havering	174,137
Hillingdon	178,527
Hounslow	151,694
Islington	127,379
Kensington and Chelsea	105,926
Kingston-upon-Thames	103,036
Lambeth	191,707
Lewisham	172,212
Merton	130,898
Newham	156,645
Redbridge	172,561
Richmond-upon-Thames	123,850
Southwark	172,538
Sutton	127,798
Tower Hamlets	118,765
Waltham Forest	161,679
Wandsworth	192,574
Westminster	140,013

Planning Inquiries

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the implications for the disclosure of public information at public planning inquiries of section 4(5) of the Environmental Information Regulations 1992.

Mr. Baldry: The procedure rules for planning inquiries are already designed to ensure maximum disclosure of information. The Environmental Information Regulations 1992 do not change these arrangements.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the impact of the operation of the NFFO—non-fossil fuel obligation—on the privatisation of local authority waste disposal functions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Tenders for the provision of privatised waste disposal contracts under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 are a matter for the tenderers and the waste disposal authority concerned. I refer my hon. Friend to the detailed advice given in my Department's circular 8/91 "Competition for Local Authority Waste Disposal Contracts and New Arrangements for Disposal Operations". Renewable energy policy and the future of the non-fossil fuel obligation are matters for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the occasions on which each urban development corporation in England has used its planning designation powers, giving details of the dates on which such powers were used and the nature of the development to which they were applied in each case.

Mr. Robin Squire: Urban development corporations are each planning authorities and consider all planning applications in their designated areas.

CITES

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of discussions between officials of EC Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and the Indonesian Government relating to the CITES appendix II ban affecting Indonesia.

Mr. Maclean: The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) is still discussing with the Indonesian authorities the management and sustainable use of the country's wildlife. The European Commission has not yet received sufficient information to enable an assessment to be made of the conservation status of the species covered by the current import ban.

Local Government Commission

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what budget has been allocated to the Local Government Commission; how much has been spent; and how many officers are in post.

Mr. Robin Squire: For 1992-93, some £2·63 million is available for payment of grant-in-aid to the Local Government Commission. Of this amount some £724,600 has been paid to the commission to date. The commission currently has 28 staff in post.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names, remuneration, political affiliation and former or current occupation of each of the members of the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Robin Squire: The names of the members of the Local Government Commission and their annual rates of remuneration are as follows:

	£
Chairman	
Sir John Banham	32,240
Members	
David Ansbro	4,510
Michael Chisholm	19,550
Ken Ennals CB	19,550
Malcolm Grant	4,510
Howell Harris Hughes	4,510
Brian Hill CBE DL	19,550
Mary Leigh	19,550
Ann Levick	19,550
Robert Scruton	4,510
David Thomas	19,550
Clive Wilkinson	19,550
Lady Wilcox	4,510

Details of the occupational background and political affiliation (where known) of the commission's members are available from my Department's press notice of 3 July 1992, a copy of which I have placed in the Library.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the cost of establishing and running the Local Government Commission to date, the cost of consultations undertaken by the commission, the total budget for the commission in the current year and the expected cost of the commission for the review as a whole.

Mr. Robin Squire: Some £2·63 million is available for payment of grant-in-aid to the commission in 1992-93, of which some £724,600 has been paid to date. We have announced provision of £3·259 million, £3·300 million and £3·439 million for the years 1993-94 to 1995-96. The cost of consultations undertaken by the commission is a matter for the commission itself.

Cooking Facilities

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the numbers of units with self-contained cooking facilities in *(a)* local authority hostels, *(b)* private sector leasing accommodation, *(c)* temporary accommodation and *(d)* local authority short-life housing.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not collect this information.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate how many units in bed-and-breakfast accommodation used for accommodating homeless families have self-contained cooking facilities.

Mr. Baldry: The information is not held centrally and my Department does not make estimates.

City Challenge

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the ministerial visits made to each city challenge winner.

Mr. Robin Squire: City challenge partnerships receive regular visits from their sponsor Minister—the Minister of State for Inner Cities—and me.

Revenue Support

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 December, *Official Report*, column *99*, what assessment he has made of the revenue forgone by each local authority as a result of council tax exemption for student-only dwellings; how the revenue support grant system provides specific compensation for revenue forgone by local authorities as a result of student-only dwellings from the council tax; and what amounts have been provided from the revenue support grant for 1993-94 in this respect for each county, district and metropolitan borough council.

Mr. Robin Squire: The revenue foregone by each local authority as a result of council tax exemption for student-only dwellings cannot be calculated until authorities have set their council taxes.

The revenue support grant system does not provide specific compensation for loss of revenue resulting from the exemption of student-only dwellings. The calculation of revenue support grant for individual authorities involves an assessment of the amount that each authority can raise through council taxes, based upon its local taxbase. The taxbase, and the local government finance settlement generally, takes into account, among other things, exemptions of student-only dwellings. There is no merit in speculating about the amounts of revenue support grant that would have been provided if a different system, without exemption of student-only dwellings, had applied.

Local Government Review

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out his estimates of costs or savings arising from the present review of local government in England; and how far these savings differ from estimates previously made by his Department.

Mr. Robin Squire: It will be for the Local Government Commission to assess area by area the costs and benefits of possible changes to the structure of local government in England. It is not possible at this stage to give precise estimates, but the Government's guidance to the commission makes it clear that any changes to the structure of local government should be worthwhile and cost-effective over time.

Rate Relief

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total rateable value of non-domestic properties given rate relief for unoccupation in each year for which figures are available.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is not available.

Sellafield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total current Curie content of long-lived radioactive waste stored in high-activity storage tanks at Sellafield; and what notification of the status of the radioactive waste storage facilities Her Majesty's Government are required to give Euratom on a routine basis.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

The long-lived radioactive waste stored in high activity storage tanks at Sellafield contains 920 million Curies of radioactivity. Highly active waste contains small quantities of uranium and plutonium. In line with the requirements of the Euratom safeguards authorities, such arisings from reprocessing are reported by British Nuclear Fuels plc in its inventory change reports to Euratom which are made via my Department's safeguards office.

Private Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what areas of his Department's responsibilities he has introduced, or may introduce, private finance; and if he will describe in each case the procedures by which private finance is sought.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 17 December 1992]:* I welcome any suggestions for private finance that the private sector puts forward, provided they are consistent with the Treasury guidance published on 9 December.

Much inner cities spending is targeted on levering in private finance through grant applications and competition between developers. The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities expects to issue shortly a list of further opportunities. The Rural Development Commission and other countryside bodies draw in private finance in their areas through both loan and grant applications. All these applications both have to meet testing criteria, and to compete for limited available public funds. In Property Holdings civil estate business, private finance is used through property leasing. In social housing, the housing association movement uses leading city firms to draw in loan finance from financial institutions.

Birds

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many bird species currently subject to United Kingdom conservation licensing controls under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976 will not be subject to import licensing under current European Community/Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species regulations after 1 January 1993; if he will list them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 17 December 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) on 1 December 1992, *Official Report*, cols *153-54*. About 8,000 species of bird will no longer be subject to import licensing after 1 January 1993. A list of these could only be produced at disproportionate cost. To ensure their continued protection, 83 of these species will be made subject to sales licensing. Only a minority of the remaining species are traded, and licensing of imports of them has been primarily for monitoring. We are pressing for more extensive monitoring to be introduced throughout the European Community in future.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the cash and real terms increases for total standard spending in England in 1993-94, after adjusting for changes in local authority functions, compared with *(a)* total standard spending for 1992-93 and *(b)* local authorities' budgets for 1992-93.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* I wrote to the hon. Member on 22 December 1992.

Further Education

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the representations he has received from local education authorities about the amount of finance allocated and methodology used to calculate each authority's national spending on further education and sixth form colleges for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: Up to 8 January, my right hon. and learned Friend had received 40 written representations from local education authorities on the finance allocated to further education and the methodology employed in his provisional calculations. The issue has also been raised by a further four authorities in meetings with Ministers in this Department. Many such representations have been on the calculation of relevant notional amounts reflecting that from 1993-94 local education authorities have no responsibility for sixth form colleges and their responsibility for post-16 education is limited to schools with sixth form intakes and to some adult education. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to announce to this House his decisions on the revenue support grant settlement in the light of consultation before the end of the month.

Council Tax

Mr. Archy Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to set a target time in which valuation tribunals will complete a council tax appeal.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 16 December 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

Council tax appeals in Scotland will be heard by valuation appeal committees. How many appeals will arise is obviously unknown at this stage. It would not be practicable at present to set a time within which committees will aim to complete their consideration of such appeals. The Government will, however, keep under review the progress of committees in disposing of appeals.

WALES

Heritage Coastline

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which areas in Wales have been designated heritage coasts; how many kilometres have been so designated; and what proportion this represents of the total Welsh coastline.

Mr. David Hunt: The areas listed have been defined as heritage coasts in Wales.

	kilometres
North Anglesey	28·66
Holyhead Mountain	12·88
Aberffraw Bay	7·73
Great Orme	7·08
Lleyn	88·39
Ceredigion	33·80
St. Dogmaels and Moylegrove	22·54
Dinas Head	17·71
St. David's Peninsula	82·11
St. Brides Bay	8·05
Marloes and Dale	43·47
South Pembrokeshire	66·01
Gower	55·06
Glamorgan	21·74
	495·23

495·23 kilometres represents 42 per cent. of Welsh coastline.

Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the closure of the Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni lower school.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a matter for Mid Glamorgan county council.

Parent-Governor Meetings

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many schools in Wales hold annual parent-governor meetings which are attended by fewer than 10 per cent. of the parents entitled to attend.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

Urban Programme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will show expenditure on the urban programme since 1988-89 in the valleys programme area as *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual outturn expressed in (i) cash terms for 1988-89 and (ii) cash terms for 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: Urban programme expenditure in the valleys programme area since 1988-89 in cash terms is:

£ million

	Allocation[1] *excluding national garden festival*	*Allocation/ expenditure national garden festival*	*Actual outturn*
1988-89	14·442	0·458	11·9
1989-90	15·200	2·600	16·0
1990-91	15·657	5·043	19·4
1991-92	15·985	9·915	23·6
1992-93	19·646	1·354	—

[1] Includes supplementary allocations approved during the year.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will show expenditure on the urban programme since 1985 to 1989 in Wales as *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual outturn, expressed in (i) cash terms for 1988-89 and (ii) cash terms for 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: Expenditure on urban programme between 1985-86 and 1989-90 in cash terms is:

£ million

	Allocation	*Actual outturn*
1985-86	19·2	18·0
1986-87	23·7	21·6
1987-88	23·1	20·4
1988-89	24·6	20·5
1989-90	27·6	25·0

Smokers

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the total number of habitual smokers in Wales by health authority area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest information on the percentage of the population in Wales in the age group 18 to 65 who reported that they smoked to any extent is given in the following table:

	Percentage of Population who were smokers
Clwyd	33·8
East Dyfed	28·8
Pembrokeshire	29·1
Gwent	31·3
Gwynedd	32·8
Mid Glamorgan	35·4
Powys	27·4
South Glamorgan	30·2
West Glamorgan	29·2

Source: Heartbeat Wales Technical Report No. 25 published in 1992 by the Health Promotion Authority for Wales.

Special Needs Housing

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the implications of the Tai Cymru's consultation paper for special needs housing in Wales; how he intends to respond to the needs of women and children escaping domestic violence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The board of housing for Wales are giving careful consideration to all the responses received following the issue of its consultation paper entitled "Improving the Effectiveness of Housing Association Development and Management". Decisions will be made known shortly.

TECs

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to review the *(a)* membership and *(b)* membership qualifications of the boards of Welsh training and enterprise councils; if he will set minimum criteria for the representation of manufacturing industry on each of these TECs; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The appointment of directors to training and enterprise council boards is a matter for individual TECs in accordance with the broad criteria set out in the TEC operating agreement. We expect the private sector directors of individual TEC boards to reflect broadly the pattern of employment in their area. We have no plans to alter this arrangement.

The manufacturing sector is represented on all TEC boards in Wales; five of the seven Welsh chairmen of TEC boards are from manufacturing industry.

Right-to-buy Schemes

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Tai Cymru concerning the issuing of new right-to-buy guidelines for the tenants of housing association schemes.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Radon

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate how many houses in each Welsh health authority area exceed *(a)* the radon action level of 200 Bq/m^3 and *(b)* 20 Bq/m^3; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is not possible to provide the estimates requested until the full results of the National Radiological Protection Board survey in Wales are known.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will be publishing the Welsh local government financial statistics for 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: It is anticipated that the next edition of Welsh local government financial statistics, which will include details of 1993-94 budgets, will be published in December 1993.

Trawsfynydd Power Station

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what monitoring he undertakes of the surrounding area of Trawsfynydd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The food science division and the fisheries radiological inspectorate of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food undertake monitoring in the Trawsfynydd area on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. The FSD monitoring covers food and agricultural products whilst that undertaken by FRI involves aquatic environmental monitoring of Lake Trawsfynydd. The results are regularly published in the terrestrial radioactivity monitoring programme and aquatic environment monitoring reports, copies of which are held in the Library of the House. In addition, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has a programme of environmental monitoring linked to its regulatory responsibility for the nuclear power station.

This monitoring shows that levels of radioactivity found in the environment as a result of discharges from the Trawsfynydd nuclear power station are within international and national guidelines.

Part of the area near Trawsfynydd falls within the designated area which is subject to controls on the movement and slaughter of sheep following the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986. The Welsh Office monitors radioactivity levels in sheep from the area as part of those controls.

Agricultural Training Board

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future funding and structure of the Agricultural Training Board for Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: My ministerial colleagues and I are considering the funding and structure of the Agricultural Training Board in the light of the responses to our consultation paper.

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list *(a)* the total number of residential properties owned by his Department, *(b)* the number of such properties which are empty, and *(c)*, *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

	Number
(a) Properties/units[1] owned by the Welsh Office	4,904
(b) Number of properties/units vacant	389
	per cent.
(c) *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*	7·93

[1] The figures included for the national health service are based on units and a property may contain more than one unit.

Health Service

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the methods his Department used to allocate places to district health authorities at the treatment centres in the financial year 1991-92.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1991-92 the Department allocated an initial tranche of places to the district health authorities in which the treatment centres are located. The other authorities negotiated their places direct with the centres which agreed the final allocations with the Department.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what correspondence he has had with the World Health Organisation in relation to *(a)* NHS Wales's relative position in the European health care systems management efficiency league table and *(b)* the relative international position of Wales in 1980 and 1990 in respect of infant mortality rate, incidence of heart disease and cancer; if he will place a copy of such correspondence in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I am not aware of a European league table of the efficiency of health care management.

Correspondence with the regional office of the World Health Organisation on Wales' relative position in terms of key health status indicators, for inclusion in "Caring for the Future", was limited to short technical exchanges between statistical advisers.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will fund the treatment centres in Wales on the same basis in 1993-94 as in the current financial year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Health authorities will be notified of the funding arrangements for 1993-94 in due course.

Butte Mining

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his Department's actions in respect of investigations into share dealings in Butte Mining.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department is not involved in any such investigations.

Development Boards

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to debar members of the board of the Welsh Development Agency from sitting on the Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board.

Mr. David Hunt: No.

Water Fluoridation

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will delete the section on Page iv of the Oral Health Protocol issued in November 1992 referring to co-ordinated action by family health service authorities and district health authorities in Wales to encourage fluoridation of water sources covering 60 per cent. of the Welsh population by 1997.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No.

Baby Milk

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to change the guidelines on the distribution of welfare food baby milk; what consultations he has had with the chairmen and women of the family health service authorities and health authorities in Wales in relation to such guidelines, present and proposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government are currently looking at methods of welfare food distribution to identify scope for improvement in service and value for money. We will consult relevant authorities and agencies before any changes are made to present arrangements.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps were taken to inform all recipients of mobility allowance under the age of 66 years of the new disability living allowance; and what instructions he has issued to adjudication officers in respect of late claims.

Mr. Scott *[pursuant to his reply, 16 November 1992, Official Report, c. 77]:* I regret that some of the information given was incorrect.

Since January 1992, tailored letters have been issued to some 1·5 million beneficiaries of attendance allowance and mobility allowance, giving advice about disability living allowance. These letters were in a series of 16, eight of which were designed for mobility allowance recipients and people who had been refused mobility allowance. The letters enclosed an explanatory leaflet which set out how the changes would affect individuals and, where appropriate, recipients were invited to claim extra benefit available through disability living allowance. Regulations allow awards of this extra benefit to be backdated to 6 April, if the person was entitled to attendance allowance or mobility allowance at that date.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to making mobility living allowance available to children under five years of age.

Mr. Scott: We have considered this issue carefully. We have no plans to change the age limit for the mobility component of disability living allowance which is set at age five. The care component is, where appropriate, payable to under five-year-olds.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement indicating what advance notification was given to Mrs. S. Guest of 4 Clay road, Bury St. Edmunds of *(a)* when her son's attendance allowance had to be reviewed and *(b)* when it was to cease; and what advice she was given about how to reclaim the allowance.

Mr. Scott: The administration of Attendance Allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Richard Spring, dated 17 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what advance notification was given to Mrs. S. Guest of 4 Clay Road, Bury St. Edmunds of *(a)* when her son's Attendance Allowance (AA) had to be reviewed, *(b)* when it was to cease; and what advice she was given about how to reclaim the allowance.

I should explain that, from 6 April 1992, Disability Living Allowance replaced and extended both Mobility Allowance and AA. Mrs. Guest claimed AA on behalf of her son and was notified of the duration of each award when the decision was made. About five months before the expiry of the last award Mrs. Guest was invited to make a renewal claim. This invitation included a set of notes explaining why the claim pack had been sent and how to complete the forms.

Normally, Mrs. Guest would have been notified in writing of the outcome of the renewal claim before the expiry of the existing award. I regret, in this instance, Mrs. Guest was not notified until after the award expired. The notification letter advised Mrs. Guest she had the right to apply for a review of the decision if she was dissatisfied and how to exercise that right.

Clearly, in view of the late notification of the outcome of the renewal claim, Mrs. Guest has not received the standard of service which she has every right to expect from the Agency and I offer my sincere apologies to her for the inconvenience this must have caused. You will be aware from my letter of 19 October to all MPs of the problems we have encountered since the successful launch of the new benefit and the positive steps taken to improve the situation.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report. A copy is also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what criteria are used in the selection of doctors chosen to assess claimants of attendance allowance; what specific training they receive; and what remuneration they receive.

Mr. Scott: The selection, training and payment of doctors who assess claimants of attendance allowance are matters for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. David Blunkett, dated 17 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what criteria are used in the selection of doctors chosen to assess claimants of Attendance Allowance; what specific training they receive; and what remuneration they receive.

Examining Medical Practitioners (EMPs) chosen to assess people claiming Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance are selected by the Senior Medical Officer of the Disability Benefits Centre which processes the claims. Applicants for this work are normally doctors in active clinical practice or recently retired. They are chosen on the basis of a letter of application from the doctor and a subsequent interview with the Senior Medical Officer. Due regard is also given to the need for the services of an EMP in the doctors particular area.

Applicants are trained in the basic principles of the allowances and in the completion of EMP report forms by one of our Medical Officers. This training is usually carried out on a one to one basis. The standard of their reports is monitored by the medical staff, who arrange further training if necessary.

Remuneration is based on a national scale agreed between the Treasury and the British Medical Association, and depends on the time required to complete the report as shown overleaf:

	£
Up to and including 1·5 hours	37·90
More than 1·5 but less than 2 hours	56·90
More than 2·5 hours	88·40

Since all these examinations are carried out at the home of the customers the doctors are also paid a mileage allowance to cover their travelling expenses.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy is also being placed in the Library.

Boarder Premium

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a breakdown of the estimate of the cost of a boarder premium of £10 for each member of a homeless family living in temporary accommodation without the use of self-contained cooking facilities.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available. There is no accepted definition of "self-contained cooking facilities" and no valid estimate of the total number of families in temporary accommodation that would allow the analysis sought. The published estimate was for £10 extra per week for each boarder claim unit. The cost of that is currently estimated to be around £45 million per annum; the cost of a £10 premium to each member of a boarder family would be considerably higher.

Furnishings (Fire Safety)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer 6 November, *Official Report*, column *459*, if he will publish the guidance issued to social fund officers in respect of the broad range of prices that would be considered reasonable for essential items of furniture compliant with foam furniture regulations.

Mr. Scott: The Secretary of State's directions, and his guidance to social fund officers are published in the Social Fund Guide, a copy of which is available in the Library. This guidance encourages social fund officers to look at a broad range of prices offered by various suppliers, when considering the amount of an award.

There is no guidance to social fund officers, either in the guide or elsewhere, which suggests specific amounts for items of furniture.

Child Support

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will seek to amend the Child Support Act 1991 to make provision for single caring parents who do not wish to disclose the name of their child; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Act already contains safeguards to ensure that if there would be a risk of harm or undue distress to the parent with care of any child living with her, she will not have to seek maintenance from the absent parent.

The Government believe it right that a parent who has no such good grounds should be expected to co-operate so that the absent parent can be approached about meeting his responsibility to support his child. It is a widely accepted principle that parents should support their children when they can afford to do so, rather than transfer that responsibility to other taxpayers who may have families of their own to support.

We have no plans to change our policy on this matter.

Benefit Statistics

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households are currently in receipt of *(a)* the disabled, *(b)* the child, *(c)* the carer's and *(d)* the enhanced pensioner premium.

Mr. Scott: Information as to the numbers of recipients of the disability, disabled child, carer and enhanced pensioner premiums is shown in the table below. The disabled child and carer premiums can be awarded in addition to other premiums. There is some overlap between housing benefit and community charge benefit recipients.

Premium	*Recipients (thousands)*		
	Income Support[1]	*Housing Benefit*[2]	*Community Charge Benefit*[2]
Disability Premium	375	163	217
Disabled Child Premium	22	2	4
Carer Premium	28	6	10
Enhanced Pensioner Premium	243	226	402

[1] Source: Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry May 1991.
[2] Source: Housing Benefit and Community Charge Management Information System annual 1 per cent. sample for May 1991.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the total number of people claiming and dependent on income-related benefits in 1979 and 1991, broken down into the relevant benefits.

Miss Widdecombe: The available information is in the tables. The figures cannot be added together as a claimant could be receiving more than one benefit. Comparisons between 1979 and 1991 are difficult; the basis of assessment changed substantially during the period.

(a) Number of claimants, partners and dependents receiving income-related benefits

Thousands

	1979	1991
Income support	[1]4,371	7,747
Family credit	[2]301	1,267

(b) Housing benefit/Community charge benefit (1991-92 only)

Benefit	*Average number of cases*[3]
Housing benefit	4,120
Community charge benefit	6,340

[1] Supplementary benefit.
[2] Family income supplement.
[3] 1991-92 only.

Notes:
1. All figures in thousands, rounded to the nearest thousand.
2. Figures quoted in table *(b)* (Housing benefit and Community charge benefit) are for recipients only, information is not available for totals dependent on these benefits.
3. No information is available for Housing benefit/Community charge benefit in 1979 as the current Housing benefit scheme did not commence until 1988 and Community charge benefit was not introduced until 1990 (1989 in Scotland).

Sources:
Table *(a)* Supplementary benefit/Income support; Annual Statistical Enquiries, 1979 and 1991; Social Security Statistics, 1980 and 1991.
Table *(b)* Averages of four quarters caseload information for 1991-92, including estimates for non-responding local authorities.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the proportion of people claiming and dependent on supplementary benefit or income support in 1979 and 1991 in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the table. Comparison between income support and supplementary benefit are difficult since the conditions of entitlement and the basis of the assessments.

	(A) Percentage of population in Scotland receiving supplementary benefit/income support	*(B) Percentage of population in Great Britain receiving supplementary benefit/income support*
1979	8·67	7·99
1991	15·78	13·82

Notes:
1. *Source:* Supplementary Benefit/Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiries 1979 and 1991; Office of Population Censuses and Surveys 1979 and 1991.
2. The figures in column (b) of the table relate to Great Britain, not the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is responsible for statistics relating to the province.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the numbers and proportion of children in families on supplementary benefit in 1979 and income support in 1991 broken down into England, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the table:

	Country	*Number of Children*	*Proportion of Population (per cent.)*
1979	England	757	6·62
(Supplementary Benefit)	Scotland	109	8·09
	Wales	57	8·21
1991	England	1,998	19·42
(Income Support)	Scotland	239	21·97
	Wales	131	20·89

Notes
1. Figures are thousands rounded to the nearest thousand.
2. Sources:
Supplementary Benefit statistics annual enquiry May 1979.
Income Support statistics annual enquiry May 1991.
Office of Population Censuses and Surveys 1979 and 1991.

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the numbers of claimants on *(a)* income support and *(b)* housing benefit as a proportion of the population in each local authority in England, Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Burt *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* Income support information is not available in the form requested. The available information relating to housing benefit is in the tables:

Proportion of households in receipt Housing Benefit (HB) by Local Authority in Great Britain[1]

	per cent.
Adur	11
Allerdale	17
Alnwick	17
Amber Valley	12
Arun	10
Ashfield	16
Ashford	13
Aylesbury Vale	9
Babergh	12
Barking	25
Barnet	11
Barnsley	25
Barrow in Furness	15
Basildon	18
Basingstoke	9
Bassetlaw	16
Bath	18
Berwick-upon-Tweed	17
Beverley	7
Bexley	10
Birmingham	25
Blaby	5
Blackburn	19
Blackpool	18
Blyth Valley	23
Bolsover	20
Bolton	19
Boothferry	13
Boston	17
Bournemouth	21
Bracknell	11
Bradford	18
Braintree	13
Breckland	12
Brent	18
Brentwood	9
Bridgnorth	11
Brighton	24
Bristol	20
Broadland	7
Bromley	10

	per cent.
Bromsgrove	8
Broxbourne	10
Broxtowe	12
Burnley	17
Bury	13
Calderdale	16
Cambridge	17
Camden	29
Cannock Chase	17
Canterbury	13
Caradon	11
Carlisle	17
Carrick	13
Castle Morpeth	13
Castle Point	6
Charnwood	11
Chelmsford	11
Cheltenham	16
Cherwell	10
Chester	16
Chester le Street	20
Chesterfield	21
Chichester	14
Chiltern	7
Chorley	11
Christchurch	10
City of London	26
Cleethorpes	12
Colchester	11
Congleton	8
Copeland	17
Corby	22
Cotswold	10
Coventry	19
Craven	9
Crawley	15
Crewe and Nantwich	13
Croydon	13
Dacorum	12
Darlington	17
Dartford	13
Daventry	10
Derby	18
Derbyshire Dales	9
Derwentside	27
Doncaster	20
Dover	14
Dudley	18
Durham	20
Ealing	16
Easington	32
East Cambridgeshire	12
East Devon	10
East Dorset	7
East Hampshire	8
East Hertfordshire	9
East Lindsey	12
East Northampton	11
East Staffordshire	11
East Yorkshire	13
Eastbourne	16
Eastleigh	10
Eden	8
Ellesmere Port	15
Elmbridge	9
Enfield	14
Epping Forest	13
Epsom and Ewell	7
Erewash	14
Exeter	16
Fareham	6
Fenland	14
Forest Heath	10
Forest of Dean	10
Fylde	9
Gateshead	31
Gedling	10
Gillingham	10

	per cent.
Glanford	9
Gloucester	16
Gosport	14
Gravesham	15
Great Yarmouth	18
Greenwich	22
Grimsby	23
Guildford	10
Hackney	33
Halton	23
Hambleton	10
Hammersmith	25
Harborough	7
Haringey	39
Harlow	23
Harrogate	9
Harrow	9
Hart	6
Hartlepool	29
Hastings	18
Havant	6
Havering	11
Hereford	18
Hertsmere	12
High Peak	13
Hillingdon	11
Hinckley and Bosworth	8
Holderness	10
Horsham	9
Hounslow	11
Hove	16
Huntingdon	9
Hyndburn	13
Ipswich	18
Isles of Scilly	9
Islington	31
Kennet	12
Kensington and Chelsea	19
Kerrier	13
Kettering	13
Kingston-upon-Hull	34
Kingston-upon-Thames	10
Kingswood	8
Kirklees	16
Knowsley	36
Lambeth	30
Lancaster	15
Langbaurgh	22
Leeds	22
Leicester	23
Leominster	10
Lewes	9
Lewisham	34
Lichfield	9
Lincoln	26
Liverpool	39
Luton	14
Macclesfield	9
Maidstone	10
Maldon	9
Malvern Hills	10
Manchester	46
Mansfield	20
Medina	19
Melton	9
Mendip	12
Merton	14
Mid Bedfordshire	9
Mid Devon	12
Mid Suffolk	10
Mid Sussex	9
Middlesbrough	32
Milton Keynes	13
Mole Valley	9
New Forest	9
Newark	13
Newbury	8
Newcastle under Lyme	14

	per cent.
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	34
Newham	35
North Bedfordshire	11
North Cornwall	12
North Devon	16
North Dorset	10
North East Derby	16
North Hertfordshire	14
North Kesteven	9
North Norfolk	11
North Shropshire	11
North Tyneside	27
North Warwickshire	13
North West Leicester	12
North Wiltshire	10
Northampton	15
Northavon	8
Norwich	31
Nottingham	32
Nuneaton	14
Oadby and Wigston	6
Oldham	21
Oswestry	14
Oxford	25
Pendle	13
Penwith	15
Peterborough	19
Plymouth	21
Poole	10
Portsmouth	24
Preston	20
Purbeck	9
Reading	15
Redbridge	11
Redditch	16
Reigate and Banstead	9
Restormel	13
Ribble Valley	6
Richmondshire	10
Richmond-upon-Thames	11
Rochdale	19
Rochester on Medway	13
Rochford	8
Rossendale	17
Rother	9
Rotherham	22
Rugby	11
Runnymede	10
Rushcliffe	9
Rushmoor	12
Rutland	8
Ryedale	7
Salford	32
Salisbury	13
Sandwell	28
Scarborough	15
Scunthorpe	21
Sedgefield	27
Sedgemoor	13
Sefton	17
Selby	9
Sevenoaks	10
Sheffield	29
Shepway	14
Shrewsbury and Atcham	12
Slough	16
Solihull	13
South Bedfordshire	11
South Buckinghamshire	9
South Cambridgeshire	9
South Derbyshire	10
South Hams	10
South Herefordshire	9
South Holland	11
South Kesteven	14
South Lakeland	9
South Norfolk	10
South Northants	9

	per cent.
South Oxfordshire	9
South Ribble	9
South Shropshire	12
South Somerset	16
South Staffordshire	10
South Tyneside	33
South Wight	11
Southampton	19
Southend on Sea	14
Southwark	28
Spelthorne	8
St. Albans	9
St. Edmundsbury	12
St. Helens	21
Stafford	11
Staffordshire Moorlands	7
Stevenage	19
Stockport	13
Stockton on Tees	21
Stoke on Trent	19
Stratford-on-Avon	10
Stroud	10
Suffolk Coastal	9
Sunderland	30
Surrey Heath	6
Sutton	12
Swale	12
Tameside	19
Tamworth	18
Tandridge	8
Taunton Deane	14
Teesdale	12
Teignbridge	11
Tendring	9
Test Valley	10
Tewkesbury	9
Thamesdown	13
Thanet	14
The Wrekin	20
Three Rivers	11
Thurrock	17
Tonbridge and Malling	11
Torbay	14
Torridge	11
Tower Hamlets	40
Trafford	11
Tunbridge Wells	10
Tynedale	12
Uttlesford	8
Vale of White Horse	8
Vale Royal	12
Wakefield	23
Walsall	25
Waltham Forest	18
Wandsworth	24
Wansbeck	27
Wansdyke	10
Warrington	16
Warwick	13
Watford	13
Waveney	17
Waverley	10
Wealden	6
Wear Valley	25
Wellingborough	16
Welwyn Hatfield	16
West Devon	11
West Dorset	11
West Lancashire	20
West Lindsey	13
West Norfolk	13
West Oxfordshire	9
West Somerset	14
West Wiltshire	11
Westminster	21
Weymouth and Portland	15
Wigan	19
Winchester	12

	per cent.
Windsor and Maidenhead	11
Wirral	19
Woking	9
Wokingham	5
Wolverhampton	28
Woodspring	10
Worcester	15
Worthing	10
Wychavon	10
Wycombe	9
Wyre	8
Wyre Forest	13
York	19
Aberconwy	14
Alyn and Deeside	13
Arfon	23
Blaenau Gwent	27
Brecknock	12
Cardiff	22
Carmarthen	13
Ceredigion	13
Colwyn	16
Cynon Valley	21
Delyn	16
Dinefwr	14
Dwyfor	15
Glyndwr	14
Islwyn	18
Llanelli	20
Lliw Valley	17
Meirionnydd	14
Merthyr Tydfil	29
Monmouth	11
Montgomery	11
Neath	20
Newport	24
Ogwr	17
Port Talbot	23
Preseli	17
Radnor	12
Rhondda	19
Rhuddlan	17
Rhymney Valley	24
South Pembrokeshire	17
Swansea	23
Taff-Ely	17
Torfaen	24
Vale of Glamorgan	15
Wrexham Maelor	21
Ynys Mon	18
Aberdeen	19
Angus	17
Annandale and Eskdale	16
Argyll-Bute	19
Badenoch	16
Banff and Buchan	16
Bearsden and Milngavie	6
Berwickshire	16
Caithness	18
Clackmannan	37
Clydebank	36
Clydesdale	20
Cumbernauld	26
Cumnock and Doon	30
Cunninghame	26
Dumbarton	23
Dundee	32
Dunfermline	21
East Kilbride	19
East Lothian	21
Eastwood	5
Edinburgh	22
Ettrick and Lauderdale	14
Falkirk	25
Glasgow	42
Gordon	9
Hamilton	28
Inverclyde	31
Inverness	24
Kilmarnock	28
Kincardine and Deeside	7
Kirkcaldy	26
Kyle and Carrick	21
Lochaber	19
Midlothian	16
Monklands	38
Moray	16
Motherwell	33
Nairn	16
Nithsdale	17
North East Fife	25
Orkney	11
Perth and Kinross	15
Renfrew	25
Ross and Cromarty	19
Roxburgh	18
Shetland	12
Skye and Lochalsh	15
Stewartry	14
Stirling	21
Strathkelvin	14
Sutherland	17
Tweeddale	14
West Lothian	23
Western Isles	11
Wigtown	25

[1] Percentages for England and Wales refer to 1990; Scottish figures refer to 1991.

Sources:

Caseload figures from Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit Management Information System caseload counts for 1990 and 1991, including estimates for non responding authorities.

Number of Households from the Building Research Establishment and the Scottish Office.

Homelessness

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ensure that housing benefits and income support is available to homeless people using half-way houses.

Miss Widdecombe: Homeless people are entitled to income support, and to housing benefit when they find accommodation and incur a liability to pay rent. Housing benefit is also available on the same basis to people who secure temporary or permanent housing.

Eating Out Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the cost of re-introducing the eating out allowance, at the level payable in 1989, for the financial year 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe: It is not possible to produce a reliable estimate from the data available.

War Pension Scheme

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations his Department has received about the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State's announcement of 12 November about the introduction of a threshold for noise-induced hearing impairment into the war pension scheme; what replies have been sent; what action is being taken; what

consultation there was prior to the press announcement with the Royal British Legion and other ex-service organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Consultation over the package of proposals, involving a threshold for noise induced hearing loss and an increase in war disablement pensions, commenced after the announcement of 12 November 1992. Since then, several letters have been received from representatives of the ex-service organisations. Full and careful account has been taken of the comments made in those letters, and of the comments made on 3 December during discussions of the proposals at the meeting of the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions. As announced in my reply of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *369-70*, after full consideration, we have concluded that they are in the best interests of war pensioners and are proceeding with them. My noble Friend Lord Henley has written to members of the central advisory committee and others representing the interests of war pensioners, advising them of our decision.

Compensation Payments

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much compensation has been paid to social security claimants in the current year for late payment of benefit, for benefit interruptions, or in ex-gratia payments.

Mr. Burt: During the six-month period ending 30 September 1992, a total of £1,499,236 was disbursed as ex-gratia payments, of which £1,113,367 represented compensation payments. The records kept do not distinguish between payments made for delay in payment of benefit and payments made for interruption of benefit.

Pensioners

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of pensioners had an income of less than £5,000 a year, at the latest available date.

Miss Widdecombe: It is estimated[1] that 61 per cent. of single pensioners[2] had an income of less than £5,000 per year in 1988 (the latest available date).

[1] Family Expenditure Survey 1988.

[2] Based on pensioner units—i.e., single people over state pension age and couples where the husband is aged 65 or over, regardless of whether they are drawing state pension.

Income Statistics

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the numbers and proportion of people who fell below 50 per cent. of average income before and after housing costs in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland in 1979 and in 1988-89.

Mr. Burt: Reliable information in the form requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Information for the United Kingdom as a whole is available in Households Below Average Income: a Statistical Analysis 1979-1988-89 (HMSO 1992), a copy of which is in the Library.

Share Fishermen

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will allow share fishermen to sign on for unemployment benefit by postal slips; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Postal signing is offered to all claimants who would find it difficult to attend their local benefit office regularly.

The Employment Service, which administers the scheme on behalf of the Secretary of State for Social Security, has issued guidelines to local offices describing the circumstances in which this facility should be offered. People who live more than six miles from their local benefit office, people with disabilities who would suffer hardship through regular attendance, and people who live in areas where local transport is inadequate, can all be excused from regular attendance. We have no plans to offer postal signing to any specific occupational group.

Carers

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he proposes to review the present qualifying roles for the carer premium.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will extend payment of invalid care allowance for a period beyond the time that a person's caring responsibilities come to an end.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many carers he expects to benefit from changes to invalid care allowance and carer premium from next April; and at what cost.

Mr. Scott: All carers currently in receipt of invalid care allowance and the carer premium will benefit from the uprating of benefits which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 12 November 1992.

We expect a further 3,000 carers to benefit from the increase in the invalid care allowance earnings limit at a cost of £3 million.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current annual cost of benefits for carers.

Mr. Scott: We estimate that the cost of invalid care allowance for the year 1992-93 will be £301 million. Separate figures are not held on the cost of the carer premium.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will extend eligibility for invalid care allowance to carers providing care and support for someone in receipt of the lower care component of disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

The purpose of invalid care allowance is to provide a measure of financial assistance to those who forego the opportunity of full-time work to provide regular and substantial care to a severely disabled person. It is doubtful whether a person receiving the lower rate care component of disability living allowance would require such substantial care.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has for increasing the level of take-up of the carer premium on means tested benefits.

Mr. Burt: The carer premium is already well-publicised in a number of ways and we continually monitor the provision of information about benefits. Information about the whole range of premiums is given in a number of leaflets about income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit. In addition specific information about the carer premium is contained in leaflet FB31 (Caring for someone?), which has been well received by carers and their organisations, in the ICA claim pack and award notices and in the income support claim pack.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has further to improve financial support for carers.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend, the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on 12 November 1992 at columns *906-24* and, in particular cols *910-11*.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to increase the basic rate of invalid care allowance.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on 12 November 1992 at columns *906-24*. Apart from this, we have no plans to do so.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress has been made in implementing the specific improvements in financial support for carers proposed by the fifth report from the House of Commons Social Services Committee of 1989-90, "Community Care: Carers" (HC 410).

Miss Widdecombe: The Government's reply to the report was contained in "The Government's Plans for the Future of Community Care" (Cm 1343) a copy of which is in the Library.

Income Support

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what account he takes of fluctuations in interest rates paid to savers on the notional income received by income support claimants with savings.

Mr. Burt: Treatment of notional income support claimants is designed to give most help to people with the least savings. The formula is not linked to, nor is it meant to imply, any particular rate of return which would be secured from investment.

Consequently, while the formula is kept under review, it would not be appropriate to amend it to reflect directly fluctuations in interest rates paid to savers.

Correspondence

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he replied to a letter from the European Commissioner responsible for Social Affairs and Employment in connection with the United Kingdom's obligations under European Council directive (EEC) 80/987; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The United Kingdom Government responded on 11 September 1992 to a letter from the Director General of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs about European Council Directive 80/987. We believe the Government have done all that is required to comply with this directive.

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list *(a)* the total number of residential properties owned by his Department, *(b)* the number of such properties which are empty, and *(c)*, *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Miss Widdecombe: There are 18 properties on the Department's estate which could be described as residential properties. Three of these properties are empty: 16·7 per cent. of the total.

Pension Funds

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will amend company pension fund law so as to oblige companies suspending employer contributions to suspend employee contributions for a parallel period;

(2) if he will make it an offence under company pension fund law to suspend company employer contributions without full consultations with all employees;

(3) what proposals he has to amend company pension fund law to assist the transfer of small company pension funds, in the event of receivership, to larger ongoing pension funds;

(4) if he will make it a criminal offence under company pension fund law to deduct employee pension contributions and fail to transfer them into the pension fund;

(5) what proposals he has for changes in company pension fund law to protect the pension rights of employees, where their contributions were deducted from wages, but not transferred with the pension fund in the event of receivership; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security announced on 8 June 1992 that a pension law review committee was being set up to carry out a wide ranging review of the framework of law and regulation within which occupational pension schemes operate. Questions relating to securing pension rights are fundamental to that review, and we have no proposals for amendments to legislation that might preempt the committee's report. Protections exist in employment protection legislation for unpaid contributions to occupational pension schemes, up to certain limits, where the employer is insolvent.

Arachnoiditis

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to which benefits sufferers of arachnoiditis may be entitled; and what steps are being taken to publicise such eligibility.

Mr. Scott: A wide range of benefits is available to sick and disabled people, including sufferers of arachnoiditis, provided they meet the conditions of entitlement. Information about eligibility to benefits is made widely

available by the Benefits Agency in a variety of forms including leaflets and various confidential free telephone advice lines.

National Welsh Bus Company

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set up an inquiry into the administration of the company pension fund of the National Welsh Bus Company.

Miss Widdecombe: An independent trustee has been appointed to the National Welsh Omnibus scheme, as required by the Social Security Act 1990, and is taking the steps necessary to safeguard the pension position of members.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 12 January 1993

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Expenditure

Mr. Straw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many member countries of *(a)* the EC, *(b)* G7 and *(c)* the OECD include expenditure incurred by sub-national units of government, local authorities, states, departments, länder, municipalities, and so on, and financed by local taxation in the expenditure to be controlled by central Government in their public expenditure planning processes; and if he will make a statement on the inclusion of United Kingdom local authority self-financed expenditure in the new control total.

Mr. Portillo: As explained in annex C to chapter 2 of the "Autumn Statement"—paragraph 2C.9—local authority self-financed expenditure—LASFE—is included in the new control total because it is a significant component of general Government expenditure, is not primarily cyclical and cannot sensibly be allowed to vary without any requirements for offsetting adjustments. Although LASFE is not directly under central government control, the Government influence and restrain local authority expenditure, and hence LASFE, through grant, capping and capital receipts rules.

Information on which OECD countries include expenditure incurred by sub-national units of government and financed by local taxation in their public expenditure planning processes is not readily available. It can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Revenue Losses

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his most recent estimate of annual revenue losses arising from legal imports of *(a)* cigarettes, *(b)* other tobacco products, *(c)* wines and spirits, *(d)* beer and *(e)* other excisable goods, following the completion of the single market in January.

Sir John Cope: The "Financial Statement and Budget Report" published in March 1992 made provision for a full-year loss of £250 million from increased cross-border shopping. We anticipate that most of the loss will be due to cigarettes, but the estimate is difficult and subdivisions between categories of alcoholic drinks and tobacco products would not be meaningful.

VAT

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to collect value added tax from businesses at the current rate only on the turnover above the registration threshold; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Value added tax is a transaction-based tax; it is collected by registered businesses from their customers and remitted to Customs. Unlike direct taxes, it is not a tax on the business. The relief suggested is, therefore, not appropriate.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the terms of reference of the planned review of the exemption from value added tax of educational materials; and when he expects the review to be completed.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise are undertaking an internal review of the VAT exemptions available for educational services provided by fee paying schools, universities and other businesses to see whether, consistent with EC legislation, there is scope for simplification and rationalisation. It is too early yet to say how soon the review will be completed. There is no general exemption for the supply of educational materials and this is not part of the review.

Food Prices

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will prepare a table showing for each year since 1 January 1973 *(a)* the average price of a standard loaf of bread, *(b)* the average price of a pint of milk, *(c)* the average price of a standard tin of baked beans, *(d)* the percentage increase in the price of each item, *(e)* the retail price index and *(f)* the United Kingdom net contribution to the EC budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The available information is given in the following table. Average price data for baked beans are not available.

	Average January price (pence)		*Percentage price change (per cent.) over previous 12 months*			
Year[1]	*Standard loaf of bread*[2]	*Pint of milk*[3]	*Bread*	*Milk*	*January Retail Prices Index (Jan 1974=100)*	*UK net contribution to the EC Budget £ million*
1973	10	5·5	n.a.	n.a.	89·3	102
1974	13	5·5	20·3	0	100·0	29
1975	14	5·0	8·3	−9·2	119·9	−56
1976	17	8·5	19·4	69·8	147·9	167
1977	21	10·5	23·2	23·5	172·4	369
1978	26	12·5	18·5	19·1	189·5	822
1979	30	13·5	13·4	7·3	207·2	947
1980	35	15·0	16·0	11·1	245·3	706
1981	39	18·5	11·0	23·3	277·3	397
1982	41	20·0	6·0	8·1	310·6	606
1983	43	21·0	3·5	5·0	325·9	647
1984	45	21·0	4·1	0	342·6	656

Year[1]	Standard loaf of bread[2]	Pint of milk[3]	Bread	Milk	January Retail Prices Index (Jan 1974 = 100)	UK net contribution to the EC Budget £ million
1985	47	22·0	3·0	4·8	359·8	1,808
1986	51	23·0	8·5	4·3	379·7	572
1987	55	25·0	4·0	8·2	394·5	1,721
1988	58	26·0	5·8	4·2	[4]407·5	1,362
1989	60	28·0	5·5	7·2	[4]437·9	2,315
1990	64	29·0	6·3	7·5	[4]471·4	2,475
1991	70	32·0	9·7	8·2	[4]513·6	545
1992	71	33·0	2·5	4·6	[4]534·9	n.a.

[1]The price data have been given for January of each year.
[2]Price for a white unwrapped 1¼lb loaf.
[3]Price for a pint of pasteurised milk. Prior to 1987 prices relate to delivered milk only. Since then shop-bought milk has been included in the calculations.
[4]Indices have been converted to a January 1974—100 base from the official January 1987 = 100 base for ease of comparison.

Family Expenditure

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the average spent each week by a family of two adults and two school age children on *(a)* food, *(b)* clothing, *(c)* entertainment, *(d)* housing and *(e)* taxes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The estimates are shown in the table. They are based on spending in 1991.

Average weekly expenditure

Description	£ per week
Food	68·86
Clothing	24·83
Entertainment	41·42
Housing	64·34
Income tax and National Insurance employees contribution	107·88

Domestic Energy Supplies

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to levy *(a)* value added tax or *(b)* any other additional taxation on domestic energy supplies.

Sir John Cope: My right hon. Friend will, as usual, set out his taxation proposals in the Budget. As is normal at this time of year, I cannot comment further at this time on any such proposals.

TRANSPORT

Lorry Trailers (Rail Transport)

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the upgrading of the existing British Rail network necessary in order to accommodate unaccompanied lorry trailers.

Mr. Roger Freeman: Discussions are to be held between BR, independent transport consultants and the Health and Safety Executive on the scope for accommodating piggyback freight on some of BR's existing lines. They will be considering the engineering, cost and safety implications of using redesigned wagons and enhancing height clearances on some lines.

WALES

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been paid in each of the last five years to landowners in Wales in respect of compensation under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and how much was paid during the same period in respect of land purchase.

Mr. David Hunt: Prior to 1 April 1991, payments under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for management agreements and land purchase were made by the Nature Conservancy Council for Great Britain as a whole, and were recorded centrally. Therefore figures for payments made in Wales prior to 1 April 1991 are not readily available and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

In 1991-92 payments made to landowners by the Countryside Council for Wales in respect of management agreements under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 amounted to £1·055 million. This amount included payments to encourage positive conservation measures as well as payments in respect of compensation, which are not recorded separately.

For 1991-92, £0·631 million was paid by the Countryside Council for Wales for the purchase of land in national nature reserves. In addition, the Countryside Council for Wales gave grants totalling £0·399 million towards the purchase of land by other organisations for nature and landscape conservation.

Urban Programme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement indicating the criteria used in assessing *(a)* projects benefiting all of the county and *(b)* projects benefiting all of the borough/district as used in his Department's press release of 14 December concerning the urban programme in mid Glamorgan.

Mr. David Hunt: The press release included a map showing the location of the projects to be grant aided. Projects that were shown as benefiting the whole county or the whole borough or district were identified on the basis of the information supplied by the local authorities concerned in their grant applications.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the sites of special scientific interest damaged by acid rain in the latest year for which figures are available and give the hectarage of each site of special scientific interest affected.

Mr. David Hunt: A study published in October 1992 identified 42 sites of special scientific interest in Wales as having freshwater habitats affected by acid deposition, out of a current total of 848 SSSIs. These sites are listed in the tables. The area given is that of the whole SSSI and not the area damaged. The study sampled freshwaters and did not assess damage to the land area of sites. The Countryside Council for Wales is currently seeking to establish how far land habitats are being damaged by acid rain. Present research has indicated that some parts of south Wales may also be affected by acid rain although this was not considered likely at the time of the original study.

Welsh SSSI surveyed and within which freshwaters were considered to have been affected by acidification.

SSSI Name	*Area of whole SSSI (not area damaged)*
Dwyfor	
Llyn Llagi and Llyn yr Adar	138 ha
Hafod Garregog	45 ha
Meirionnydd	
Ceunant Cynfal	36 ha
Cadair Idris	3,548 ha
Rhinog	2,681 ha
Coed Ganllwyd	59 ha
Coedydd Abergwynant	88 ha
Migneint	4,108 ha
Ddualit	135 ha
Arfon Arthog	280 ha
Pont Croesor	91 ha
Llyn Tegid	484 ha
Aberconwy	
Sychnant Pass	109 ha
Fairy Glen Woods	43 ha
Llynnau Mymbyr	67 ha
Llyn Goddionduon	7 ha
Llynnau Bodgynydd	25 ha
Llyn Bychan	4 ha
Llyn Ty'n y Mynydd	7 ha
Pandora Reservoirs	8 ha
Carneddau	8,190 ha
Arfon	
Coedydd Aber	185 ha
Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon)	2,740 ha
Cwm Dwythwch	385 ha
Glydeiriau and Cwm Idwal	2,780 ha
Llyn Cwellyn	89 ha
Clwyd	
Berwyn	15,991 ha
Mynydd Hiraethog	6,321 ha
Llandegla Moor	576 ha
Dyfed/Powys	
Montgomery	
Coed Afon Crewi	5 ha
Coedydd Llawr-y-glyn	102 ha
Pencreigiau'r Llan	234 ha
River Wye	[1]0 ha
Pumlumon	3,848 ha
Radnor	
Marcheini Uplands	810 ha
Cwm Gwynllyn	92 ha
Rhos Rhyd-y-ceir	8 ha
Maelienydd	350 ha
Ceredigion	
Coedydd a Cheunant Rheidol	234 ha
Llynoedd Ieuan	175 ha
Elenydd	22,770 ha
Cwm Doethie and M Mallaen	6,187 ha

[1] 250 km length

Medical Research

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Medical Research Council in relation to the closure in 1995 of the epidemiology unit at Llandough hospital; what provision he will arrange in relation to the Caerphilly study into factors affecting heart disease incidence; what other proposals for medical research in Wales he has exchanged with the research council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* Officials were involved in the review of the Medical Research Council-funded epidemiology unit and keep in close touch with the MRC as a matter of course. Senior officials, including the chief medical officer, met the Secretary of the Medical Research Council in Cardiff on 12 November 1992 to discuss the closure of the unit, and the future Medical Research Council developments in Wales. I am pleased to say that the Medical Research Council has endorsed the recommendation of its systems board that the Caerphilly study should continue to be supported through to the completion of phase IV, which will require work beyond the closure date of the unit.

I consider a sound research base very important and I am keen to see Medical Research Council investment in Wales maintained. Thus, I am encouraged to note that the Medical Research Council is discussing with researchers in Wales a number of possible projects under the clinical research initiative.

Learning Difficulties

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to publish a revised learning difficulties strategy for Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* The revised document will be published in time to relaunch the strategy from 1 April 1993.

EC Doctors and Dentists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will encourage district health authorities to embark on recruitment drives in Europe to attract doctors and dentists to work in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* All health authorities in Wales are currently able to recruit doctors and dentists from Europe. All, with the exception of Powys health authority, have already recruited from Europe.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Postponed Cases

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, if he will give the numbers of cases postponed in *(a)* magistrates courts and *(b)* stipendiary magistrates' courts in each county, indicating (i) the percentage involved at each court, (ii) the reasons for each postponement and (iii) the cost of each postponement in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is not available centrally in the form requested.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Service Agency

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria were used in the selection of the new chief executive of the Prison Service Agency; what steps were taken to ensure a fair and open competition; if the selected candidate was the first recommendation of the selection panel; and what is to be the salary of the appointee.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 21 December, Mr. Derek Lewis was appointed chief executive and director general of the new Prison Service Agency in an open competition conducted under the aegis of the Civil Service Commissioners. The Recruitment and Assessment Services issued a public advertisement and Saxton Bamfylde International plc conducted an executive search. The advertisement stated that the successful candidate would need to have experience, most probably at chief executive level, of leading a substantial organisation in the public or private sector; a track record of successful management of large-scale change, delivering improved quality and efficiency; and first-class communication skills and good judgment appropriate to the leadership of a highly complex and sensitive public service. In accordance with the normal practice the recommendations of the selection panel are confidential. Mr. Lewis's salary is £125,000 a year and he is eligible for a performance bonus of up to 35 per cent. of basic salary, assessed by the Department on the basis of measures of performance.

Racial Incidents

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions there have been for incitement to racial hatred each year since 1965 under section 5a of the Public Order Act 1936 and subsequently sections 17 to 23 of the Public Order Act 1986; and how many of these prosecutions have been successful.

Mr. Jack: Information for 1979 to 1991, which is provisional, is given in the table. Data for 1965 to 1978 are not available.

Number of prosecutions at magistrates' courts and convictions at all courts under Section 5A of the Public Order Act 1936 and Sections 17 to 23 of the Public Order Act 1986[1], 1979 to 1991

Year	Prosecutions	Convictions
1979	3	2
1980	—	—
1981	3	1
1982	4	4
1983	2	1
1984	11	2
1985	25	8
1986	4	11
1987	11	6
1988	22	2
1989	28	2
1990	45	4
1991[2]	67	3

[1] Came into force on 1 January 1987.
[2] Provisional.

Child Sex Abuse

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many offenders have been charged with more than one incidence of child sex abuse;

(2) how many incidents there have been of persons being treated for child sex abuse who have been charged with offences of a similar nature *(a)* during the course of their treatment and *(b)* within two years after their treatment finishing;

(3) how many persons were convicted in each of the last five years for offences of sexual abuse against children; and how many such persons have been convicted in each of the last 10 years in the Coventry and Warwickshire area.

Mr. Jack: Information is not collected centrally on the number of offenders who have been charged with more than one incident of child sex abuse. Nor are records kept centrally of the number of persons being treated for child sex abuse who have been charged with similar offences.

Information on the number of persons convicted of child sex crimes in England and Wales and the Coventry and Warwickshire areas is given in the tables. It is only possible from the information held centrally to identify sex offenders where the victim is known to be aged under 16 years.

Table A
Number of persons convicted of child sex offences 1981-1991[1]
England and Wales

Offence	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991[1]
Buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	147	126	149	118	150	147	195	232	183	189	168
Attempt to commit buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	10	5	12	22	17	20	20	31	26	18	26
Indecent assault on a male aged under 16 years	509	506	533	511	528	410	430	460	406	421	351

Offence	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*[1]
Indecent assault on a female aged under 16 years	1,458	1,492	1,356	1,281	1,446	1,327	1,556	1,650	1,657	1,537	1,469
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged under 13 years	81	71	103	83	110	100	102	135	96	110	105
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged under 16 years	487	419	422	414	395	341	346	340	262	304	223
Incest with a girl under 13 years	32	45	40	49	57	77	89	104	100	84	68
Inciting girl under 16 years to have incestuous sexual intercourse	7	7	7	—	3	3	4	2	5	3	3
Householder permitting unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16 years	7	7	3	6	3	2	6	7	3	5	1
Person responsible for girl aged under 16 causing or encouraging her prostitution, etc	4	3	4	3	—	3	3	1	1	2	2
Abduction of unmarried girl aged under 16 years	8	9	6	8	11	12	7	8	13	8	8
Gross indecency with children	229	231	220	237	266	243	248	246	219	276	219

[1] Provisional.

Table B

Number of persons convicted of child sex offences in the Warwickshire Police Force Area 1987-1991[1]

Warwickshire

Offence	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*[1]1991*
Buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	2	1	2	2	—
Attempt to commit buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	—	—	—	—	—
Indecent assault on a male aged under 16 years	1	1	6	3	1
Indecent assault on a female aged under 16 years	15	13	14	17	13
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged under 13 years	2	3	1	—	—
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged under 16 years	2	1	5	3	5
Incest with a girl under 13 years	—	1	—	1	1
Inciting girl under 16 years to have incestuous sexual intercourse	—	—	—	—	—
Householder permitting unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16 years	—	—	—	—	—
Person responsible for girl aged under 16 causing or encouraging her prostitution, etc	—	—	—	—	—
Abduction of unmarried girl aged under 16 years	—	—	—	—	—
Gross indecency with children	1	1	2	1	4

[1] Provisional.

Table C

Number of persons convicted at the magistrates' courts of child sex offences in Coventry Petty Sessional Division and at the Crown Court who were committed from Coventry Petty Sessional Division 1987-1991[1]

Coventry

Offence	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*[1]1991*
Buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	5	1	5	3	1
Attempt to commit buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	—	—	—	—	—
Indecent assault on a male aged under 16 years	2	3	2	2	3
Indecent assault on a female aged under 16 years	11	7	11	9	9
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged under 13 years	—	—	—	1	—
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged under 16 years	4	4	2	2	1
Incest with a girl under 13 years	—	1	1	—	—
Inciting girl under 16 years to have incestuous sexual intercourse	—	—	—	—	—
Householder permitting unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16 years	—	—	—	—	—
Person responsible for girl aged under 16 causing or encouraging her prostitution, etc.	—	—	—	—	—

Offence	1987	1988	1989	1990	[1]1991
Abduction of unmarried girl aged under 16 years	—	—	—	—	—
Gross indecency with children	5	5	2	2	3

[1] Provisional.

Linen Washing

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he will take to ensure that prisons conform to guidelines issued in circular DHSS HC (87); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Circular instructions 9/1992 replaces, so far as practice in the prison service is concerned, DHSS circular HC (87) on the washing of foul and infected linen. Annex 3 of the circular instruction includes detailed guidance on the treatment of foul and infected linen and the wearing of protective clothing, which all prisons are expected to follow so as to ensure that such items are hygienically washed to the standards recommended in the DHSS circular.

EDUCATION

Adult Education

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many enrolments there were for courses of adult education provided by the Inner London education authority at the time of its abolition; and what are the current corresponding figures for its successor authorities.

Mr. Boswell: In November 1989, there were some 222,000 enrolments of students aged 19 and over on courses in adult institutions and further education colleges maintained by the Inner London education authority. In November 1991, the corresponding figure for institutions maintained by the inner London boroughs or funded through the London residuary body is provisionally estimated as 202,000.

PRIME MINISTER

Prince and Princess of Wales

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister how many times he met the Prince and Princess of Wales to discuss their separation before his announcement on 9 December 1992.

The Prime Minister: I meet both the prince and princess periodically to discuss a range of issues.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 January.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 5 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *655*, when the further report from the National Radiological Protection Board on mortality and cancer evidence relating to nuclear test veterans will be published; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) on 24 November at column *577*.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Homelessness

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on the number of homeless persons presently seeking dwellings who are *(a)* Roman Catholics, *(b)* Protestants and *(c)* others in each district of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I am advised by its chief executive that the information requested is not readily available. However an indication of the total number of homeless persons seeking Housing Executive accommodation is given by the numbers of applicants in the A1 group—emergency housing category—of the executive's waiting list. The number in the A1 group in each executive district as at 30 November 1992 was as follows:

District	A1 Applicants
Antrim	27
Armagh	19
Ballycastle	8
Ballymena	22
Ballymoney	1
Banbridge	11
Bangor	15
Belfast 1	98
Belfast 2	38
Belfast 3	96
Belfast 4	49
Belfast 5	50
Belfast 6	53
Belfast 7	75
Carrickfergus	36
Castlereagh 1	17
Castlereagh 2	18
Coleraine	30
Cookstown	6
Craigavon	3
Downpatrick	72
Dungannon	10
Fermanagh	19
Larne	16
Limavady	26
Lisburn 1	55
Lisburn 2	30
Lisburn 3	63
Londonderry 1	139
Londonderry 2	49
Londonderry 3	109
Lurgan	17
Magherafelt	6
Newry 1	31
Newry 2	25
Newtownabbey 1	15
Newtownabbey 2	20
Newtownards 1	38
Newtownards 2	10
Omagh	35

District	*A1 Applicants*
Portadown	12
Strabane	25

HEALTH

Diethylstilbestrol

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies she has undertaken into the long-term carcinogenic and other side-effects on children born to mothers given DES as a treatment for high blood-pressure during pregnancy in the period 1941 to 1960; if she will assist the formation of DES self-help groups; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: International studies have suggested that Diethylstilbestrol is potentially carcinogenic to daughters of women prescribed the drug and can have potential non carcinogenic side effects on offspring of both sexes.

The Department has supported a study among EC member states aimed at providing information to the public and medical profession. This was undertaken by "DES Action the Netherlands" on behalf of the European Commission. We have no current plans to assist in the formation of DES self-help groups, but it is open to voluntary bodies to seek financial support under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968.

DES was not widely prescribed in this country and the estimated number of women who might develop cancer as a consequence is very small.

The prospect for the early detection of breast and cervical cancer in this country has been greatly enhanced by the introduction of the NHS breast and cervical screening programmes. Additionally, anyone who develops symptoms which worry them should immediately contact their doctor.

Any new information relating to side effects from DES will be monitored in the usual way when it becomes available to the Committee on Safety of Medicines.

NHS Property

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is Her Majesty's Government's practice in respect of use of the proceeds from disposal of national health service land or other property which was in origin substantially funded by charitable donations.

Mr. Sackville: All proceeds from the sale of national health service land and property are retained by the NHS for reinvestment in the NHS.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will outline her decision on the level of prescription charges to be applied from 1 April.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) on Tuesday 8 December 1992 at column *633*.

Maternity Services

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the report of the departmental study team set up to consider good practice in commissioning and providing maternity services in units led by midwives and/or general practitioners; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am pleased to announce that the study team's report, entitled "A study of midwife-and GP-led maternity units" has been published today. Copies have been placed in the Library and distributed throughout the national health service in England.

The report sets out principles of good practice in purchasing and the effective use of resources, the roles of clinicians, safety and location of units and quality of service. Although it was based on visits to maternity units led by midwives or general practitioners, many of the principles are relevant to maternity services more generally.

Drug Costs

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, for each of the last 10 years, the average proportion of the increase in national health service spending attributable to manufacturers' price increases, for each of the 10 groups of prescription medicines and drugs covered by the proposed extension to the limited list.

Dr. Mawhinney: Available data do not permit the effect of manufacturers' pricing increases to be identified separately from other factors affecting the total cost of national health service prescriptions.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Accommodation (Loans)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many loans were given from the social fund in each of the last three years to young people under the age of 21 years living in the Greater London area to help pay a deposit to secure accommodation.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 11 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about loans from the Social Fund to help pay a deposit to secure accommodation.

Payments for deposits to secure accommodation are excluded from the Social Fund by the Secretary of State's Direction. However, loans for the payment of rent in advance are available from the Social Fund to assist people moving into accommodation. In the financial year 1990-91, 1,822 such awards were made in the Greater London area totalling £363,366. In 1991-92, 1,854 awards were made to the value of £365,752. The corresponding figures for 1989-90 are not held but you may wish to note that 12,833 awards totalling £1·8 million were made nationally during this year. No information is available as to the age of the applicants to whom awards were made.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy is also being placed in the Library.

Resettlement Units

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the current timetable for the transfer of each of the Department of Social Security resettlement units to independent landlords;

(2) what are the plans for units that are specifically excluded from the transfer programme for resettlement units;

(3) what arrangements have been made by the DSS resettlemenmt unit to guarantee that there will be continued revenue funding for each transferred resettlement unit and any associated replacement provision;

(4) what provision is being made for appropriate replacement accommodation and permanent move-on accommodation for single homeless people currently resident in DSS resettlement units.

Miss Widdecombe: The management of the Resettlement Agency is a matter for Mr Tony Ward, the chief executive. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Tony Ward to Mr. John Battle, dated 12 January 1993:

I am writing in response to the four questions that you have recently asked about the business of the Resettlement Agency of which I am the Chief Executive.

Your first question asked, "What is the current timetable for the transfers of each of the Department of Social Security Resettlement Units to independent landlords?"

Our first exercise to dispose of the resettlement units at Camden in London, and Newbury in Berkshire should be completed by 31 March 1993. At that time this Agency will cease to have any operational responsibility for the units and they will be disposed of to two separate voluntary organisations. We have not yet decided the exact timescales for the nine remaining units which will be subject to similar processes. However, provisional planning is that at least four will be disposed of by the end of March 1994, and at least a further four by the end of March 1995.

Your second question asked, "What are the plans for units that are specifically excluded from the transfer programme for resettlement units?"

Only two of our resettlement units fall into this category, namely Bishopbriggs in Scotland and Leeds. Bishopbriggs is certain to be replaced by other hostel provision. We are, as yet, undecided about the prospects for our unit at Leeds. We are currently considering ways in which the unit could be modernised, but if this is not a practical option then the unit would be replaced by other facilities.

Your third question asked about the guarantees, "that there will be continued revenue for each transferred resettlement unit and any associated replacement provision?"

The current intention is that revenue funding will continue for those organisations which the Agency currently funds, and in the future might fund. However, funding is subject to monitoring arrangements which aim to ensure that the care standards are adequate, that the conditions of grant award are within the legislation, and that the facilities are managed in a way which provides value for money. Providing these conditions are met and subject to overall Government policy, I expect funding to continue.

Your fourth question asked, "What provision is being made for appropriate replacement accommodation and permanent move-on accommodation for single homeless people currently resident in DSS Resettlement Units?" (RUs).

Only two RUs are currently in the process of being replaced. These are the 80 bed unit at Southampton and the 64 bed unit at Stormy Down in South Wales.

At Southampton, by 1 April 1993 the replacement provision will consist of 136 beds at various locations in the region. In South Wales the replacement provision will consist of 65 beds, and an additional 14 beds where we provide financial support.

As I have indicated earlier, the remaining units will mainly be handed over to other organisations and the residents will not be adversely affected by this process.

If you require any further information or advice on my answers to your questions please let me know.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when Elizabeth Pinnock of 45 South Furzeham road, Brixham (NI number YM 87 30 82 A) will learn the result of her appeal against the decision to refuse her disability living allowance; and whether any of her doctors, consultants, osteopaths and chiropracters were consulted before this decision was made.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 11 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions raised about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Mrs. Elizabeth Pinnock's appeal against the decision to refuse her Disability Living Allowance (DLA), and whether any of her doctors, consultants, osteopaths and chiropractors were consulted before this decision was made.

Mrs. Pinnock appealed against a decision to refuse her claim for Mobility Allowance (MobA) on 6 November 1991 and was notified of the outcome of the appeal on 13 December 1992. I am pleased to tell you that the review decision on her DLA claim has also now been notified to Mrs. Pinnock.

As you may be aware, adjudication officers (AOs) are independent of the Benefits Agency in their decision-making and are free to seek such medical advice as they deem necessary to make a decision. General Practitioners, consultants, chiropractors and osteopaths are all among the sources available to AOs before decisions are made. A medical report was obtained from Mrs. Pinnock's GP in pursuit of her appeal.

I am very sorry for the delay in dealing with this case and for any difficulties Mrs. Pinnock has experienced. I wrote to you in greater detail about this on 6 January 1993.

I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy is also being placed in the Library.

Benefits, Wakefield

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the refusal rate for *(a)* community care grants and *(b)* social fund loans at the Wakefield Benefits Agency office in the 1991-92 financial year and from April 1992 to the current date.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefit Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 11 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about refusal rates for grants and loans at the Wakefield Benefits Agency Office.

Details of refusal rates for each Benefit Agency District, for the 1991-92 financial year, are in the Library. The number of applications received and refused by each District for the period 1 April 1992 to 30 September 1992 is also in the Library. The refusal rate in Wakefield District for loans and grants for the months of October and November 1992 (the

latest data available) is 34·5 per cent. and 78·6 per cent. respectively. I should emphasise that the vast majority of community care grant refusals are because the application fails to meet the basic criteria.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy is also being placed in the Library.

Benefit Take-up

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the take-up figures for the post-1988 reforms income-related benefits will become available.

Mr. Lilley: Estimates of take-up for the post-1988 income-related benefits have been published today. Copies of the report, which relates to 1989 for income support and housing benefit and 1988-89 and 1991 for family credit, have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Child Support Agency

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance she proposes to issue to Child Support Agency staff on the subject of the requirement on mothers to co-operate; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has today issued guidelines for Child Support Agency staff which describe how he wishes section 6 of the Child Support Act 1991, which deals with applications by those receiving certain benefits and includes a requirement to co-operate in some circumstances, to be applied. Copies of the guidelines have been placed in the Library.

A new system of child maintenance is being introduced on 5 April, which takes the responsibility for determining maintenance away from the courts and puts it in the hands of a new Government body, the Child Support Agency. Both parents have a responsibility for the financial support of their children.

After 5 April, lone mothers who get income support, family credit or disability working allowance will be asked to give the name and other details of their child's father so that the Child Support Agency can arrange for him to pay maintenance for his child. The vast majority of lone mothers claiming income support already provide details of absent fathers although they are not yet required to do so by law. Some mothers, however, decide not to give details of the child's father. These mothers will be asked to supply information after 5 April, unless they or any children living with them would be at risk of harm or undue distress if they did so. Many mothers who receive child maintenance find that it gives them greater flexibility and more choice over the way they organise their lives, particularly as they continue to get maintenance if they go to work, and research shows that many mothers would welcome a return to work. Nevertheless, the Government recognise that in some cases a mother will have genuine fear that disclosing the name of the father to the Child Support Agency will result in a risk of harm or undue distress to her or her children. Mothers will be told, in these circumstances, that the Child Support Agency will act as a buffer between the parents so that, if they do not wish to do so, they will not have to see the child's father, and he will not be told where the mother and her children live. However, if the mother continues to believe, in spite of this, that there is a likelihood that there is a risk to her or the children, then the guidelines will be applied.

The guidelines are not exhaustive and do not provide a definitive list of circumstances which would constitute good cause for not providing information about the absent parent. Rather, they provide guidance which staff will use to help make a decision. Each case will be considered on its merits. Child support staff will be very carefully trained, in a programme devised with the help of Relate, to enable them to deal with their clients sensitively. In general, the mother will have the right to be believed unless what she says is inherently contradictory or implausible. The guidelines also explain the rights of appeal to an independent tribunal.

The same rules for child maintenance will apply in cases where the parent with care of the child is the father, and it is the mother who will be contacted to pay maintenance. In one in 10 cases, the parent with care is the father.

In addition to placing the guidelines in the Library, further copies will be available from the Department.

I understand that the Department of Health and Social Services will shortly be issuing similar guidelines for the Northern Ireland Child Support Agency.

DEFENCE

Royal Navy Ships

11. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has further to reduce the number of Royal Navy ships; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Our plans to move to a smaller and better equipped Navy remain as set out in "Britain's Defence for the 90s". We will move to these force levels while introducing newer and more capable vessels.

Armed Forces Pay

16. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effect the armed forces pay increase announced in the autumn statement will have on morale.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government's policy on pay restraint applies across the public sector without exception. Service personnel recognise that they must play their part, along with other public sector workers, in keeping public expenditure under control and contributing to economic recovery.

Peacekeeping (Europe)

17. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the effect of the projected deployment of infantry in peacekeeping roles in Europe on the availability of forces for other purposes.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am satisfied that the restructuring of the Army currently under way will deliver a balanced force that is well matched to our needs and at a level which is adequate to meet the tasks we ask it to undertake.

Industry (Communications)

18. **Mr. Mark Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to improve his Department's communications with industry.

Mr. Rifkind: We seek continually to develop and improve communication between the Department and

industry. Most recently, we have informed the Defence Trade Associations that, from this year, we shall be publishing annually a list of our approved equipment programmes, as an aid to industry in their forward planning.

Oil Pipelines

19. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to increase the revenue of his Department by allowing the private sector to use the oil pipelines under his control.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Spare capacity on the MoD pipeline system has, for a number of years, been let to the private sector and revenues appropriated in aid. The situation is continuously monitored by our managing agents, the Oil and Pipelines Agency, to ensure maximum returns commensurate with strategic requirements.

Bosnia

20. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the role of British forces in Bosnia.

24. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the latest situation in Bosnia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend gave my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) earlier today.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the number and deployment of United Kingdom troops in Bosnia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are currently some 2,500 British troops deployed to Bosnia Herzegovina as part of the United Nations protection force.

Trident

21. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the life of the Trident submarine programme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Trident force is planned to enter service progressively from the mid-1990s and will provide the United Kingdom's strategic nuclear deterrent capability until well into the next century.

Defence Spending (Scotland)

22. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to visit Scotland to look at the implications there of reductions in defence spending.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend frequently visits Scotland and gives regular consideration to the effects of reductions in the defence programme there, as he does for all parts of the United Kingdom.

Scottish Regiments and Battalions

23. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the review of Scottish regiments and battalions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend gave the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) earlier today.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

25. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with regard to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We take appropriate opportunities to discuss issues related to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty with those countries already party to the treaty, and to urge the few remaining countries who have not acceded to do so.

Defence Contracts

26. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the nationality of all the companies given contracts for small arms and bullets in the last three years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In addition to companies based in the United Kingdom, companies from the following countries have been awarded contracts for small arms and bullets in the last three years:

Austria
Belgium
France
Germany
Norway
Portugal
Sweden
Switzerland
United States of America

27. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the proportion of British defence contracts placed with British companies.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In order to achieve the best value for money, wherever possible, we place contracts by means of open competition. British companies have proved highly competitive to the extent that, over the past five years, we estimate that 91 per cent. of defence equipment expenditure was spent with United Kingdom firms.

28. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for improving the living quarters for armed forces in Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Two hundred new houses are currently under construction throughout the sovereign base areas. These will replace 35-year-old prefabricated married quarters. It is planned to start construction of a further 96 married quarters in the eastern sovereign base areas in 1993. Two old barrack blocks in the eastern sovereign base area are scheduled for demolition and replacement by modern style single living accommodation for 150; construction is planned to start in 1993. In addition, the Defence Land Agent is steadily improving the stock as better properties become available.

Warship Orders

29. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement about future plans for ordering warships and auxiliary vessels.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Further orders for warships and auxiliary vessels are planned including type 23 frigates, a replacement for the type 42 destroyers, mine countermeasures vessels and new amphibious ships. Further orders for support ships are also planned.

Departmental Property

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the properties within the responsibility of his Department which are currently empty in the London borough of Greenwich.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 30 September 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 118 vacant service married quarters in the London borough of Greenwich out of a stock of 646. The majority of these are reserved for families returning from overseas within the next two months while others are undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation.

In addition, 39 married quarters were in the process of being sold, 30 of these to a housing association at a discount in return for nomination rights for personnel who will be leaving the services over the next few years.

ENVIRONMENT

House Renovation Grants

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for changes to the house renovation grant system; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: As I explained to my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) in my reply of 11 January, during recent months it has become clear that the present renovation grant system is placing increasing financial pressure on a growing number of local authorities, mainly because of the demands of mandatory grants. I have concluded that there is a need to take a further thorough look at the operation of the system, in particular to examine whether it offers the best structure for investing the resources that are likely to be available in future years. Accordingly, my Department will shortly be issuing a consultation paper setting out possible options for change. I shall want to consider very carefully the views expressed by local authorities and others in response to this document.

On 17 December 1992, I announced the resources which we are making available in 1993-94 to support the local authorities expenditure on renovation grants, on other aspects of private housing renewal and on dealing with defective housing. I am pleased to say that, taken together with authorities increased spending power receipts next year, these provide for higher total expenditure than in the current financial year.

On 22 December my officials wrote to the local authority associations consulting them on the amendment regulations to give effect to the changes to the renovation grant system that I announced on 16 July 1992, *Official Report*, column 1047. These changes will be implemented from 1 April this year. Among other things, these involve adjustments to the means test which will enable more help to be given to low income applicants, a limit of £50,000 on mandatory renovation grants and revised cost limits for minor works assistance and group repair schemes.

These changes are being made without prejudice to further revision of the system, possibly including adjustments to the means test to target resources even more tightly on the poorest households, that I may decide to make for 1994-95 onwards as a result of the review.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Research and Technology

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to terminate the application of attribution in relation to projects in research and development in the United Kingdom which have been granted EC funding.

Mr. Leigh: The DTI does not normally provide top-up funding to those organisations who have secured European Community R and D funding. EC R and D grants have already been set at a level which takes into account the need for the research projects to be completed successfully. I have no plans to change this policy.

The key need in research and development funding is to continue to avoid duplication, by ensuring that Community programmes complement, and are complemented by, our domestic programmes.

Toy Imports

Mr. Cox: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total value of toys imported into the United Kingdom from China in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: Figures prior to 1988 are not available on a comparable basis due to the revision of the standard international trade classification. The available information is given in the table.

United Kingdom imports of toys[1] from China

	£ million
1988	92·4
1989	136·1
1990	159·1
1991	192·1
Jan-Oct 1992	221·9

[1] Toys are defined as heading 894.2 of the Standard International Trade Classification (revision 3).
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Kazakhstan

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what plans he has to negotiate a trade agreement between the United Kingdom and Kazakhstan;

(2) what plans he has to meet trade delegations from Kazakhstan;

(3) what plans he has to increase the amount of trade between the United Kingdom and Kazakhstan.

Mr. Needham: Trade between the United Kingdom and Kazakhstan comes within Community competence and, under the United Kingdom presidency of the EC, my Department has played a leading role in securing agreement on a mandate for partnership and co-operation agreements with the republics of the former Soviet Union. Negotiations with Kazakhstan on such an agreement are expected to begin early this year. On a bilateral basis

negotiations are now beginning between the United Kingdom and Kazakh authorities on an investment promotion and protection agreement—IPPA.

No officially sponsored trade delegations are expected in the near future but as recently as last November my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade met Vice-President Asanbaev during his visit to London.

My Department intends to build on this visit and on that made by President Nazarbaev in November 1991. The section of the Department that dealt with the former Soviet Union has now been split up and enlarged to provide a separate section on Transcaucasia and central Asia, including Kazakhstan. This new section already provides British companies with information about economic conditions and specific business opportunities and supports them in the market, in which it works closely with the British embassy recently opened in Alma Ata.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Stern: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what discussions his Department has had with the European Commission about lifting the 1998 time limit for the non-fossil fuel obligation—NFFO—as it relates to renewable energy sources;

(2) what representations he has received regarding the impact of planning delays on the viability of waste-to-energy schemes included under the 1991 NFFO renewable order.

(3) how many waste-to-energy schemes are included under the 1991 NFFO renewables order; and how many such schemes have *(a)* received planning consent, (b) failed to receive planning consent and *(c)* not applied for planning consent.

(4) what role renewable energy schemes, including waste-to-energy, have in achieving Government targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Eggar: The Government believe that renewable sources of energy can make an important contribution to limiting greenhouse gas emissions. We are currently working towards a figure of 1,000MW of new renewable energy generating capacity in 2000. The Renewable Energy Advisory Group has recommended that the Government should underwrite a floor level of 1,500MW of new renewables in the United Kingdom by the year 2000. This recommendation is under consideration. The Government are considering targets for the specific use of waste to generate energy against the background of the Government target of recycling 50 per cent. of recyclable household waste by the year 2000.

There are 42 waste to energy schemes including landfill gas, in the 1991 NFFO renewables order. Planning consents for such schemes are a matter for the generators who put them forward.

Representations about the effect of planning delays on waste to energy schemes have been received from Cory Environmental and from the hon. Gentleman. I am unable to comment on Cory's application for consent for a waste to energy station at Belvedere as I am acting in a quasi-judicial capacity.

Discussions are in progress with the European Commission on the question of support of renewables beyond 1998.

European Space Agency

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the British companies carrying out work in connection with the European Space Agency in order of the value of the contract concerned.

Mr. Leigh: On the basis of the most recent information available, the total value of contracts awarded by the European Space Agency—ESA—to United Kingdom companies in the three years between 1989 and 1991 amounted to the equivalent of 323,194,715 ecu—European currency units. More than 100 United Kingdom companies received contracts from ESA in this period and the following table lists those who were awarded contracts with a total value of more than 850,000 ecu.

Value of contracts awarded by the European Space Agency to United Kingdom companies 1989-91

Company	*Value ('000 ecu)*
British Aerospace	126,815
Matra Marconi Space UK	56,438
Serco Ltd.	19,077
Logica Ltd.	11,260
Avica	7,921
Marcol	6,491
Vega Space Systems	5,596
Royal Aerospace Establishment	4,769
Sira Ltd.	4,388
Science Systems	4,244
IGG Component Technology	3,629
Dowty Electronics Ltd.	2,658
Spur Electron Ltd.	2,324
GEC Research Ltd.	2,296
Satellites International Ltd.	2,158
Plessey Ltd.	1,975
STC Technology	1,875
ERA Technology	1,714
Rutherford Appleton Laboratory	1,653
European Space Tribology Lab	1,590
English Electric Valve Co.	1,560
Pilkington	1,521
Ferranti Ltd.	1,356
Martin Baker Aircraft Co.	962
Brunel University	959
COM Dev Europe	870
Other UK companies	44,097
Total	323,195

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on United Kingdom participation in the European Space Agency.

Mr. Leigh: The United Kingdom will continue to participate in the European Space Agency on the present basis. Our most recent initiative within the agency's activities, which I announced on 26 November, 1992, *Official Report*, columns *818-19*, has been to take a major share in a new earth observation programme, Envisat-1, approved by European Space Agency Ministers at their meeting in Granada on 9 and 10 November, 1992.

BAe Space Division

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the effects for the United Kingdom technology base of the Matra/Marconi takeover of the BAe space division.

Mr. Leigh: British Aerospace has discontinued discussions with potential purchasers or partners for its

space systems business since it has not been possible to conclude a satisfactory agreement. In the light of that outcome, the British Aerospace board has decided to retain its space systems interests as a wholly owned subsidiary of British Aerospace plc.

Civil Servants

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list each civil servant in his Department with an outstanding consent to become a non-executive director of a private company; if he will give the date his consent was given, the time period, and the companies concerned; and what policy considerations underlie his decisions on giving or withholding consent.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department arranges non-executive directorships to companies as part of a programme to develop the knowledge and skills of its senior staff and improve understanding between DTI and business. In selecting candidates for specific opportunities account is taken of potential conflicts of interest. The time periods of directorships are flexible and not normally determined when appointments are made. The table lists the DTI civil servants currently holding non-executive directorships under this programme, with details of the dates they started them and the companies concerned.

Name of Official	*Start Date*	*Company*
Cooke, J. A.	September 1990	RTZ Pillar Ltd.
Dart, G. S.	October 1991	Laing Engineering Ltd.
Dobbie, Dr. R. C.	April 1989	Vickers PLC (Marine Engineering Division)
Egginton, Dr. M. A.	October 1991	BOC UK Gases Ltd.
Hagestadt, J. V.	March 1988	British Aerospace Flying College Ltd.
Heathcote, Dr. F. R.	February 1988	Trafalgar House Property Ltd.
Lawrenson, I. J.	March 1990	Marine Technology Directorate Ltd.
Marsh, D. R.	February 1992	Bovis Homes Ltd.
Neville-Rolfe, Miss M. T.	April 1987	Rolls Royce Motor Cars Ltd.
Paton, W.	April 1989	Optimat Ltd.
Wallard, A. J.	June 1986	Rank Cintel Ltd.
O'Shea, M. K.	July 1992	Seven Seas Ltd.

Bureaucracy

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made in removing excessive bureaucracy in Government dealings with businesses, organisations and individuals; and what further steps he proposes to take.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Since the general election, a wide range of deregulatory measures has been taken across Whitehall to reduce administrative and regulatory burdens on business. There has also been action to improve the application of regulation by local authorities and the quality of assessments of the potential costs of compliance which are taken into account in deciding whether and how to regulate. Currently, all Government Departments are examining the body of regulation for which they are responsible, whether this originates at the EC or national level or is applied by local authorities. The work is being driven forward by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade who has appointed my noble Friend Lord Sainsbury to assist him and to help strengthen the business contribution to the deregulation initiative. The aim is to identify further scope for reducing the burden on business significantly through simplification and abolition of regulatory requirements and administrative procedures. Taking into account the concerns and views of businesspeople affected by such regulations, each department is drawing up a plan of action for 1993 and beyond. These plans and progress under the initiative generally will be discussed at a forthcoming seminar to be chaired by the Prime Minister. In addition, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will shortly announce the terms of reference of a scrutiny into the formulation of EC law and its implementation and enforcement in the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the cost to businesses of implementing *(a)* EC directives and *(b)* Government legislation in each year since 1987-88; and what steps he is taking to reduce such costs.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Overall estimates of compliance costs have not been made. Compliance costs of individual measures are made but it is not possible sensibly to aggregate these estimates. A scrutiny will begin shortly into the formulation, implementation and enforcement of EC directives in the United Kingdom with a view to minimising the burden on businesses. All Departments are examining existing legislation with a view to reducing the burdens on businesses through simplification and repeal. In addition, revised guidance has been issued to officials on compliance cost assessments and copies are available in the Library of the House.

Cuba

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what restrictions there are on trade with Cuba *(a)* generally and *(b)* in respect of medical supplies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 December 1992]:* Cuba is on the UK list of destinations for which export licence applications are subject to special licensing procedures. Apart from imports of bananas which are subject to "dollar quota" licensing, there are no UK restrictions on imports from Cuba which are not applied more generally against imports from all sources.

GATT

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with participants in the Uruguay round of the GATT concerning the proposed creation of a multilateral trade organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* The establishment of a multilateral trade organisation was proposed in the draft final act of the GATT Uruguay round, which was tabled in December 1991 by the GATT director general, Mr. Dunkel. It has been the subject of a great deal of discussion between participants in the Uruguay round, including the European Commission who negotiate on behalf of the European Community; the position taken by the Commission has been prepared in discussion with the member states. The MTO was intended to serve as a means of implementing the results of the round and of strengthening the international trading system; it would not in itself alter the rights and obligations under the various Uruguay round agreements. Recently, the United States Government have indicated that they have problems with the constitution of the MTO as proposed, which will require further discussion.

Terrorist Activities

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what plans he has to accept Government responsibility for compensation for terrorist activities on the British mainland on the basis of the rules in force in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will meet the Association of British Insurers to discuss the implications of the withdrawal of insurance cover for terrorist attacks on premises in Great Britain.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* The President of the Board of Trade made an announcement on 21 December that the Government have decided in principle to act as reinsurer of last resort for terrorist attacks against mainland GB non-domestic property and related risks from January 1993. This has enabled insurance companies to continue to offer insurance cover for terrorist attacks, with insurers being able to buy the necessary cover as a separately rated risk. As an insurance solution to the problem has been provided in agreement with the Association of British Insurers, the question of Government compensation does not arise.

Transgenic Animals

Mr. Morley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to ensure that transgenic animals that cannot be kept without adverse effects on their health and welfare will be excluded from patentability under the proposed EC directive on the legal protection of biotechnical inventions.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* The European Commission is expected to revise the draft directive in response to a recent opinion from the European Parliament and I will consider any provisions relating to animal health and welfare which may be proposed. However, patent law is not an appropriate means for controlling activities undertaken in the field of biotechnology. Legislation exists covering the welfare of animals and it is reasonable that inventions which respect that legislation should have the benefit of patent protection.

Foreign Investment

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what future plans his Department has to promote the north-east abroad to foreign investors; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what role his Department plays abroad to make the north-east an attractive proposition for investment by foreign businesses.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* The Department of Trade and Industry through its Invest in Britain Bureau—IBB—promotes all United Kingdom regions to potential overseas inward investors. Overseas, this national promotional activity is carried out at IBB's direction by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The IBB directly funds the overseas inward investment activities of the English regional development organisations, who each have responsibility for promoting their own particular region. In the north-east this is the Northern Development Company. The NDC has offices in 10 countries, solely to promote the north to potential investors. In addition, the DTI's English unit manages offices in Taiwan and Korea which promote all the English regions to potential investors. These arrangements work well and have attracted many inward investors to the north-east.

North-East Aid

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the regional aid measures initiated by his Department to aid the north-east; what is the level of *(a)* Government and *(b)* private investment in each case; and what is the number of jobs created and safeguarded through each scheme.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* Since April 1984, two regional aid schemes run by my Department assisted private investment and were linked to employment. The schemes were regional selective assistance and the revised regional development grants scheme.

Regional selective assistance is available to firms in the assisted areas for investment projects which either create or safeguard employment. Since April 1984 to end December 1992 my Department offered £289 million which was accepted by firms in the north-east in support of projects estimated at £2,865 million. Up to the end December 1992, grant totalling £181 million had been paid in respect of those projects which had created 31,232 jobs and safeguarded a further 8,473.

Under the revised regional development grants scheme which was introduced in development ares in November 1984 and was closed to new applications in March 1988, no grant was paid to undertakings employing more than 200 people unless their projects created employment. To be eligible for grant, projects had to be approved. The amount of capital expenditure that was approved for grant in the north-east was £1,843 million. Since the inception of the scheme up to the end December 1992 grants totalling £193 million had been paid to companies in the north-east and during that time 51,909 jobs had been created.

My Department also provides assistance under the regional enterprise grants scheme aimed at assisting small enterprises with, inter alia, investment projects. Projects supported by this scheme have created employment in the north-east; however, as grant is not directly linked to job creation, employment data are not collected.

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list *(a)* the total number of residential properties owned by his Department, *(b)* the number of such properties which are empty, and *(c)*, *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* My Department has no residential properties.

Companies House

Mr. Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many companies in each of the past five years failed to meet their legal obligations to supply returns to Companies House timeously; and how many of these cases were referred to debt collectors in order to extract penalties;

(2) what process of competitive tendering was engaged in before the Lewis Group was appointed as debt collectors to Companies House; and to what extent payments by Companies House to the Lewis Group are on a commission basis.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the chief executive of Companies House executive agency for which my Department is responsible. I have therefore asked Mr. David Durham to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from David Durham to Mr. Brian Wilson, dated 6 January 1993:

You recently tabled two Parliamentary Questions to the President of the Board of Trade, asking him: (1) how many companies in each of the past five years failed to meet their legal obligations to supply returns to Companies House timeously; and how many of these cases were referred to debt collectors in order to extract penalties: (2) what process of competitive tendering was engaged before the Lewis Group were appointed as debt collectors to Companies House; and to what extent payments by Companies House to the Lewis Group are on a commission basis. Following the answer given by Mr. Hamilton, I am replying as Chief Executive of Companies House.

Companies House is responsible for ensuring that both annual returns and annual accounts are filed within the time limits set out in the Companies Act. Because companies are continually filing throughout the year it is not possible to give figures on how many companies filed late during any particular year. It is possible to give the number of companies who have not filed either their annual returns or annual accounts, or both, on 30 June for the last five years. It is on this date that Companies House' performance against the compliance target set by Ministers is measured.

	Both	*Annual Returns*	*Annual Accounts*
30 June 1992	146,000	101,000	80,000
30 June 1991	214,000	138,000	134,000
30 June 1990	187,000	100,000	142,000
30 June 1989	211,000	126,000	154,000
30 June 1988	183,000	103,000	134,000

These companies were not referred to debt collectors as no penalties were charged prior to July 1992.

Penalties for the late filing of accounts were introduced on 2 July 1992 and since that date 51,736 penalties have been levied of which 12,023 have been referred to the Lewis Group as official recovery agents for Companies House.

A number of firms were invited to tender for assisting Companies House in the collection of late filing penalties revenue. DTI standard procedures were followed in the competitive tendering process and the Lewis Group were finally selected on the basis that having met all the criteria laid down they also offered the best value for money.

As you are probably aware it is not customary to reveal payments to individual contractors following a competitive tender procedure on grounds of commercial confidentiality, however, Lewis Group are paid entirely on a commission basis.

SCOTLAND

Food and Drink

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how he intends to take forward the initiative announced at the 1992 Royal Highland Show to establish a forum for the industry and public agencies to discuss the generic promotion of Scottish food and drink.

Sir Hector Monro: Scottish Office officials have consulted representatives of food and drink producers and there has been a widespread welcome for this initiative. I have therefore decided to create a Scottish Food Strategy Group, with the following general terms of reference:

"To advise on opportunities for enhancing the performance of the Scottish food and drink industry, particularly in overseas markets, and with regard to the resources available to the public agencies."

As one of its early tasks, I am asking the group to consider the detailed case for developing a single Scottish quality mark for food and drink and to report to me with its recommendations.

I am glad that Mr. James Millar, Chairman of William Low plc, has agreed to chair the group. Other members, who between them share extensive knowledge and experience on the range of issues relevant to the group's work, are:

Mr. Stanley Bernard, Managing Director, Sco-Fro Ltd.

Miss Ann Foster, Director, Scottish Consumer Council.

Mr. David Hall, Managing Director, Halls of Broxburn.

Mr. Adam McCartney, Managing Director, Scottish Pride Quality Dairy Foods.

Mr. Maitland Mackie, Vice-President, National Farmers' Union of Scotland, and Managing Director, Mackie's Quality Farm Foods.

Mr. Donald Morrison, soft fruit farmer, Forfar.

Mr. Brian Simpson, Chief Executive, Scotch Quality Beef and Lamb Association.

Mr. James N. Walker, Director, Walkers Shortbread Ltd.

Mr. John Whitehead, Managing Director, Top Hat Holdings Ltd.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise and Food From Britain will provide assessors to the group and the secretariat will be provided by the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department.

Economy

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the growth in GNP for the Scottish economy for 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* The Government do not publish forecasts of GNP growth in any of the countries or regions of the United Kingdom, including Scotland.

For reference, the Chancellor's autumn statement included a forecast growth of 1 per cent. in United Kingdom GDP in 1993. I am confident that Scotland will share in this economic upturn.

Detailed projections of the Scottish economy are, of course, made by a number of independent economic consultants.

Drugs

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total general practitioner drug budget for each year since 1989-90 and projected for 1992-93; and what proportion of the budget was spent on each standard age group of patients.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1992]*: The following are the costs of drugs dispensed each year since 1989-90 and projected for 1992-93. These figures include all presciptions dispensed by community pharmaceutical services: over 99 per cent. of the costs relates to prescribing by general practitioners. It is not possible to identify the proportion of the budget spent on each standard age group of patients.

	£ million
1989-90	233·4
1990-91	257·1
1991-92	288·9
[1]1992-93	323·5

[1] Projected.

European Regional Development Fund

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the receipts from the European Community's regional development fund have been awarded to *(a)* infrastructure projects undertaken by regional and island councils, *(b)* infrastructure projects carried out by the state, *(c)* industrial concerns and *(d)* other programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 December 1992]*: Since 1975 Scotland has obtained assistance from the European regional development fund under a variety of measures and programmes. Not all the records are held centrally, most are in manual form, and none is categorised in the manner set out in the hon. Gentleman's question. Accordingly, the information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Hospitals, Angus

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects Tayside health board to announce its plans for the future of *(a)* Stracathro hospital, *(b)* Arbroath infirmary and *(c)* other hospital services in Angus.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 December 1992]*: Tayside health board is currently in the process of reviewing its acute services. Options will be considered by the health board in February 1993 and there will then be a period of public consultation. No decisions will be taken about the future of Stracathro hospital, Arbroath infirmary or any other hospital service in Angus, until public consultation is complete.

Skye Bridge

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest estimate of the cost to public funds of the proposed Skye bridge and its approaches.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 January 1993]*: The estimate of the cost to public funds of the Skye bridge and its approaches up to the end of 1995 is £7·75 million at June 1988 prices, the price base on which tenders were received. The estimate includes the costs of the approach roads, incorporating changes as a result of the public local inquiry held in January and February last year, and consultants' fees.

Ferry Services

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with local authorities in the east of Scotland on the provision of a roll-on-roll-off ferry service between Scotland and mainland Europe.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 January 1993]*: None.

Structural Fund

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken within the Council of Ministers to secure a change in the criteria for allocation of structural funds under objective 1 to ensure that the highlands and islands of Scotland are eligible for assistance.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 December 1992]*: The Edinburgh European Council decided that there should be no change in the criteria for establishing objective 1 areas and agreed that special cases would also be considered where areas did not meet the strict gross domestic product test. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made clear that the Government will be arguing for the inclusion of the highlands and islands in the list of objective 1 areas.

Scottish Enterprise

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to implement review procedures within Scottish Enterprise to ensure that board members who also lead consultancy firms are not favoured in the awarding of consultancy contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 December 1992]*: There are already in place within Scottish Enterprise procedures for ensuring that board members do not become involved in the consideration of matters in which they have a financial or commercial interest. These procedures, the rigorous operation of which is supported by the board, apply to the award of consultancy and similar contracts as well as to other business.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the producers' and dairy trades' respective proportionate shares of final retail

values, milk prices, for each milk marketing board and their trade counterparts throughout the United Kingdom for each year since 1974.

Mr. Gummer: It is not possible to provide a full reply in the form requested. The Government ceased setting maximum retail prices for milk in 1981 and 1984 for Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom respectively. Since then, retail pricing has been a matter for dairy companies and retailers.

The average net prices paid to producers by each milk marketing board, each board's average net return for milk sold by it for human liquid consumption and the maximum retail prices for the relevant years are as follows:

Table 1
Wholesale producers' average net price (pence per litre)

Milk marketing year April to March	England and Wales Board	Scottish Board	Aberdeen and District Board	North of Scotland Board	Northern Ireland Board
1974-75	6·362	6·390	6·300	6·379	5·959
1975-76	7·956	7·880	7·867	7·905	7·628
1976-77	9·400	9·450	9·324	9·487	9·010
1977-78	9·985	9·930	9·985	10·275	9·640
1978-79	10·587	10·590	10·815	10·424	10·217
1979-80	11·560	11·800	11·907	11·684	11·361
1980-81	12·701	13·200	13·257	13·118	11·413
1981-82	13·732	14·400	14·044	13·978	12·954
1982-83	14·778	15·021	15·023	14·121	14·100
1983-84	14·666	15·058	15·326	14·587	14·266
1984-85	14·574	15·284	14·947	14·515	13·926
1985-86	15·415	16·194	15·609	15·502	14·423
1986-87	15·805	16·500	15·955	15·913	14·720
1987-88	16·301	17·575	16·705	16·719	15·127
1988-89	17·663	18·336	18·114	18·102	16·532
1989-90	18·937	20·112	19·672	19·819	17·873
1990-91	18·943	20·143	19·169	18·954	16·568
1991-92	19·716	20·466	19·847	19·279	17·914

Source: "UK Diary Facts and Figures" published by the Federation of United Kingdom Milk Marketing Boards.

Table 2
Milk Marketing Boards' average net returns for milk sold by them for human consumption (pence per litre)

Milk marketing year April to March	England and Wales Board	Scottish Board	Aberdeen and District Board	North of Scotland Board	Northern Ireland Board
1974-75	5·370	5·262	5·224	5·117	5·098
1975-76	5·938	5·592	5·802	5·862	5·602
1976-77	8·367	8·268	8·198	8·197	8·256
1977-78	11·283	11·208	11·099	11·127	10·826
1978-79	12·464	12·467	12·456	12·442	12·192
1979-80	13·589	13·600	13·594	13·560	13·318
1980-81	15·334	15·718	15·698	15·673	15·476
1981-82	16·391	17·117	17·097	17·057	16·596
1982-83	17·589	18·187	18·167	18·086	17·829
1983-84	17·771	18·551	18·540	18·560	18·020
1984-85	18·323	18·925	18·911	18·914	18·552
1985-86	19·176	19·823	19·841	19·812	19·388
1986-87	19·835	20·475	20·472	20·469	20·054
1987-88	20·731	21·348	21·347	21·333	20·907
1988-89	21·287	21·892	21·904	21·889	21·538
1989-90	22·842	23·199	23·209	23·285	22·453
1990-91	23·914	24·111	24·043	24·174	23·585
1991-92	24·759	24·745	24·752	24·745	24·674

Source: "UK Dairy Facts and Figures" published by the Federation of United Kingdom Milk Marketing Boards.

The figures for Northern Ireland are shown net of a consumer subsidy which applied from 1981 to 1988. The Northern Ireland figures for 1981-82 and 1982-83 were obtained from the Northern Ireland Milk Marketing Board.

Table 3
Maximum retail price for liquid milk (pence per litre)

Calender Year	Maximum retail price[1]
1974	8·799
1975	14·958
1976	16·718
1977	20·238
1978	23·757
1979	26·397
1980	29·916
1981	32·556
1982	36·956
1983	36·956
1984	38·715

[1] Retail price control of milk ended in Scotland on 30 September 1981 and in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on 31 December 1984.

All figures listed are year end prices.

Source: "UK Dairy Facts and Figures" published by the Federation of United Kingdom Milk Marketing Boards.

Hill Farmers

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in full the autumn review of hill farming in less-favoured areas.

Mr. Curry: I have placed in the Library copies of the tables dealing with indices of hill farm income, market prices, hill livestock compensatory allowance expenditure and animal numbers which were discussed with the farming unions in the context of the autumn review, along with supplementary tables containing additional background information. Definition of the terms relating to income used in these tables are contained in appendix 3 to "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom", 1992 edition, a copy of which is also in the Library of the House.

Potatoes

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he is taking to ensure that potato growers and consumers in the United Kingdom will be assured of a continuing sufficient supply of British potatoes in the event of abolition of the Potato Marketing Board.

Mr. Curry: The Government are consulting widely on the recently published proposals for an EC potato regime which as drafted do not make provision for the area—quota—controls and support-buying arrangements of our potato marketing scheme. We have long made it clear that our objectives in the light of any proposals for an EC regime in potatoes would be a level playing field of potato production throughout Europe; that the United Kingdom industry can meet all the needs of the market; that the United Kingdom industry can contribute to the export drive; that decisions are based clearly on the best scientific and technical knowledge available. It is also important that we create a climate favourable to investment in the United Kingdom by food processing and manufacturing companies.

Nitrates

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest assessment of the effect of overuse of agricultural nitrates; and what resources his Ministry is putting into research on lower nitrate use.

Mr. Soames: The Ministry operates various programmes to encourage sensible use of nitrogen fertilisers and to monitor the effects of such fertilisers on the environment. Our current assessment is set out at length in the booklet "Solving the Nitrate Problem" which is available in the Library of the House. The findings in the booklet are based in part on the R and D programme instituted by the Ministry to identify ways of reducing nitrate leaching from agriculture. In 1992-93 we are spending £6·9 million on this programme.

Overgrazing

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his assessment of the damage done to upland landscapes and wildlife caused by overgrazing; and if he will reconsider switching payment of grants to farmers to the area of land farmed rather than the number of sheep.

Mr. Curry: Conservation of the traditional upland environment is dependent upon the continuation of extensive livestock farming. Overgrazing of certain types of land can however result in localised environmental damage. The Government have announced a series of targeted measures to deal with this. A switch to paying hill livestock subsidies on an area basis would be hugely disruptive with an uncertain impact on the environment. It would also be contrary to European Community law.

Aflatoxins

Mr. Hague: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to introduce controls of aflatoxins in certain products.

Mr. Soames: Regulations introducing limits on nuts, dried figs and their products were laid before Parliament on 18 December 1992 and came into effect on 31 December 1992. The regulations, which are based on advice from the Food Advisory Committee, replace the general controls operated under the Food Safety Act. The main provisions of the regulations are: a statutory limit of 4μg/kg total aflatoxins in supplies for sale for human consumption; a statutory limit of 10μg/kg total aflatoxins in produce imported from third countries for further processing before human consumption.

EMPLOYMENT

Offshore Installations (Standby Vessels)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she is satisfied that all the standby vessels supporting oil and gas installations fully comply with the code in the assessment of the suitability of standby vessels attending offshore installations; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The joint Health and Safety Executive and Department of Transport code on the assessment of the suitability of standby vessels attending offshore installations came fully into effect on 1 January 1993. At that date, all standby vessels attending offshore installations had been certificated as complying with the code, full compliance will be expected before any certificate is issued in the future.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Yugoslavia

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had held with UN representatives with regard to the increase of British troops currently committed in Yugoslavia, or with regard to extending the area of operations for such British troops.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No decision has been taken on the reinforcement of the British forces in former Yugoslavia, but the UN has been made aware that it is under consideration. We have no plans at this time to extend the area of operations of the British forces in former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what efforts were

made by Her Majesty's Government to promote balanced media reporting during the recent elections in Yugoslavia, and to monitor the way in which they were run.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Westminster Foundation for Democracy, with our encouragement, provided £35,000 as half the cost of independent satellite broadcasts during the run-up and immediate aftermath of the elections, as well as a contribution to the costs of a monitoring team.

EC Presidency

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the total cost to United Kingdom funds of the United Kingdom Presidency of the EC.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The main costs of the United Kingdom presidency were borne by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office vote. Including the Birmingham and Edinburgh European Councils and the London conference on Yugoslavia, they are expected to total around £15.8 million.

Other Government Departments and public sector bodies such as the police have also incurred expenditure on the presidency. Precise figures on their costs are not available.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom presidency.

Mr. Hurd: Yes. I have placed in the Library a pamphlet produced by the Foreign and Commonwealth office which gives details of the main items of business covered during the United Kingdom presidency of the Community, from July to December 1992. A copy has been sent to each Member of Parliament.

Treaty on European Union

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which areas of action or competence of the proposed European union incorporated in the draft treaty or treaties tabled by the Dutch presidency and discussed by the Council of Ministers on 30 September 1991 were not included in the treaty on European union signed at Maastricht in December 1991.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The draft treaty tabled by the Dutch presidency in September 1991 differed from that signed at Maastricht essentially in including all areas of co-operation within amendments to the treaty of Rome and thus within Community competence. For example, the Dutch draft made immigration and foreign and security policies matters within Community competence rather than intergovernmental as under the Maastricht treaty.

Croatia

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by what means and at which date and location the Council of Ministers of the European Community determined policy in respect of the recognition of Croatia; and when and by what means such recognition was signified by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Council of Ministers of the European Community, meeting in Brussels on 15 January 1992, decided that Croatia should be recognised. The Prime Minister wrote to President Tudjman later that day recording the British Government's recognition of Croatia.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 21 December 1992.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I represented the United Kingdom at the Foreign Affairs Council on 21 December. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry was present for the discussion of trade issues.

The Council discussed follow-up to the Edinburgh European Council. On high definition television—HDTV—Ministers held a short discussion on a Commission proposal for a five-year action plan to support the development of HDTV. No decisions were taken and the subject was remitted for further work under the Danish presidency. On enlargement of the Community, Ministers noted that negotiations with Austria, Sweden and Finland would open formally on 1 February.

The Council expressed the Community's willingness to enter into negotiations with EFTA member states on the changes necessary to the European economic area agreement after the negative vote in the Swiss referendum. The Council invited the Commission to submit as soon as possible a recommendation for the opening of these negotiations.

The Council continued discussion of a Commission proposal to change the decision-making procedures for Community anti-dumping and other commercial defence measures, and to establish common rules for imports of goods from third countries. The Council also discussed the export regimes for goods which have both civil and military uses. Pending agreement on the draft regulation on export controls on these dual-use goods and technologies, member states agreed the nature of interim controls which would apply to intra-Community trade in such goods from 1 January.

When the Council discussed the court of first instance, one member state maintained its reserve on the proposed transfer of dumping and subsidy cases from the European Court of Justice to the court of first instance. The Council therefore decided to send the issue back to the Committee of Permanent Representatives for early discussion under the Danish presidency.

Recent developments in the Yugoslav crisis were discussed, including the enforcement of the no-fly zone over Bosnia, Kosovo, implementation of the United Nations and EC sanctions regimes and EDC economic assistance to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The Commission presented a draft negotiating mandate for a new partnership agreement with Morocco. Detailed discussion will now take place under the Danish presidency.

In the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council there was a conference of representatives of member states to agree the nomination of new Commissioners.

An EC/Cyprus Association Council also took place in the margins of the Council.

Visa Applications

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration has been given to setting up an office in Ljubljana, Slovenia, to deal with settlement and visa applications.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have no plans at the moment to set up a visa section at the embassy in Ljubljana, but we are keeping the possibility under review. Nationals of Slovenia travelling on national passports do not require visas for the United Kingdom.

Western European Union

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British women employed by the Western European Union hold senior positions within that organisation; and if he will list those positions.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Three British women hold senior positions within the Western European Union. One is head of the private office of the president of the Western European Union Parliamentary Assembly; one is a linguist in the office of the clerk of the Assembly; and one is a linguist in the Western European Union secretariat.

India

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has *(a)* received and *(b)* made concerning the religious troubles in India.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received a number of representations about events in India following the destruction of the Babri mosque on 6 December. We have condemned those responsible for provoking the violence and supported the Indian Government's appeal for calm. We also support the principle of protecting religious minorities and have urged Hindu and Muslim communities everywhere to show restraint and to avoid further provocations or reprisals.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from which overseas British posts former Yugoslavia nationals are able to apply for visas to visit the United Kingdom; what is the average delay at each post in interviewing those applying for visas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Former Yugoslavia nationals can apply at any British visa-issuing post overseas. Straightforward visitor visa applications are processed within 24 hours of receipt. The method of recording statistics at posts worldwide does not allow us to establish the average waiting time at posts for applicants from the former Yugoslavia who are required to attend for interview.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Cultural Property

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he proposes to sign the 1970 UNESCO convention on the means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property; how many countries have signed the aforementioned convention; and if he will list them.

Mr. Key: I have been asked to reply.

Her Majesty's Government have no plans to ratify the 1970 UNESCO convention on the means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property. The 76 contracting states are:

Algeria
Angola
Argentina
Australia
Bangladesh
Belarus
Belize
Bolivia
Brazil
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Cambodia
Cameroon
Canada
Central African Republic
China (People's Republic of)
Columbia
Cote D'Ivoire
Croatia (Republic of)[1]
Cuba
Cyprus
Czechoslovakia
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Georgia (Republic of)[2]
Greece
Grenada
Guatemala
Guinea
Honduras
Hungary
India
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Iraq
Italy
Jordan
Kuwait
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Madagascar
Mali
Mauritania
Mauritius
Mexico
Mongolia
Nepal
Nicaragua
Niger
Nigeria
Oman
Pakistan
Panama
Peru
Poland
Portugal
Qatar
Republic of Korea
Russian Federation[3]
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Slovinia (Republic of)[4]
Spain
Sri Lanka
Syrian Arab Republic
Tadjikistan (Republic of)[5]
Tunisia

Turkey
Ukraine
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Uruguay
Yugoslavia
Zaire
Zambia

[1] This State lodged a notification of succession on 1 July 1992, by which it stated that it was bound by the Convention which Yugoslavia ratified on 3 October 1972.

[2] This State lodged a notification of succession on 4 November 1992, by which it stated that it was bound by the Convention that the USSR ratified on 28 April 1988.

[3] The instrument of ratification was deposited by the USSR on 28 April 1988. The Director-General has been informed that the Russian Federation would continue the participation of the USSR in UNESCO Conventions.

[4] This State lodged a notification of succession on 28 October 1992, by which it stated that it was bound by the Convention which Yugoslavia ratified on 3 October 1972.

[5] This State lodged a notification of succession on 8 November 1992, by which it stated that it was bound by the Convention that the USSR ratified on 28 April 1988.

Note: The German Democratic Republic accepted the Convention on 16 January 1974. However, on the occasion of the unification of the two German States, it was agreed upon that the united Germany would determine its position with regard to the international treaties adopted by the German Democratic Republic. Germany has not made its position known concerning this Convention.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

New Parliamentary Building

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the modified plans and designs of the phase 2 new parliamentary building to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held from Monday 18 January to Friday 22 January.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Somalia

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that British aid to Somalia is reaching the people for whom it is intended.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In order to help ensure that British humanitarian assistance to Somalia reaches those in need, it is channelled through United Nations agencies, British and international non-governmental organisations. Its delivery has been severely constrained by lack of security. We have strongly supported United Nations efforts to improve the security situation through the deployment of United Nations arrmed guards. We also try to ensure that practical arrangements made for delivery of aid to Somalia take full account of local security situations.

We shall take full advantage of any new security arrangements agreed by the United Nations to help the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 13 January 1993

HOME DEPARTMENT

Probation Service

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to ensure that the probation service can respond to the employment needs of offenders under its supervision.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 11 January, at column *600*.

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research he has conducted into the economic benefits to the United Kingdom of the arrival of the migrant communities in the last 20 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Department has not undertaken any research on this subject.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to commission research into the economic effects of the migrant communities on the United Kingdom economy.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have no proposals to commission research on this subject.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when instructions were sent to the post in Islamabad to issue entry clearance to Mr. Jahir Mahmood—Ref. TH/41452/91—to join his wife in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 17 December 1992]:* Following the immigration appeal tribunal's refusal on 24 November 1992 of an application for leave to appeal against the adjudicator's decision to allow Mr. Mahmood's appeal, instructions to issue an entry clearance were sent on 10 December 1992 to the entry clearance officer in Islamabad. These instructions were repeated on 7 January 1993 when it was discovered that the earlier papers had not then reached the entry clearance officer.

Passport Control

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about preliminary passport checks conducted on the tarmac as passengers step off the plane at Heathrow airport; *(a)* how long this system has been in operation and *(b)* how extensive it is; and to what extent he proposes to institute the scheme at other airports.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Heathrow and Gatwick airport immigration officers attend some arriving aircraft to check for any passengers who may seek entry without proper documents. This is to ensure that the flight on which such a passenger arrives is identified and that any charge which may arise under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 is correctly attributed. Such checks are conducted only infrequently at other airports. They have been conducted for this purpose since 1987, although it has long been the practice for immigration officers to observe the arrival of selected flights.

HEALTH

Electoral Registration

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many adults appear on the electoral register in each of the London boroughs.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the table.

Local Government Electors on the 1992 Electoral Register

Area	*Total electors excluding attainers (ie persons aged 18 and over on 16 February 1992)*
Greater London	4,863,555
London boroughs	
City of London	3,847
Barking and Dagenham	109,885
Barnet	209,331
Bexley	165,901
Brent	167,922
Bromley	227,032
Camden	122,302
Croydon	241,617
Ealing	187,206
Enfield	194,367
Greenwich	155,363
Hackney	112,400
Hammersmith and Fulham	99,579
Haringey	141,445
Harrow	143,953
Havering	178,188
Hillingdon	169,955
Hounslow	151,859
Islington	111,510
Kensington and Chelsea	84,262
Kingston upon Thames	93,173
Lambeth	171,364
Lewisham	173,700
Merton	125,246
Newham	156,919
Redbridge	169,793
Richmond upon Thames	115,593
Southwark	173,377
Sutton	125,781
Tower Hamlets	112,166
Waltham Forest	161,467
Wandsworth	197,799
City of Westminster	109,253

Source: Population Estimates Unit, OPCS.

Mental Illness

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with the Royal College of Psychiatrists about new legal provisions for mentally ill people in the community; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to seek to amend the Mental Health Act 1983; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Royal College of Psychiatrists has recommended that the Mental Health Act 1983 should be amended to incorporate a community supervision order. The college proposes that this should apply to a small group of patients who are repeatedly admitted to hospital under sections 3 or 37 of the Mental Health Act 1983 and who require long-term support and supervision in the community, but are known to have a history of failing to cooperate with treatment.

I welcome the college's proposals as a constructive contribution to the debate about how mentally ill people can most effectively be helped and looked after in the community. Services for the mentally ill in the community have expanded rapidly in recent years and they represent an increasing proportion of the £2 billion budget annually spent on the mentally ill by health and social services departments. But we do need to address, as a priority, whether we are doing enough to ensure that these vulnerable people keep in contact with the services available.

I have recently had discussions on this subject with the college and with a number of other professional and voluntary organisations. I have asked my officials to consider urgently, in the light of the college's proposals, whether new legal powers are needed to ensure that mentally ill people in the community get the care they need, whether the present legal powers in the 1983 Mental Health Act are being used as effectively as they can be, and what action could be taken in advance of any new legislation to ensure that they are.

This work will be taken forward urgently by a small departmental team. It will take full account of the views which outside interests have expressed to me. They and others concerned with services for mentally ill people will be consulted about the work as it develops. My officials will be keeping in close touch with the other Departments concerned including those in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The team will be reporting regularly to Ministers and I am asking them to complete their work within six months.

British Medical Association

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations she has had with, and what representations from, the British Medical Association concerning hospital bed closures and cancelling operating sessions; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department holds regular meetings with professional representative bodies, including the British Medical Association and the royal colleges. The problems being experienced by a minority of hospitals in scheduling their contracted work evenly over the financial year have been raised recently. Where such problems are occurring they are being resolved by local managers with help, where necessary, from their regional health authority.

Computer Games

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will institute a research programme into photosensitive epilepsy in children and the effects of computer games as trigger mechanisms.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no plans for a research programme into photosensitive epilepsy in children. There is a well-established association between certain types of flashing light and epileptic seizures in children known to have photosensitive epilepsy or potential sufferers who for a variety of reasons have not yet been identified. The need for specific action in relation to the information and advice available to users of computer games is a matter for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

ENVIRONMENT

Tree Preservation Orders

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for making tree preservation orders more effective; and what consultations he has had to consider tougher penalties for those who flout tree preservation orders.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* The system of tree preservation legislation has proved its value over the years. However, we are reviewing its general effectiveness and last year introduced substantially increased penalties for contravention of tree preservation orders. On summary conviction, the maximum fine for felling, uprooting or destroying a protected tree is now £20,000, and in determining the fine to be imposed magistrates are required to have regard to the financial benefits which may accrue to the offender in consequence of the offence.

Acid Rain

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sites of special scientific interest damaged by acid rain in the latest year for which figures are available and give the hectarage of each site of special scientific interest affected.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 12 January 1993]:* The information is not available in the form requested. However, a recent study identified 46 sites of special scientific interest in England as being affected to some degree by acid rain. Details of freshwaters affected by acid rain are set out in the report Rimes C. (1992), "Freshwater acidification on SSSIs in Great Britain. I Overview and II England"—English nature science volumes 1 and 2. A copy of this report has been placed in the Library of the House.

Heritage Coasts

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many kilometres of coast in England have been designated as heritage coasts; and what proportion this is of the total coastline.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* Since 1973, some 1,450 km of the English and Welsh coastline has been defined as heritage coast. This is approximately one third of the coastline of England and Wales.

TRANSPORT

Speed Limits

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has completed his review of the criteria for setting speed limits; and when he expects to publish his policy document on speed.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We have today published a new circular—roads 1/93—on the criteria for setting speed limits, which offers greater flexibility in setting speed limits, and a policy document "Killing Speed and Saving Lives". Both these documents make a significant contribution to the process of reducing actual speeds and casualties. Copies of both have been placed in the Library of the House.

Public Transport (Capital Works)

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what allocations will be made from his Department in 1993-94 to allow local authorities to undertake public transport capital works.

Mr. Freeman: In addition to the allocations for measures to promote bus use announced on 15 December, *Official Report* columns *134-35*, we shall be making available £119·7 million for local authority public transport capital works in 1993-94.

The allocations are as follows.

Public transport capital works 1993-94: local authority

	Annual capital guidelines £ million	*Supplementary credit approvals £ million*	*Grant (estimated) £ million*
Passenger transport authorities			
Greater Manchester	4·165	0·840	
Merseyside	8·865	6·113	
South Yorkshire	26·940	13·000	14·500
Tyne and Wear	2·085	2·073	
West Midlands	2·000	3·007	
West Yorkshire	1·600	25·543	
Metropolitan district councils			
Manchester		0·750	
County councils			
Avon	0·150		
Cambridgeshire	0·075		
Cornwall	0·135		
Devon	0·005		
Essex	0·018		
Gloucestershire	0·015		
Kent		1·000	
Hampshire	0·100		
Humberside	0·020		
Lancashire		0·069	
Leicestershire/Derbyshire jointly	1·967	1·966	2·000
North Yorkshire	0·057		
Nottinghamshire		0·367	
Oxfordshire	0·020		
Surrey		0·250	
Warwickshire	0·035		
	48·252	54·978	16·500

Baggage Reconciliation

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy over implementation of the 1993 EC baggage reconciliation directives.

Mr. Steven Norris *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* Council regulation (EEC) No. 3925/91 and Commission regulation (EEC) No. 1823/92 concern the elimination of Customs controls and formalities applicable to the cabin and hold baggage of persons taking an intra-Community flight or making an intra-Community sea crossing. One of the detailed rules laid down in the Commission regulation was that hold baggage registered in a Community airport was to be identified by means of a green edged tag with specified technical characteristics. The Commission regulation also required each member state to provide the Commission with a list of airports approved for air traffic with third countries—"international community airports". The regulations are binding in their entirety and are directly applicable in all member states. They applied from 1 January 1993.

The Commission discussed its detailed proposals about baggage tags with the International Air Transport Association and other organisations, and Customs and Excise and my Department discussed the implementation of the rule with United Kingdom airlines and airports. Customs and Excise have notified the Commission of 34 international Community airports in the United Kingdom and have subsequently added Ronaldsway, Isle of Man, to the list. My Department has recently written to all airlines operating in the United Kingdom to remind them of the baggage tagging requirement.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Scottish Arts Council

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the budget of the Scottish Arts Council in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Brooke: The Scottish Arts Council's grants from the Arts Council of Great Britain were £19,693,000 and £22,691,000 in 1991-92 and 1992-93 respectively. In addition to these grants, the Scottish Arts Council received further income, from various sources, of £183,000 in 1991-92 and £149,000 in 1992-93.

Radio Authority Licences

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many licences the Radio Authority has issued since they were established; and how far the undertakings invested in them have been complied with.

Mr. Brooke: By 11 January 1993, the Radio Authority had awarded two licences for national services, 25 local licences, 419 restricted service licences, eight licences for licensable sound programme services and 11 satellite licences. The authority also licensed 126 local radio services which had earlier operated under contract to the Independent Broadcasting Authority.

The authority considers all written complaints about programming, advertising and transmission aspects of independent radio services and publishes a quarterly complaints bulletin.

Royal Scottish Academy

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what lessons from the Windsor castle fire he has transmitted to the authorities of the Royal Scottish Academy.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* None, so far. As I told the House on 7 December, *Official Report*, column *579*, in the light of the fire at Windsor castle I am setting up an inquiry to assess the adequacy of fire protection measures for the royal palaces for which my Department has a financial responsibility. The report of the inquiry will be published and I shall ensure that it is made widely available.

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list *(a)* the total number of residential properties owned by his Department, *(b)* the number of such properties which are empty and *(c)*, *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* (a) My Department manages 156 residential properties of which 12 are owned. (b) Eight of the owned properties are empty while awaiting remodelling and renovation works. (c) 66 per cent. of the owned properties are unoccupied.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Kasakhstan

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the value of trade between the United Kingdom and Kasakhstan; and what is his estimate of the value of trade between each EC member state and Kasakhstan.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

EC trade with Kasakhstan January to June 1992

	Exports £000s	*Imports £000s*
Belgium/Luxembourg	1,461	710
Denmark	625	6
France	n.a.	n.a.
Germany	5,078	2,473
Greece	n.a.	n.a.
Italy	n.a.	n.a.
Netherlands	124	0
Portugal	n.a.	n.a.
Spain	0	109
United Kingdom	n.a.	n.a.
EC Total	7,289	3,298

Source: Eurostat: External Trade and Balance of Payments.
Note: Imports on a CIF basis, Exports FOB.
Totals may not equal sum of components due to rounding.

Only a limited number of countries report separately trade with the former Soviet republics. Prior to January 1992, trade with Kasakhstan was reported as trade with the former Soviet Union as a whole.

The United Kingdom will be collecting data on trade with Kasakhstan from January 1993.

Data are supplied on an ecu basis and have been converted into pounds sterling.

Phosphate

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what importation of phosphate was undertaken by the United Kingdom annually for each year since 1982.

Mr. Needham: Comprehensive statistics on the imports of phosphates are not available. Imports of phosphate are recorded under a large number of categories according to the type of phosphate and its function. The table gives the total figures for the imports of the three largest groups of phosphates: superphosphates, diammonium phosphate and monoammonium phosphate, for each year since 1982.

Imports of phosphates into the United Kingdom

Year	*Metric tonnes*	*£'000s*
1982	182,496	21,596
1983	260,878	30,135
1984	282,746	38,386
1985	309,831	42,010
1986	343,414	39,432
1987	386,127	41,883
1988	403,452	46,289
1989	467,591	57,378
1990	561,955	58,570
1991	450,929	48,037
1992[1]	461,611	44,407

[1] Excludes figures for December 1992.

Note: Phosphates have been defined as the following items of the Standard International Trade Classification: 562.22, 562.93 and 562.94.

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics for United Kingdom.

New Business Development

Mr. Elletson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of the relative potential for new business development by British firms in each of the countries of the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe; and what comparisons he has made with similar assessments of other regions of the world.

Mr. Needham: Within the whole area to which my hon. Friend refers we take the view that the best prospects for British exporters in most sectors other than oil and gas are to be found in Poland, Hungary and the Czech lands, although worthwhile opportunities are also being found in most of the other markets. In oil and gas we see the best prospects in Kasakhstan, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation. Within the world as a whole we see the best all-round prospects in western Europe, north America and Asian parts of the Pacific rim.

Mr. Elletson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures his Department is taking to encourage British firms to take the opportunities for new business developments in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe.

Mr. Needham: My Department provides a comprehensive range of services to assist United Kingdom exporters and investors who are interested in the region, including support for outward missions—sometimes led ministerially—and participation in overseas trade fairs as well as the provision of general and specific information about the markets and opportunities. Information about export and consultancy projects under bilateral, EC and multilateral funded assistance programmes is also available and my Department encourages United Kingdom companies to exploit such opportunities.

These services are available from the former Soviet Union, central and east Europe branch of my Department whose resources have been increased in response to the growing interest in these markets. Similarly, the British Overseas Trade Board's area advisory group, the East European Trade Council, has also had its resources augmented.

Mr. Elletson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what importance his Department attaches to the further development of commercial and economic relations with the countries of the Pacific rim; and what measures his Department is taking to encourage British firms to develop new business there.

Mr. Needham: The Asia Pacific rim, like Europe and north America, is a top priority for my Department's trade promotion and market opening work. The region offers the best prospects worldwide for rapid, large-scale and sustained growth of imports and investment. United Kingdom business has a strong position in parts of the region but needs to do much more particularly in such large, growth markets as Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia and Thailand. The region accounts for 8 per cent. of our exports and 6·5 per cent. of our overseas investment. It is the Department's objective to raise this substantially. To that end, 18 per cent. of our overseas trade staff are allocated to work on the region, as well as a substantial proportion of our promotional budget. I have visited the region three times in the past nine months. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, the chairman of the British Overseas Trade Board and I plan more visits to the region this year, mainly with groups of business men. We continue to make a special drive on the Japanese market, through the Priority Japan campaign. We have just held the largest-ever United Kingdom trade promotion in China, involving over 90 business men, and are following it up vigorously. We are also running intensive trade promotion campaigns to pursue opportunities in the other promising markets of the region.

This promotional work is led by business men active in these markets who give their time voluntarily. To focus their contributions more effectively the BOTB has set up a new promotional body covering most of the region's markets, the Asia Pacific Advisory Group, and the equivalent bodies for Japan and China have reorganised. Details of their work are published in the annual forward plan of the BOTB.

In summary, in the financial year 1993-94 we are planning some 68 outward and inward VIP visits, 50 promotional events in the United Kingdom, 217 DTI-supported missions, exhibitions, technical seminars and store promotions in the region and expect to deal with about 23,000 inquiries from British business. In the next few months we will be intensifying this drive through the full-time secondment of experienced business men to the Department as export promoters. We are also working vigorously through multilateral and bilateral channels to improve business conditions in the region, particularly by working for the successful completion of the GATT Uruguay round.

I should be glad to consider additional proposals for intensifying our efforts in these markets, within the resources available to my Department.

Public Houses

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many breweries have complied with the Supply of Beer (Tied Estates) Order 1989—SI 1989 No. 2390; what information his Department holds on the purchasers of public houses under the order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I understand from the Director General of Fair Trading that all the national brewers have complied with the Supply of Beer (Tied Estate) Order 1989, on the basis of information they have supplied to him. The statutory undertakings given by these brewers to provide the Director General with information to enable him to monitor compliance with the order do not require them to provide details of the purchasers of public houses that are sold. His office does, nevertheless, hold a significant amount of information provided voluntarily by the brewers and compiled from reports that have appeared in the trade press.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what investigations his Department undertakes into the ownership of companies purchasing public houses from breweries en bloc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Director General of Fair Trading is under a statutory duty to investigate sales of packages of public houses when these qualify as merger situations under the Fair Trading Act 1973. He has also made it clear that he will look very closely at all transactions involving supply agreements. Public houses owned by companies in which a national brewer has a shareholding of 15 per cent. or more, which are tied to that brewer's beer, would count towards its tied pub limit under the Supply of Beer (Tied Estate) Order 1989.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total number of tonnes of coal used to produce electricity in 1991; what tonnage was imported; and what tonnage was British.

Mr. Eggar: The total amount of coal used to produce electricity in 1991 by the major generators was 82 million tonnes of which 7·3 million tonnes was imported. Other smaller, industrial generators used 2 million tonnes of coal to produce electricity in the same period, but data are not available to show how much of this was imported.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the coal equivalent tonnage of natural gas used in 1991 to produce electricity.

Mr. Eggar: The amount of natural gas used by all generating companies in 1991 to produce electricity was 1·9 million tonnes of coal equivalent.

National Welsh Omnibus Services Ltd.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has received the report of receivers KPMG Peat Marwick into the insolvency of the National Welsh bus company.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Secretary of State received reports on 8 January 1993 from the administrative

receivers of National Welsh Omnibus Services Ltd., in respect of the conduct of the directors of that company, pursuant to section 7(3) of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will institute an inquiry into the financial propriety of the directors of National Welsh bus company in the period leading up to the company's receivership at the end of 1991.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: It is not my Department's policy to comment on the affairs of individual companies. If the hon. Member has information to suggest that an inquiry would be appropriate, my officials will be pleased to consider any information forwarded in the usual manner.

Warren Spring Laboratory

Mr. Hague: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what performance targets he has set for 1992-93 for the Warren Spring Laboratory executive agency.

Mr. Leigh: Warren Spring Laboratory operates in a competitive market. Its primary performance target for 1992-93 continues to be the recovery of full economic cost through the charges it makes to customers. In addition, new secondary performance measures have been developed to supersede those agreed when the agency was originally established in 1989. For 1992-93 these are:

- to recover full economic costs through charges made to customers;
- to achieve the net contribution to the Department set out in Supply Estimates of £362,000;
- to win and complete business to the value of £13·6 million;
- to gain National Measurement Accreditation Service —NAMAS—accreditation for trace inorganic analytical chemistry services and the air quality calibration laboratory.

These targets will in future be reviewed annually as part of the corporate planning process.

Coal Review

Mr. Hague: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many pieces of evidence have been submitted to his Department's coal review; and what plans he has to make the evidence public.

Mr. Eggar: Evidence submitted by 327 individuals and organisations had been received by the coal review team by noon on Friday 8 January. Evidence has been copied to the Trade and Industry Select Committee as we have received it and copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. In cases where those submitting evidence have provided it in confidence, we have sought their permission to pass it to the Select Committee, and where such permission has been given, have done so on a protected basis.

We have also now made the evidence, other than commercially confidential material, more widely available by placing copies in the following libraries where members of the public may call, by appointment, to read it: DTI library and information centre, Ashdown house, 123 Victoria street, London SW1E 6RB, telephone 071 215 4245/4250; DTI energy library and information centre, 1 Palace street, London SW1E 5HE, telephone 071 238 3042; Office of Electricity Regulation library, Hagley house, Hagley road, Birmingham B16 8QG, telephone 021 456 6378.

In addition, copies of individual pieces of evidence, other than confidential evidence, may be ordered from the library at 1 Palace street. A charge will be made to cover the cost of this service.

The full list of those submitting evidence is as follows, with an asterisk indicating those who have asked that their evidence be treated as confidential.

Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce
Action Group of Northern Ireland Electricity Prices
Mr. J. M. S. Adams
AEA Technology
Alliance Gas Limited
AMCO Corporation plc
Amerada Hess Limited
Amoco (UK) Exploration Company
Mr. J. Amos
Anderson Group Limited*
Anglo United plc
Antrim Coal Company Limited*
Mr. R. Anyon (Shop Steward at BNFL Springfields) and Mr. P. Logue*
Apparel, Knitting and Textiles Alliance
Applied Energy Services Electric Limited
Architects and Engineers for Social Responsibility
ARCO British Limited
Mr. D. G. Arundale
ASEA Brown Boveri*
Associated Electricity Suppliers Ltd.*
Associated Octel Company Limited*
Association for the Conservation of Energy
Association of British Chambers of Commerce
Association of British Mining Equipment Companies
Association of Independent Electricity Producers
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Australian High Commission

Babcock Energy Limited
Mr. S. Ball
Banks Development Division
Barking/Thames Power Limited
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Bassetlaw District Council
Mr. A. J. Black
Blue Circle Industries Ltd.
Bow Group Energy Standing Committee
Botham Engineering Limited
BP BITOR Limited
BP Exploration Operating Company Limited
Mr. F. Bradbury
BRINDEX
British Alcan Aluminium plc
British Association of Colliery Management
British Ceramic Confederation
British Coal Corporation
British Gas plc*
British Geological Survey
British Gypsum Limited
British Nuclear Forum
British Nuclear Fuels plc*
British Paper and Board Industry Federation
British Retail Consortium
British Rubber Manufacturers Association Limited
British Wind Energy Association
Broadland District Council
Brown and Root Limited
Brunner Mond and Company Limited

Cairn Energy plc
Caledonian Mining Co. Ltd.
Ms. S. Carribine—Low Valleyfield Residents' Association
Centre for Intermediate Mining Research Limited
Chamber of Coal Traders Limited
Chemical Industries Association
Chesterfield Borough Council
Mr. J. Chiswell Jones
Churches Energy Group
City of Nottingham Development Department

City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
Clackmannan District Council (Alloa)
Clay Colliery Company Ltd.
Clwyd County Council
Coal Advisory Service
Coalfield Communities Campaign
Cobex Limited
Combined Heat and Power Association
Combined Power Systems Limited
Communist Party of Great Britain
Confederation of British Industry
Confederation of British Industry (Northern Ireland)
Confederation of UK Coal Producers
Conoco (UK) Ltd.
Consortium of Opposing Local Authorities
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Cooperative Wholesale Society
Cory Environmental Ltd.
Council for the Protection of Rural England
Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland
Country Landowners Association
Countryside Commission
Countryside Council for Wales
County Planning Officers' Society
Mr. H. Cox
Co-Steel Inc.
Cummins Diesel[1]
Currall Lewis and Martin Ltd.
Cytun Industrial and Economic Affairs Network (Welsh Clergy)

Mr. Cynog Dafis, MP
Mr. A. C. Day
Derbyshire County Council
Mr. W. Digby Worthy
Domestic Coal Consumers' Council
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Durham County Council
Dyfed County Council

E Gas Limited
Easington District Council
East Midlands Electricity Consumers' Committee
East Midlands Electricity plc.
Eastern Electricity plc.
Eastern Region Electricity Consumers' Association
Electricity Consumers' Committee, Merseyside and North Wales
Electricity Consumers' Committee for London
Electricity Consumers' Committee Southern Region
Electricity Pool of England and Wales
Electricity Supply Trade Union Council
Energy and Chemical Projects Ltd.
Energy Economic Engineering Limited
Energy Information Centre[1]
Energy Intensive Users Group/Major Energy Users Council
Energy Supply Company Ltd.[1]
Engineering Consultancy Services Ltd.
English Nature
Enron Europe Limited[1]
Esso Exploration and Production UK Ltd.

Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors
Federation of Small Mines of GB
Prof. I. Fells—Newcastle University
Fenton Solid Fuels Ltd.
Fife Regional Council
Food and Drink Federation
Forest of Dean District Council
Foster Wheeler Energy Limited
Friends of the Earth

Galvanisers Association
Mr. R. Gardner
Gas Consumers Council
Gas Strategies
GEC Alsthom Limited
General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
Mr. F. Gilbert
Mr. A Glyn

Mr. D. F. Godfrey—Larkin and Co. Solicitors
Grampian Enterprise Limited
Grampian Regional Council
Greenpeace
Mr. P. A. Gruber

H. Leverton Limited[1]
Hamilton Oil Company Ltd.[1]
Harper Macleod Limited
Mr. K. Harrison
Mr. J. P. Hart
Mr. R. E. A. Harvey
Mr. G. Hawkes
Highland Regional Council
Mr. D. Hopkinson
Mr. R. Horrocks

I. and H. Brown Limited
ICI Chemicals and Polymers Ltd.
Institute of Civil Engineers
Institute of Energy
Institution of Mining Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
Institution of Mining Engineers
Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists
Ivo Energy Limited

Mr. R. M. Jervis
Johnson Matthey plc.

Kelt UK Ltd.
Kingsnorth Developments Ltd.

LASMO North Sea plc.
LE Energy
Leicester City Council
Mr. Jim Lester, MP
Levack Civil Engineering
Lewis and Towers Limited
Liberal Democrats
Liebherr GB Ltd.
Mr. and Mrs. R. K. Lindsay
Prof. N. H. Lipman
Mr. H. B. Lloyd
Loadmaster Ltd.
London Electricity plc
Mr. F. E. Lynam
Lytham St. Annes Methodist Circuit Social Responsibility Committee

Mansfield District Council
Manweb plc[1]
Marks and Spencer plc
Mr. J. I. Mason
Mr. G. McAlpine, OBE
Mr. W. McMillan
Mechanical Handling Engineers' Association
MECO AFC Ltd.
Merz and McLellan Limited
Metropolitan Planning Officers' Society
Mid Glamorgan County Council
Midlands Consumers' Committee
Midlands Electricity plc
Midlands Electricity plc/Central Power
Miller Mining
Mrs. G. Millington
Mining Association of the United Kingdom
Mobil Gas Marketing (UK) Ltd.
Monktonhall Mineworkers Ltd.
Monument Oil and Gas plc[1]

National Association of Colliery Overmen Deputies and Shotfirers
National Association of Licensed Opencast Operators
National Association of Local Government Officers
National Consumer Council
National Engineering Construction Employers' Association
National Grid Company plc
National Network of Chaplains in the Electricity Supply Industry
National Network of Coal Industry Chaplains

National Power plc
National Rivers Authority
National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection
National Union of Mineworkers
Neighbourhood Energy Action
Newark and Sherwood District Council
Mr. K. Nicholson
Non-Fossil Purchasing Agency Ltd.
North Derbyshire Health Authority
North East Derbyshire District Council
North Eastern Region Electricity Consumers' Committee
North Nottinghamshire Training and Enterprise Council
North West Region Electricity Consumers' Committee
Northern Development Company
Northern Electric plc[1]
Northern Ireland Electricity plc
NORWEB[1]
Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Nottinghamshire Conservative Mining Constituency Associations
Nottinghamshire County Council
Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council
NSM plc
Nuclear Electrics plc[1]
Nykomb Synergetics

O & K Orenstein and Koppel Ltd.
Offshore Contractors Council
Offshore Manufacturers and Constructors Association
OFGAS
Oil and Chemical Plant Constructors Association
Open University Energy and Environment Research Unit
Oxford Institute for Energy Studies
Parkhill Estates Limited
Parliamentary Alternative Energy Group
Mr. I. J. Pearce
Phillips Petroleum Company United Kingdom Limited
Point of Ayr Colliery Survival Committee
Pontefract Graders Ltd.
Powergen plc[1]
Powys County Council

R. J. B. Mining Ltd.
Rackwood Colliery Co. Ltd.
Regional Studies Association
Mr. J. Reynolds—Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner and Smith Ltd.
Mr. C. Robinson—Exergy Inc.
Mr. D. Robinson
Rolls Royce plc.
Rotherham and District Trades Union Council
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council[1]
Royal Academy of Engineering
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Royal Institution of International Affairs
Royal Town Planning Institute
Rural Power Station Action Group

Safecom UEP Ltd.
Save the Moors From Opencast (SHAMROC)
Scottish Hydro Electric plc.[1]
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Northern Region Electricity Users' Sub-Committee
Scottish Nuclear Limited[1]
Scottish Power[1]
Scottish Trades Union Congress
Mr. A. T. Seabridge[1]
Seeboard plc.
Severn Tidal Power Group
Mr. J. K. Shanklin
Shawater Ltd.
Sheerness Steel Company plc.
Sheffield City Council
Shell UK Ltd.
Shepway Friends of the Earth
Shirebrook Traders Association
Mr. A. G. Simmons
Skegness 2000
Slough Trading Estates Ltd.
Mr. E. M. Smith
Solid Smokeless Fuels Federation
South Eastern Regional Electricity Consumers' Committee
South Wales Electricity plc.[1]
South Wales Region Consumers' Committee
South Western Electricity plc.
South Western Regional Electricity Consumers' Committee
Southern Electric plc.[1]
Southern Scotland Electricity Consumers' Committee
Staffordshire County Council
Standing Conference on Regional Policy in South Wales
Statoil UK Ltd.

Taylor Woodrow Mining Division
Texaco
Town and Country Planning Association
Trades Union Congress
Trainload Freight
Transport and General Workers Union
Tyne and Wear Chamber of Commerce, Trade and Industry

United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association Ltd.
United Kingdom Onshore Operators Group
United Kingdom Petroleum Industry Association Limited
Union of Democratic Mineworkers
United Gas Company Limited

Viscosuisse Textured Yarns

Wakefield and District Trade Union Council
Mr. J. F. Walker
Wansbeck District Council
Ward Brothers Mining Division Ltd.
Mr. K. Watson
Watt Committee on Energy
Mr. J. Watt
WEFA Energy Group[1]
West Midlands Regional Forum of Local Authorities
Westoe Colliery Campaign Group
Wimpey Minerals Inc.
World Solar Power Foundation

Yorkshire Electricity Group plc[1]
Yorkshire Opencast Objectors
Yorkshire Region Electricity Consumers' Committee
Yorkshire Water Services Limited[1]
Young Group plc[1]

[1] part or all of document confidential

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he proposes to set up a national authority to oversee the United Kingdom compliance with the chemical weapons convention; if he will ensure it is fully independent of the Department of Trade and Industry and if it will include experts from outside Government; what parliamentary involvement he proposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* The national authority will deal largely with requirements falling on United Kingdom industry, such as provision of information. My Department will therefore be responsible for setting up the national authority. Its structure and organisation will be the subject of consultation with interested bodies in due course.

Board of Trade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the date for the next meeting of the Board of Trade; what will be the agenda; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: I have no present plans for a further meeting of the Board of Trade.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Cabinet Papers

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what communications he has had recently from the Institute of Contemporary History in regard to the release of Cabinet and departmental papers from the Public Record Office.

Mr. Waldegrave: Under cover of a letter dated 21 December 1992, Dr. Brian Brivati of the Institute of Contemporary British History, sent me the final report of a conference held on 25 November 1992 at which my invitation to historians to suggest blocks of records for release was considered. I replied to Dr. Brivati on 12 January 1993. I have placed a copy of my letter in the Libraries of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister what changes there have been since 27 October 1987 in the guidelines for exports of nuclear materials, equipment and technology by the United Kingdom set out in the statement by the then Foreign Secretary on 31 March 1976.

The Prime Minister: An expansion to the guidelines set out on 31 March 1976 was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in a statement issued on 24 September 1991 when he introduced the policy of fullscope safeguards as a condition of supply. This means that we do not allow the export of any significant new nuclear supplies or materials to any country, other than the nuclear weapon states, where there are any unsafeguarded nuclear installations.

Edinburgh Summit

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment was made by the European Council at Edinburgh of the net effect of its conclusions on the contributions and receipts of each member state; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The European Council did not explicitly consider the effect of its conclusions on future financing on the contributions and receipts of each member state.

Macedonia

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library a copy of the report of the presidency's special representative on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the EC summit at Edinburgh on 12 December.

The Prime Minister: I hope that we can place a copy of this report in the Library soon. But discussion of Macedonian accession to the United Nations is now at a delicate stage in New York. It would not be helpful to this process to make the report public at this time.

Lockerbie Air Crash

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what response he has given to the petition presented to him on the fourth anniversary of the destruction of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* I have received a letter signed by some of the relatives of those who died, and have replied. I sympathise with their loss. I do not believe that there is a good case for an independent public inquiry into the disaster. There has already been a fatal accident inquiry and the criminal investigation is continuing.

The Government continue to put pressure on the Libyans to comply with the United Nations resolutions and to surrender the two suspects for trial in Scotland or the United States.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the yield of restricting *(a)* the personal tax allowance, *(b)* the married couple's allowance and *(c)* the age allowances and the major tax reliefs to (i) the basic rate of tax and (ii) the lower tax rate of 20 per cent. in 1993-94.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest estimates of the direct revenue yields in a full year at 1993-94 levels of income and using the autumn statement assumption of a 3·25 per cent. increase in 1992-93 levels of allowances and thresholds are as follows:

	Restriction to 25 per cent. £ million	*Restriction to 20 per cent. £ million*
Personal allowance (excluding age related addition)	1,100	5,200
Married couple's allowance	320	1,100
Age allowances[1]	0	100
Pension contribution reliefs[2]	480	1,150

[1] The higher levels of the age-related personal and married couple's allowance given to those aged 65 and over subject to the income limit.
[2] Employees' contributions to occupational pension schemes and contributions to personal pensions including retirement annuity premia and free standing additional voluntary contributions.

Mortgage interest relief is currently restricted to the basic rate of tax. Restricting it to 20 per cent. would yield £1,000 million in 1992-93 assuming interest rates remain at current levels for the rest of the year. The yield for 1993-94 has not been shown since it would depend on the pattern of borrowing, the eligibility of borrowers for mortgage interest tax relief, tax rates and interest rates in that year.

No account has been taken of possible behavioural change resulting from such restrictions, and the figures shown represent the yield from restricting each allowance separately. If two or more allowances were restricted, the total yield would be greater than the sum of the figures for individual allowances.

Cigarette Tax

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the amount of tax paid on a pack of the most popular price category cigarettes in each EC member state and the average price of a pack of 20 cigarettes in each country; and what the figures were in 1990.

Sir John Cope: We do not have information on the average price of a pack of cigarettes in other member states. The tables show the price of the most popular price category—MPPC.

(a) Tax and price on the MPPC in November 1992, based on exchange rates as on 1 October 1992.

	Total tax (pence)	*Most popular price (pence)*
Belgium	142	185
Denmark	246	288
France	111	148
Germany	139	192
Greece	38	63
Ireland	184	245
Italy	81	113
Luxembourg	103	140
Netherlands	102	147
Portugal	88	112
Spain	25	40
United Kingdom	170	227

(b) Tax and price on the MPPC in 1990, based on exchange rates as on 20 December 1990.

	Total tax (pence)	*Most popular price (pence)*
Belgium	79	110
Denmark	197	229
France	70	104
Germany	103	141
Greece	32	45
Ireland	131	179
Italy	62	86
Luxembourg	56	78
Netherlands	72	102
Portugal	42	57
Spain	18	31
United Kingdom	131	180

European Monetary Union

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the German Government on the mechanisms for moving to stage three of economic and monetary union, following the steps taken towards ratification of the treaty on European union by Germany on 2 December.

Mr. Nelson: None.

Insider Dealing

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many cases of insider dealing were reported to the authorities in each year since 1987.

Mr. Nelson: Alleged cases of insider dealing are generally detected by the stock exchange through its monitoring of share dealing. Following a preliminary investigation, the stock exchange informs the Department of Trade and Industry when it believes that there is a prima facie case. That Department has powers to investigate and to bring prosecutions where appropriate. The cases referred to the DTI in this way since 1987-88 are set out in the table.

Alleged cases of insider dealing reported to the DTI by the stock exchange between 1987-88 and 1992-93[1]

Year	*Cases reported*
1987-88	29
1988-89	33
1989-90	21
1990-91	8
1991-92	11
1992-93	2
Total	104

[1] A case may have led to more than one person being prosecuted. The information for 1992-93 relates to cases which were reported to the DTI between April and the end of December 1992.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many cases of insider dealing have been prosecuted in each year from 1987 to date; and how many of these prosecutions resulted in *(a)* conviction and *(b)* acquittal.

Mr. Nelson: The information is given in the table.

Insider dealing prosecutions between 1987-88 and 1992-93[1]

Year	*Cases*	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*	*Acquittals*
1987-88	3	3	3	0
1988-89	1	1	0	1
1989-90	10	14	4	9
1990-91	1	2	2	0
1991-92	5	8	3	5
1992-93	1	5	4	1
Total	21	33	16	16

[1] The figures in the final three columns reflect the number of individual defendants who were prosecuted, and the verdict reached, in the 21 insider dealing cases which have been concluded since April 1987.

The figures for 1989-90 include one prosecution which was subsequently withdrawn.

Car Leasing

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place a copy of the guidance produced by the Treasury's central unit on purchasing on car contract hire or lease schemes for public bodies in the Library.

Mr. Portillo: A copy of the guidance will be placed in the Library today.

Management Buy-outs

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidelines he has set for the funding of merchant banking consultancy advice in relation to proposed management buy-outs of the whole or part of the operations of non-departmental public bodies, *(a)* pursuant to statutory approval, *(b)* without statutory but with ministerial approval and *(c)* without either statutory or ministerial approval; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Treasury has issued written guidance to Departments on aspects of trade sales, including the

funding of management buy-outs—MBOs. It also advises Departments on the funding of MBOs on a case-by-case basis.

Investment Business

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the licences granted by his Department to firms or sole traders to conduct investment business under the provisions of the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958, since 27 February 1988, with the date in each case; and what was the reason for granting each licence.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* Principals' licences were issued to the following on the date shown:

Licensed dealer	*Date*
Spencer Thornton Investment Management Services	7 March 1988
York Australia (UK) Ltd.	7 March 1988
Oxford Seedcorn Co. Ltd.	7 March 1988
Securities and Commodities Investments plc	21 March 1988
London and Bishopsgate International Investment Management plc	25 April 1988

Under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 persons wishing to carry on the business of dealing in securities required a licence from the Secretary of State unless they were exempted dealers or members of a recognised stock exchange or recognised association of dealers in securities. The Secretary of State was obliged to issue a licence unless, on the basis of the criteria specified in the Act, they appeared not fit and proper.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many applications were made to his Department in each six-month period since 27 August 1987 to obtain a licence for conducting investment business under the provisions of the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958; and how many of these applications were granted.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* Twenty-one applications for principals' licences under the Act were received between 27 August 1987 and 27 February 1988. One application was received between 27 February 1988 and 29 April 1988 when the Act was repealed. All of these applications were granted.

Post Office Savings

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the increase or decrease in turnover in sub-post office business following the latest increase in the minimum amounts for deposits into the national savings investment account and the ordinary account, and for the purchase of premium bonds by parents and other for children aged under 16.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* The work carried out by Post Office Counters Ltd.—(POCL)—in respect of all national savings products represents less than 5 per cent. of POCL's total business. The Department for National Savings expects to save about £4 million in agency charges in a full year from the planned changes. This represents less than 0·5 per cent. of total POCL turnover of £1 billion.

WALES

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 24 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *628-30*, if he will give the total percentage of economically inactive males aged 16 to 64 years in the valleys programme districts.

Mr. David Hunt: The latest available figures for the percentage of economically inactive males in the valleys programme districts are for 1991 and are given in the table.

Percentage of economically inactive population in 1991 (males aged 16 to 64)

District[1]	*1981*[2]	*1991*[3]
Dinefwr	14·2	21·7
Llanelli	12·9	22·6
Blaenau Gwent	15·2	22·9
Islwyn	12·9	20·6
Torfaen	12·4	18·5
Cynon Valley	14·4	23·8
Merthyr Tydfil	15·2	23·8
Ogwr	13·7	19·3
Rhondda	16·9	25·4
Rhymney Valley	13·3	22·8
Taff Ely	11·7	18·6
Brecknock	12·5	18·0
Lliw Valley	12·9	20·1
Neath	12·6	21·6
Port Talbot	14·2	24·7
Swansea	12·8	20·7

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

[1]District figures include areas outside the Valleys Programme boundary.

[2]1981 data are extracted from the 1981 Census.

[3]1991 data are extracted from the Census County Monitor series CEN 91 CM.

The 1981 census recorded all students as economically inactive whereas the 1991 census distinguished between those economically active and inactive.

In answering this question, it has become apparent that the estimate of the economically active percentage of the adult male population in Brecknock in 1981 given in my answer on 24 November 1992, at column *629*, should have been 87·5 and not 87·3.

Orimulsion

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), of 26 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *473*, what further consultations he has had with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution regarding National Power's application to burn orimulsion at Pembroke power station; and when he expects to receive Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution report.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution announced on 22 December 1992 that National Power had written to the inspectorate seeking to withdraw for now its proposals for the use of orimulsion at Pembroke power station.

Health Service, South Glamorgan

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had from the British Medical Association central consultants and specialists committee concerning cancelled operating sessions and bed and ward sessions in South Glamorgan.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Angola

13. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest situation in respect of international efforts to establish peace in Angola.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The international community continues actively to support the efforts of the United Nations to secure full implementation of the Bicesse peace agreements in Angola. We fully endorse the recent call by the president of the Security Council for an end to fighting and a dialogue between both sides.

Yugoslavia

14. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the conflict in the former republic of Yugoslavia; if he will bring pressure to bear on the republic of Serbia to prevent further escalation of conflict; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has received many representations on this subject. The Edinburgh European Council declared that the Serbian nation faced a clear choice: if there were a radical change of policy it would be gradually readmitted into the international community. But if the Belgrade regime continued its present policies, existing sanctions would be tightened and extended to isolate Serbia totally.

United States of America

15. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relationship with the United States of America.

Mr. Hurd: The United Kingdom's relations with the United States are in excellent shape and we expect them to remain so.

29. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what importance he attaches to the relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Britain and the United States have a close bilateral relationship to which both Governments attach high value.

31. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to meet President-elect Clinton to discuss the relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister looks forward to meeting the President-elect and the Secretary of State designate at the earliest opportunity.

Indonesia

16. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Indonesia.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Kingdom maintains friendly and constructive relations with Indonesia. I visited Indonesia last October and my hon. Friend the Minister of Trade was there a few days ago.

European Political Co-operation

17. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent common policy initiatives have been taken by EC Foreign Ministers under the European political co-operation procedure.

Mr. Garel-Jones: During the United Kingdom Presidency of the European Community we initiated and co-ordinated EC action in many areas of foreign policy. These included attempts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, encouragement of a constitutional settlement in South Africa, efforts to provide effective aid to Somalia and support for the coalition force implementing United Nations Security Council resolution 794, participation in the middle east peace process and playing a leading role in CSCE discussions. The United Kingdom Presidency also saw the development of EC co-operation and political dialogue with many countries and regional groups, including the United States of America, Japan and central European countries. The EC has also played an active role during the United Kingdom Presidency in the human rights field.

Japan

18. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Japan.

35. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on recent developments in the United Kingdom's relations with Japan.

37. **Mr. Mills:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Japan.

Mr. Goodlad: Relations between the United Kingdom and Japan are excellent. They are marked by regular contacts between British and Japanese Ministers and senior officials. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had a constructive and friendly meeting with Prime Minister Miyazawa in July. Since the mid-1980s our trading relationship has greatly improved, with a considerable increase in British exports to Japan over that period. There is a longstanding and continuing welcome for Japanese investment in the United Kingdom. We aim to broaden and improve the relationship yet further.

Bosnia

19. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on safe havens for refugees in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration his Department has given to the establishment of safe havens for non-combatants in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations protection force, which includes British troops, is helping the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to deliver humanitarian relief to refugees and others trapped by the conflict in Bosnia. We believe that their activities are creating de facto relief areas which are a more effective and viable way of providing protection and relief than specifically demarcated militarily protected safe havens.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made of the number of aircraft flights that have transported *(a)* Serbian, *(b)* Croatian, and *(c)* Muslim forces in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Nations Secretary-General has issued regular reports to the Security Council giving details of violations of the no-fly zone established by resolutions 781 of 9 October and 786 of 11 November. It is clear from these that, to varying degrees, all parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina have conducted flights outside the terms permitted in the resolutions. We have no firm evidence that any of these flights were carrying troops.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made of the number of aircraft flights that have been used by *(a)* Serbian, *(b)* Croatian, and *(c)* Muslim forces in Bosnia for the purposes of military reconnaissance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Nations Secretary General has issued regular reports to the Security Council giving details of violations of the no-fly zone established by resolutions 781 of 9 October and 786 of 11 November. It is clear from these that, to varying degrees, all parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina have conducted flights outside the terms permitted in the resolutions. It is likely that some of these flights will have been used to carry out visual reconnaissance.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information has been provided by his Department's personnel to the United Nations about human rights violations in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The preliminary report of the investigative mission on the treatment of Muslim women in former Yugoslavia, led by Dame Anne Warburton, has been submitted to the United Nations Secretary-General. Its full report will be drawn up after the second phase of the mission. This will be submitted to the United Nations commission of experts.

EC Decision-making

20. **Mr. Hoon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will next be meeting the President of the European Commission to discuss the reform of the European Community's decision-making process.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans to discuss further reforms of the Community's decision-making process with the president of the Commission in the immediate future. The Maastricht treaty, when it enters into force, will involve some changes. Before that, following agreement at Edinburgh a number of changes designed to ensure subsidiarity is respected will be given effect immediately.

Somalia

21. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met his counterparts representing the member states of the Security Council of the United Nations to discuss the peacekeeping activities of the United Nations in Somalia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Foreign Ministers of the member states of the Security Council have not met to discuss Somalia. Our ambassador to the United Nations joined in the discussion which led to Security Council resolution 794 and keeps in close contact with the Secretary General and other Security Council members.

Pakistan

22. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the Foreign Minister of Pakistan to discuss the state of democracy there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans at present to meet Mr. Kanju or any other member of the Pakistan Government.

Russia

23. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between the United Kingdom and Russia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Relations are excellent. President Yeltsin paid a highly successful official visit to Britain in November during which the first general treaty on British-Russian bilateral relations since 1766 was signed. Our two countries are working together on an unprecedented range of subjects, including key international problems.

Maastricht Treaty

24. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next proposes to discuss ratification and implementation of the Maastricht treaty with other EC Foreign Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Maastricht treaty will enter into force on the first day of the month after the last member

state has ratified. Denmark and the United Kingdom have still to ratify the treaty. Foreign Ministers regularly review the state of the ratification process, with a view to implementation. We will continue to do so.

33. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his European counterparts about the expected date for ratification of the Maastricht treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Maastricht treaty will enter into force on the first day of the month after the last member state has ratified. Ten member states have completed the parliamentary ratification process; three of these still have to complete formal ratification. Denmark needs to hold a further referendum. In the United Kingdom ratification follows passage of the necessary legislation through Parliament.

Hong Kong

25. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the safeguards in place to protect British-owned assets and investments in the Crown colony of Hong Kong, on the return of the colony to the People's Republic of China in 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The laws of Hong Kong will safeguard all foreign-owned assets and investments after 1997, as they do now. This will include British-owned assets and investments. The Sino-British joint declaration of 1984 provides for the continuation of the legal and financial systems which are the foundation of Hong Kong's status as an international centre of finance.

Commonwealth of Independent States

26. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding Britain's relations with the independent states within the CIS.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have diplomatic relations with the 10 CIS countries, as well as Georgia and Azerbaijan and the three baltic states. We have resident diplomatic missions in six of these states. Our bilateral relations are developing briskly. President Yeltsin paid an official visit in November, and the first United Kingdom-Russia treaty since 1766 was signed. President Kravchuk will visit next month.

European Community (Enlargement)

27. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what timetable is proposed for enlargement of the European Community.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Edinburgh European Council agreed to launch accession negotiations with Austria, Finland and Sweden. They will open in early February. Negotiations with Norway are likely to begin not long afterwards. The Government will be working for an early and successful conclusion to the negotiations which would permit accession around 1995. Work is now under way to prepare the Visegrad countries of eastern Europe for eventual Community membership—an objective endorsed for the first time by last month's European Council.

28. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made of the advantages accruing to the north-east of England resulting from enlargement of the EC to include Norway and Sweden.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs expects the enlargement of the EC to benefit all regions of Britain. The extension of the single market will provide more opportunities for British business men and greater choice for the British consumer. It should boost economic growth and create jobs.

United Nations

30. **Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the role the United Nations plays in the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations has a key role to play in promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes, as is reflected in "Agenda for Peace". The United Kingdom has called for greater resort to preventive diplomacy, including fact-finding missions and the use of the Secretary-General's good offices. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs said in his speech to the general assembly on 22 September,

"preventive diplomacy is quicker, more helpful to peoples about to be embroiled in conflict than the most successful peace-keeping or peace-making operation which follows the outbreak of violence. It is also less costly, in terms of lives and cash".

EFTA

32. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met his Swiss counterpart to discuss matters relating to EFTA.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs last met Foreign Minister Felber on 15 December in Stockholm. They discussed the future of the European economic area agreement and Switzerland's application to join the EC, in the light of the recent negative vote in the Swiss EEA referendum.

Single European Market

34. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress on the single European market following the Edinburgh summit.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Edinburgh European Council declared the single market complete in all essential respects. The United Kingdom will now lay emphasis upon ensuring that the single market works in practice and on completing work in areas such as intellectual property, transport, and energy and telecommunications liberalisation.

EC-ASEAN Relations

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress there has been in the development of relations between the European Community and the ASEAN countries.

Mr. Goodlad: Considerable progress has been made in strengthening relations during the United Kingdom presidency. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has personally attended two ministerial meetings with ASEAN in Manila. The outcome of the EC-ASEAN ministerial meeting in October will boost co-operation in a range of fields, including trade, environmental protection, technical co-operation and human rights.

Burma

38. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to seek a meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi to discuss human rights in Burma; and what recent representations he has made to the Burmese Government about her detention.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no current plans to visit Burma. He has raised Aung San Suu Kyi's detention with the Burmese ambassador on 14 September 1992. We continue to be concerned at the lack of progress towards her release and about human rights generally in Burma.

Together with our EC partners, we co-sponsored the resolution adopted at the United Nations General Assembly last month which condemned Burma's human rights performance and specifically called for Aung San Suu Kyi's unconditional release.

Edinburgh Summit

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government intend to register with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, pursuant to article 102 of the United Nations charter, the decision of the Head of State and Government meeting within the European Council held at Edinburgh on 12 December 1992 concerning certain problems raised by Denmark.

Mr. Garel-Jones: This matter is under consideration. I will arrange for the right hon. Member to receive a written reply.

Poland

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom commitment to Polish membership of the EC.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Kingdom has long supported EC membership for Poland and other central European countries as soon as they are ready. The objective of their accession was endorsed for the first time by the European Council at Edinburgh, which identified the EC association agreements as the means to prepare them for this. The United Kingdom, which was the first EC member state to ratify these agreements, is now working to ensure that they are implemented in full and developed.

SCOTLAND

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as the necessary information has been collated.

EMPLOYMENT

National Training Task Force

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many members of *(a)* the Training and Enterprise Council committee and *(b)* the Employer Investment committee, advising the national training task force are *(a)* women, *(b)* from an ethnic minority and *(c)* people with disabilities, in numbers and as a percentage of the group.

Mr. McLoughlin: There is one (14·25 per cent.) woman member and one (14·25 per cent.) member from an ethnic minority group on the TEC Committee and one (6·6 per cent.) woman and one (6·6 per cent.) member from an ethnic minority group on the Employer Investment Committee which advises the NTTF. There are no members who have registered or non-registered disabilities.

Youth Unemployment

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people aged 16 and 17 years in Birmingham are not in employment, not on a youth training scheme and not in full-time education.

Mr. McLoughlin: In October 1992 there were 213 unemployed claimants aged 16 and 17 years in the local authority district of Birmingham.

Changes to the benefit regulations in September 1988 coincided with the extension of a guaranteed YTS (now YT) place to all those aged under 18 not in full time education or employment, which meant that those who declined an offer of a YTS place were no longer entitled to benefit. However, there are still a small number of under 18-year-olds entitled to benefit due to special circumstances, such as severe hardship or by virtue of their being orphans.

Complementary Medicine

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what EC directives apply to the education and training of complementary medicine practitioners.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are two directives concerned with the recognition of education and training. The First Diploma Directive, 89/48/EEC, was implemented in the United Kingdom in April 1991 and covers degree level qualifications. The Second Diploma Directive, 92/51/EEC, is due to be implemented in June 1994 and will cover those qualifications awarded on completion of higher education courses of up to three years duration and equivalents including national and Scottish vocational qualifications. Both directives are concerned with regulated occupations.

The Osteopaths Bill is having its second reading this month and it is possible that osteopaths may subsequently fall within the coverage of the First Diploma Directive.

The extent to which other fields of complementary medicine are covered by the Second Diploma Directive will emerge as the implementation proceeds towards June 1994.

DEFENCE

Explosive Ordnance Disposal

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the future of 33 Regiment explosive ordnance disposal.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: 33 Engineer Regiment (EOD) is currently located in a number of sites within Chatham garrison. It is proposed, subject to consultation with the trades unions, that the regiment should relocate to Carver barracks, Wimbish. This move would allow it to be concentrated in one site, thus reducing overheads, and would ensure the future of Carver barracks, which is to be vacated by the 16th/5th the Queen's Royal Lancers on their amalgamation with 17/21 Lancers, currently based at Tidworth. It is too early to say what would be the implications for civilian staff at Chatham but it is hoped that they may be employed by other units within the garrison.

Army Personnel Centre

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *176*, if he is now in a position to make a statement about his plans for an integrated army personnel centre outside London.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On 10 June 1992, at column 176 I announced the start of a stuty into the efficiency and cost effectiveness of forming an integrated Army personnel centre outside London.

The study team concluded its work by recommending the formation of an Army personnel centre by 1995 in existing commercial office buildings in Glasgow. The Army personnel centre would encompass the staffs of the Adjutant General and the Military Secretary, including the manning and record offices, regimental pay offices and army pay office (officers' accounts). The existing offices at Chester, Exeter, Leicester, York and Ashton-under-Lyne, and the relevant MOD offices in London and Stanmore would close during 1995-96. Exceptionally, all staff, including those serving in non-mobile grades, would be offered the opportunity to move at public expense. Very substantial efficiency savings, including a reduction of 38 per cent. in overall numbers, would result.

I propose to accept this recommendation subject to further consideration of the final location of a very small number of staff whose work requires them to be in the south of England. I am today starting a 30-day consultation period with all concerned, including the trade unions.

I have today placed a copy of the consultative document in the Library of the House.

Bosnia

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British service personnel currently deployed in Bosnia are trained in forward air control techniques; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: For the type of forces deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina it is usual, and is the case, to have one forward air control-trained officer as part of the headquarters.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the provision of additional artillery equipment to British forces in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The size and equipment requirements of the battalion group deployed to Bosnia is kept under review to ensure that the force is able to carry out its task of escorting humanitarian aid convoys.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the communications equipment currently being used by British forces in Bosnia is capable of being used for forward air control; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The battalion group has been issued with communications equipment from the normal range of equipment issued to army units. These equipments have the ability to communicate with aircraft where this is necessary.

Mozambique

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what consideration has been given to the deployment of British forces to Mozambique; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consideration has been given to deploying troops currently stationed in Zimbabwe to assist United Nations operations in Mozambique; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We do not anticipate deploying British forces as part of the United Nations force in Mozambique—ONUMOZ—nor do we anticipate deploying British troops stationed in Zimbabwe to assist United Nations operations in Mozambique. At the United Nations request, however, a British officer has been temporarily seconded to ONUMOZ from the United Nations force on the Iraq/Kuwait border—UNIKOM. We believe that we are best placed to contribute towards a more comprehensive peace settlement through our offer to help train a new unified Mozambican army.

Iraq

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what factors he takes into account when assessing the effectiveness of enforcing the no-fly zone in southern Iraq.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The no-fly zone in southern Iraq was established with the aim of monitoring Iraqi military activity and deterring repression of the civilian population, in support of UNSCR 688. We believe that the no-fly zone is making an important contribution to securing the safety of the civilian population in southern Iraq, although the zone alone cannot solve the problem.

UN Operations

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration the "Options for Change" programme gave to the requirements for the involvement of British forces in UN operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government's plans for force restructuring recognised that new peacetime commitments, including United Nations operations, could arise in the changed strategic setting. These plans place increased emphasis on the flexibility and mobility required of forces undertaking such operations, as does NATO's new strategic concept.

20. **Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 15 December, *Official Report*, columns 131-32, from which *(a)* employment, *(b)* environmental and *(c)* health and safety legislation his Ministry is exempt from.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence is part of the Crown. It is a well established rule that the Crown is not bound by a statute unless this is specifically stated, or it is clear that the Crown is to be bound by implication. To list all legislation affecting employment, environment and health and safety matters which does not apply to the Crown would therefore involve disproportionate effort and cost.

As set out in the citizens charter, it is now Government policy to take legislative opportunities to apply such regulatory standards to the Crown. Even in circumstances where the Crown is not bound by legislation it is Government policy that it should comply as though requirements apply to it, wherever this is appropriate and practicable.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 14 January 1993

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration is being given to bringing charges of perjury against civil servants who gave evidence in the Matrix Churchill case.

The Attorney-General: As a result of the submission to the Crown prosecution service by Her Majesty's Commissioners of Customs and Excise, of papers touching upon evidence given at the trial of three employees of Matrix Churchill, a police investigation is currently being carried out. Any decision as to the prosecution of an individual or individuals, arising out of evidence given at that trial, will be made by the Director of Public Prosecutions at the conclusion of the police investigation, and after she has had the opportunity of studying the findings of that investigation.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Structure Plans

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received over the need for agreed local structure plans to be amended, and future structure plans to be drafted, so as to allow for the effects of the recession in the south of England on the likely growth of the working population there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: None, but I would expect such representations to be made to county councils. There is a statutory requirement for them to prepare structure plans that take account of economic and social considerations, and to keep all matters under review that may be expected to affect the development of their areas or the planning of development there.

Derelict Land Grant, Walsall

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much derelict land grant expenditure there has been in the Metropolitan borough of Walsall council district in each year since 1984.

Mr. Baldry: Derelict land grant expenditure in the metropolitan borough of Walsall council district since 1984 is as follows:

	Expenditure (£)
1984-85	1,416,000
1985-86	1,339,000
1986-87	3,026,566
1987-88	3,117,492
1988-89	3,474,318
1989-90	3,778,999
1990-91	3,738,123
1991-92	4,222,623
[1]1992-93	3,838,000
Total	27,951,121

[1]Forecast.

A further £22,655 derelict land grant has been paid towards reclamation schemes carried out by non-local authority applicants in the metropolitan borough of Walsall council district.

Housing, Walsall

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new homes will be provided by Walsall metropolitan borough authority in 1993-94; what is the total provision from central funds which will be received by the authority in support of capital expenditure on housing; and what capital expenditure he expects the authority to incur next year.

Mr. Baldry: The level of local authority housing capital expenditure in Walsall in 1993-94 is a matter for the borough council to decide in the light of the available resources. The authority's proposed programme for housing capital expenditure in 1993-94, included in their housing investment programme—HIP—submission, indicates no expenditure on new housebuilding by the council. Walsall's HIP allocation for 1993-94 is £10,474,000.

Urban Programme

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the amounts spent by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* other organisations preparing bids for urban programme funding for 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: It is not our practice to make such estimates. The work will have informed authorities' consideration of what projects to put forward for support from the urban partnership fund; and what to support from their own usable capital receipts.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of all letters and other material sent out by his Department during 1992 dealing with bids for urban programme funding for 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: No. This material could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will break down the extra spending power that he forecasts the urban programme authorities will have as a result of the relaxation of the rules governing the use of capital receipts, by authority;

(2) if he will make a statement on how he calculated the figure of £500 million as the extra amount that the urban programme authorities would raise as a result of the relaxation of the rules regarding capital receipts.

Mr. Robin Squire: We estimate that authorities will have £1·75 billion of extra usable capital receipts as a result

of the relaxation in receipts rules based on authorities forecasts of their receipts in 1992-93. Historically, the urban authorities have had about 30 per cent. of the national total of usable receipts. If this proportion applied to the extra usable receipts, it would provide the urban authorities with about £0·5 billion of extra usable receipts. We have not made any estimates of these receipts at the level of individual local authorities. Local authorities have provided their own forecasts of the receipts they expect to receive during 1992-93 and this information is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total amount of private sector funding given to schemes supported by the urban programme in the current and last three years.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is available for three years only, as follows:

Private sector funding of urban programme projects

Year	*£ million*
1990-91	35·4
1991-92	22·2
1992-93	42·4

Source: Local authority annual urban programme submissions.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of jobs that have been created and preserved by the urban programme since its inception,

Mr. Robin Squire: The urban programme has created and preserved 230,990 jobs between 1985-86, the first year for which information is available, and 1991-92.

Source: Local authority annual reports and annual urban programme submissions.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received *(a)* in favour of an *(b)* against his decision not to consider bids for urban programme funding for 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: My Department will be supporting in 1993-94 substantial urban programme—UP—commitments amounting to £156 million and considering bids for support for new projects from the £20 million uncommitted UP resources which form the urban partnership fund.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the urban programme funding planned for 1992-93 related to on-going commitments; and how much was to be made available for new bids.

Mr. Robin Squire: We expect around two-thirds of the urban programme resources allocated to local authorities in any year to relate to continuing commitments, with the balance for new projects.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of state for the Environment how many schemes supported by the urban programme he has visited.

Mr. Robin Squire: Department of the Environment Ministers visit the urban priority authorities on a regular basis and have been pleased to see a wide range of schemes supported by the urban programme.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the planned urban block expenditure for 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 by his Department, together with the figures in real terms, allowing for projected inflation, and the percentage increase/decrease each year.

Mr. Robin Squire: The planned urban block expenditure figures for 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 are shown in the table; these incorporate the autumn statement changes, including the increase of over £90 million in the resources planned for 1993-94.

The planned expenditure figures, converted into real terms using latest GDP deflator figures, are in the table, along with the percentage year on year increase/decrease:

£ million

	[1]*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*	*1995-96*
Urban Block planned expenditure	1,017	955	820	806
Planned expenditure expressed in real term figures	1,017	929	773	739
Percentage increase/decrease	—	−8·6	−16·7	−4·4

[1]Provision based on winter supplementary estimates.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total EC funding received by schemes supported by the urban programme in the current and last three years.

Mr. Robin Squire: European Community funding of local authorities' urban programme schemes is as follows:

Year	*£ million (rounded)*
1990-91	9
1991-92	26
[1]1992-93	11

Source: UP claim forms from local authorities.
Note: Figures for 1989-90 are not available.
[1]To date.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* jobs, *(b)* training places and *(c)* schemes are currently supported by the urban programme in each of the urban programme authorities; and what was the allocation for 1992-93 for each of the authorities.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply to his question on Wednesday 13 January, *Official Report*, column *656*. It is not our policy to publish output data for each individual authority under the urban programme.

Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what his response has been to the representations made by the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority for a review of its standard spending assessment for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: I met a delegation from the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority on 12 January

to hear their representations on our proposals for the 1993-94 revenue support grant settlement. We shall carefully consider their representations before taking decisions on the settlement.

Housing Refurbishment, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what his response has been to the letter sent to him on 17 December 1992 by Liverpool city council in respect of additional funds to provide for the refurbishment of houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and learned Friend has asked his officials at the Merseyside task force to reply direct.

EC Environment Inspectorate

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have taken place about the establishment of an EC environment inspectorate within the European Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* All member states attended a meeting of national experts chaired by the Commission in March 1992 to discuss issues relating to the enforcement of EC environmental legislation, including the establishment of a network of enforcement agencies and the possible creation of an audit-type inspectorate. Subsequently, the Government have continued to press the Commission to bring forward proposals, as originally suggested by the United Kingdom, for a Community body to audit the application of EC environmental legislation, and has secured growing support from other member states for this idea. We will continue to argue its merits.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Royal Household

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what is the organisational structure of the press facility provided to the royal household by the Central Office of Information; and what is its remit;

(2) what was the cost in 1991-92, and what is the provision for 1992-93, of the press facilities provided to the royal household by the Central Office of Information; how many personnel are involved and in what capacities; and how much of the expenditure relates to salaries and staff costs;

(3) who recruits the personnel who make up the press facility supplied to the royal household by the Central Office of Information; to whom they are accountable; and what is their relationship to the head of the Government press service.

Mr. Waldegrave: Responsibility for the subject of these questions has been delegated to the chief executive of the Central Office of Information. I have asked him to write to the right hon. Gentleman direct.

Letter from Mike Devereau to Mr. Alan Williams, undated:

You recently tabled three Parliamentary Questions to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster concerning press services provided by COI to the Royal Household. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has asked me to reply.

The press facility for the Royal Household is provided by staff employed in COI's eight regional offices in England. The staff are COI employees managed by their regional director but working to the brief of the Royal Household. The remit is to make arrangements for press attendance at visits by senior members of the Royal Family while carrying out their official duties in England.

The cost of work undertaken for the Royal Household by COI in 1991-92 for press facilities totalled £318,260 excluding VAT. The estimated spend for the same services in 1992-93 is some £350,000 excluding VAT. Normally one or two members of COI staff are involved in providing services for each Royal visit. Approximately 50 per cent. of the expenditure relates to salaries and associated staff costs.

The personnel who make up the press facility are, as members of the staff of the Central Office of Information, fully accountable to me. Their recruitment, training and career development is arranged with the support of the Information Officer Management Unit which provides similar support to all Information Officers working for Government and for which I am also responsible as the Head of Profession for information staff.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Livestock Farms

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the average amounts of capital employed excluding land, on livestock farms within the less-favoured areas at the most recent convenient date.

Mr. Curry: The 1992 edition of "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom" contains estimates based on sample surveys of the level of assets employed on livestock farms in the less-favoured areas. The following table shows the average value of total assets, excluding land and buildings, on LFA livestock farms in 1990-91.

	£'000 per farm
England	102·2
Wales	92·1
Scotland	105·4
Northern Ireland	57·7

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the average farm incomes for livestock farms in the less-favoured areas for each of the last five years up to 1992, using the notional figures which his Department have used of increases of 29 per cent. for last year and 16 per cent. for this year, split between severely disadvantaged and disadvantaged areas.

Mr. Curry: Estimates, based on sample surveys, of the levels of nominal net farm incomes on the various types of livestock farm in the less-favoured areas for the past three years are contained in table 14 of the data prepared for the 1992 autumn review of the economic conditions in the hills and uplands, a copy of which has been deposited in the Library of the House.

Year by year comparisons can best be made by reference to results from a constant sample of farms. The following table shows indices of net farm income for each year from 1986-87 to 1992-93 and estimated income levels for the latest available constant sample.

Average Net farm income on LFA livestock farms

	Severely Disadvantaged Area		Disadvantaged Area		All LFA	
	[1]Index	£'000 per farm	[1]Index	£'000 per farm	[1]Index	£'000 per farm
1986-87	80	—	113	—	82	—
1987-88	118	—	218	—	125	—
1988-89	145	—	293	—	154	—
1989-90	103	—	152	—	106	—
1990-91	87	8·3	58	2·8	85	7·1
1991-92	110	10·4	91	4·3	109	9·1
1992-93[2]	128	12·2	102	4·9	127	10·6

[1]1989-90—1991-92=100
[2](forecast)

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the rate of the hill livestock compensatory allowance to be paid on eligible sheep in the disadvantaged areas within the less favoured areas of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: I am pleased to announce that following the green pound devaluation with effect from 1 January 1993 the headage payment rate for eligible ewes in disadvantaged areas has been increased by 41p to £2·86 per ewe. A statutory instrument will shortly be laid before Parliament giving effect to the proposed new headage rates that will apply under the 1993 scheme. Payment of claims will start as soon as possible.

EDUCATION

Higher Education

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of students in higher education left their courses before completion and sought employment in *(a)* 1982 and *(b)* 1992.

Mr. Boswell: Destinations of students who leave courses before completion are not collected. Details of leavers in the old universities are given in table 10 of "University Management Statistics and Performance Indicators", 1992 edition, a copy of which is in the Library. Available data for the former polytechnics and colleges are shown in DFE statistical bulletin 9/92, which is also in the Library. The next departmental report will also contain a table of estimated wastage rates; it shows wastage at 13·1 per cent. in 1982-83 and 15·3 per cent. in 1990-91.

GCSE Grade Changes

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many candidates in 1990, 1991 and 1992, in the Southern examining group area, had their grades altered due to a year-on-year change in standards of more than 3 per cent.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: New GCSE awarding procedures were introduced by the Southern examining group in 1992. To ensure that these did not result in a change in standards, awarding officers' judgments were reconsidered in those cases where there was a significant change in the proportions of candidates achieving particular grades. The awarding officers' judgments were endorsed in all but two subjects; in these, 329 grades out of 19,374—1·7 per cent.—were revised. These procedures were not in operation in 1990 and 1991.

GCSE

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidelines his Department has issued to examining groups on changes to GCSE statistical standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Department has given no guidelines to the examining groups on this or any other matter relating to the conduct of school examinations. My right hon. Friend will, however, shortly publish a mandatory code of practice which all groups will be required to follow as a condition of his continuing approval of GCSE qualifications.

Examinations (Criterion Referencing)

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) when the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council gave permission for examination groups to move from full criterion referencing to norm referencing; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the original timetable for GCSE grades to be fully criteria referenced; when it was revised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The national trend in the development of school examinations has been in the opposite direction to that implied by the hon. Member's questions. The introduction of the GCSE in 1988 marked a move to a more criterion-referenced examination system. The alignment of the GCSE with national curriculum requirements progressively from 1994 will mark a further move in that direction, since assessment in each of the foundation subjects will be related to clearly defined statements of attainment. The timetable for this alignment has not been altered: it will begin in summer 1994 with English, mathematics and science.

Teacher Education Units

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the future of teacher education units and the tutors involved in them in existing higher education institutions.

Mr. Boswell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) on 17 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *123*.

WALES

Operation Wizard

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on the commissioning of Touche Ross by the Welsh Development Agency as part of the team of consultants working on the Operation Wizard exercise;

(2) if he will make a statement on the commissioning of consultants Outram Cullinan and Co., Villiers street, London WC2, as part of the Operation Wizard exercise;

(3) what ministerial approval was given for expenditure by the Welsh Development Agency on merchant banking consultancy advice on a wholesale or retail management buy-out of WDA operations in 1989-90; what consultations were undertaken; and what guidelines were set for the Operation Wizard exercise.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 13 January 1993]:* The then Secretary of State considered possible options for the future of the WDA's functions in 1988 and 1989. This consideration included professional advice commissioned by the agency on a range of options for increasing private sector involvement. It was decided that the WDA's range of functions should remain unchanged subject to regular review from time to time under the cycle of financial management and policy reviews.

Dental Health

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he will take to improve the dental health of pupils in the schools of Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is the responsibility of health authorities, in conjunction with family health services authorities, to procure adequate dental health services for their area based on their assessment of local need.

The Welsh Office has circulated an "Oral Health Gain Protocol for Wales" which should assist health authorities in this process.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in order of dental health the health districts of Wales according to United Kingdom dental surveys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The decannial United Kingdom child and adult dental health surveys do not provide data in the form requested.

Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* Welsh medium schools and *(b)* English medium schools have been (i) opened and (ii) closed since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department does not collect information in the form requested. The provision of both Welsh and English medium schools is the responsibility of the local education authority.

Health Education

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he will take to improve health education in Wales *(a)* overall and *(b)* in respect of dental health.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: *(a)* The Health Promotion Authority for Wales has published a series of strategic documents entitled "Plans for Action". The latest document in this series, published in July 1992, presents specific health targets, many seeking improved lifestyles and enabling progress to be measured against the extensive health surveys undertaken throughout Wales.

Under the new GP contract health promotion arrangements, GPs are required by their terms of service to provide health promotion advice to their patients. New arrangements from 1 July 1993 will ensure that their advice will be delivered within a framework of national and local priorities.

(b) The Health Promotion Authority for Wales has appointed an oral and dental adviser with responsibility for dental health education in Wales.

The Welsh Office's recently issued oral health protocol laid down a number of major service targets relating to dental health education including the provision that dentists offer advice to patients on these issues.

Dyslexic Children

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what policy initiatives he will take concerning the needs of dyslexic children in the schools of Wales; and what is his policy concerning dyslexic children in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is the responsibility of local education authorities to identify, assess and make appropriate provision for children with special educational needs, including those who are dyslexic. The Welsh Office supports expenditure by local education authorities for the training of designated teachers of special educational needs in ordinary schools and the initial training of educational psychologists, both of which can help children with dyslexia.

Our proposals in the Education Bill to provide new rights and improve the assessment and statementing process will be of benefit to all children with special needs.

English Texts

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the texts by English language Welsh authors proposed for particular study by 14-year-olds in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The first statutory assessments of 14-year-olds in the subject of English, planned for June 1993, will include a test of reading against prescribed texts.

A booklet for study by 14-year-old pupils who are at levels 3 to 4 of the national curriculum was announced in November 1992. Based on books which are widely available in secondary schools, the list includes "Illustrated Poetry Broadsheets: Poetry from Wales" which is a thematic collection of poetry by Welsh authors. The wider recommended anthology for all abilities was announced on 4 January 1993 and includes extracts from Dylan Thomas's "A Child's Christmas in Wales" and R. S. Thomas's "Cynddylan on a Tractor".

The booklists were drawn up by the School Examinations and Assessment Council in consultation with the Curriculum Council for Wales and the National Curriculum Council. The texts are suitably demanding for pupils of this age, and reflect the requirements of the reading attainment target in English.

SCOTLAND

Mr. Thomas Adleigh

Mrs. Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Lord Advocate will direct that a fatal accident inquiry be held into the death of Mr. Thomas Adleigh of 27 Glencairn road, Paisley.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The death of Mr. Adleigh was reported by Strathclyde police to the procurator fiscal, Paisley who has sought further information as to the circumstances. A decision on whether a fatal accident inquiry will be held into Mr. Adleigh's death will be taken at the conclusion of the procurator fiscal's inquiries.

Non-domestic Rates

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on non-domestic rates for 1993-94.

Mr. Lang: Continuing our policy of reducing Scottish business rate poundages to the level of the English national non-domestic rate, Scottish businesses will pay £68 million less in rates next year than they otherwise would have done. This is a poundage reduction of over 7 per cent. in real terms and an actual reduction in cash terms of 4 per cent.

The total reduction, due to the Government's policy and our earlier decision to limit increases in poundages to no more than inflation from 1989-90 onwards, is now at least £400 million.

The reduction of £68 million is larger than had been allowed for in drawing up the spending plans we made last year and £56 million of it will be met by increased revenue support grant to local authorities. Local authorities are being asked to contribute the remaining £12 million through efficiency savings.

The table shows the rate poundages which I intend to prescribe for each local authority in regulations I shall lay before Parliament very shortly. Apart from Orkney and Shetland and, as a result of the reduction for next year, Kincardine and Deeside, which are at the English level, the poundage of every authority has been reduced in cash terms. As last year, I have decided to make larger reductions to those poundages furthest from the English non-domestic rate. As a result, the poundage reductions in real terms range from over 8·8 per cent. in Glasgow to 2·1 per cent. in the case of Kincardine and Deeside.

The reduction in poundages will again be accompanied by an associated reduction in derating: from 25 to 17·5 per cent. The reduction takes into account the additional £40 million reduction in poundages for this year made following the 1992 Budget.

Our decision to reduce business rates and to increase revenue support grant next year beyond our original plans yet again, at a time when resources are very scarce, continues to demonstrate the high priority we give to it. We remain committed to eliminating the difference between Scotland and England just as quickly as resources permit.

	1992-93 Poundages	*1993-94 Pre-NNDR Reduction*	*1993-94 Poundages*	*1993-94 Poundages at Ratepayer Level*	*Reduction to Ratepayer*
	P	*P*	*P*	*P*	*P*
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	9·6	9·9	7·1	53·8	4·4
Cumnock and Doon Valley	10·0	10·4	7·5	54·2	4·5
Cunninghame	12·2	12·6	9·3	56·0	4·9
Dumbarton	11·2	11·6	8·5	55·2	4·7
East Kilbride	8·2	8·5	5·9	52·6	4·2
Eastwood	5·4	5·6	3·6	50·3	3·6
Glasgow City	16·6	17·2	13·0	59·7	5·8
Hamilton	10·6	11·0	8·0	54·7	4·6
Inverclyde	9·3	9·6	6·9	53·6	4·3
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	9·6	9·9	7·1	53·8	4·4
Kyle and Carrick	10·0	10·4	7·5	54·2	4·5
Monklands	10·6	11·0	8·0	54·7	4·6
Motherwell	9·6	9·9	7·1	53·8	4·4
Renfrew	10·6	11·0	8·0	54·7	4·6
Strathkelvin	9·3	9·6	6·9	53·6	4·3
Angus	8·2	8·5	6·4	50·0	3·6
Dundee City	13·4	13·9	10·8	54·4	4·6
Perth and Kinross	8·6	8·9	6·7	50·3	3·7
Orkney	40·2	41·6	41·6	41·6	0·0
Shetland	40·2	41·6	41·6	41·6	0·0
Western Isles	55·1	57·0	52·8	52·8	4·2

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Royal Palaces (Fire Protection)

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to set up the inquiry to assess the adequacy of fire protection measures at the royal palaces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I am pleased to announce that Sir Alan Bailey, former permanent secretary to the Department of Transport, has agreed to chair the inquiry. The other members are Mr. Donald Insall, architect and planning consultant and principal of Donald W. Insall and Associates and Mr. Philip Kilshaw, former deputy senior fire safety inspector in Her Majesty's fire service inspectorate. The terms of reference of the inquiry are:

"In the light of the Windsor Castle fire to assess the adequacy of fire protection measures for the royal palaces and residences for which I have a financial responsibility, and to report to me."

The inquiry group has already started work and I hope that it will be able to report within three to four months. The report will be published. I shall make a further statement when I have considered the report.

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if there have been any items accepted in lieu of tax or, allocated since his last announcement on 3 December 1992.

Mr. Brooke: Since my announcement on 3 December, *Official Report*, column *325*, I am pleased to inform the House of the acceptance of two offers in lieu of tax. The offers are of chattels from Sheringham Hall, which will satisfy £119,119 tax, and a Charles I silver gilt standing cup and cover, which will satisfy £199,401 tax. The chattels will be allocated to the National Trust; no decision has yet been made on the allocation of the cup.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Northern Ireland

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning United States policy towards Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None in recent months.

Missile Technology Control Regime

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent changes have been made to the scope of the missile technology control regime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In the light of concerns about the proliferation of biological and chemical weapons, members of the missile technology control regime agreed, in July 1992, to extend the scope of the regime to cover delivery systems for such weapons, as well as those for nuclear weapons. Technical discussions on details of the changes have now been concluded and members formally adopted the revised guidelines on 7 January 1993. These changes will further strengthen international efforts to combat missile proliferation and to frustrate attempts to deploy weapons of mass destruction. We shall continue to urge all states who are not members of the regime to adopt similar responsible policies on missile exports. A copy of the new guidelines will be placed in the Library of the House.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community's Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The following meetings are planned:

18 January: Economic and Finance Council
18-19 January: Agriculture Council

The following subjects are likely to be discussed:

(a) *Economic and Finance Council—18 January*
—Multilateral surveillance including national actions to promote economic recovery in Europe
—Action at the level of the Community to promote economic recovery in Europe
—Medium term Financial Assistance (possible)
(b) *Agriculture Council—18-19 January*
—GATT
—Accelerated transitional measures for Portugal (possible)

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 18 January to conduct a multilateral surveillance of the economies of member states and the package of Community measures to promote economic recovery in Europe which was agreed at the European Council in Edinburgh in December.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 18 and 19 January. Ministers will discuss recent developments in the GATT Uruguay round negotiations. Accelerated transitional measures for Portugal may also be discussed.

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number and percentage of people leaving youth training in 1991 in *(a)* Walsall and *(b)* west midlands, who were without full-time employment after (i) six months, (ii) nine months and (iii) 12 months.

Mr. McLoughlin: Of those young people leaving youth training providers during 1991 53 per cent. in the Walsall training and enterprise council area and 51 per cent. in west midlands were not in full-time employment six months after leaving. Twenty-three per cent. described themselves as unemployed; the rest as in part-time work, on another training programme, or on a full-time course at a college or training centre or doing something else. No information is collected about trainee activity after nine and 12 months.

Solvent-based Paints

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of experience outwith the United Kingdom on legislation governing the conditions under which solvent-based paints can be used and the circumstances under which they can be applied; and if she will review the United Kingdom legislation in the light of the assessment.

Mr. McLoughlin: No assessment has been made of experience outside the United Kingdom on legislation governing the use of solvent-based paints. However, the dangers presented by these products are under regular review, both within the United Kingdom by the Health and Safety Executive and within the European Community through expert working groups involving representatives from all member states. In the United Kingdom, the use of solvent-based paints at work is subject to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988. Specific guidance published by the HSE recommends the substitution of solvent-based paints by less harmful substances, such as water-based paints.

Jobcentres

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what plans her Department has to extend the range of services offered by jobcentres to the unemployed; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what are the rules by which jobcentre managers accept advertisements for services to the unemployed; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what plans her Department has to give jobcentre managers greater discretion on acceptance of advertisements for services to the unemployed; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Nigel Jones, dated 14 January 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Questions to her about the range of services offered by Jobcentres, the policy on advertising in Jobcentres and the flexibility which my local managers have on the display of advertising material. These fall within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The Secretary of State for Employment recently announced a new package of Employment Service measures aimed at providing nearly 500,000 extra opportunities in 1993-94 for long-term unemployed and other people disadvantaged in the labour market. As part of this package, we are introducing a new Jobplan workshop for people unemployed for 12 months. Jobplan will be a five day assessment workshop, which will help identify strengths and skills, set new job goals and draw up an action plan for the client's route back to work.

We are also expanding our Jobclub and Job Interview Guarantee programmes, which have proved to be very successful, as well as implementing a significant development of Work Trials. Work trials allow people the chance to try out a job for up to three weeks while retaining their entitlement to benefit.

Jobclub is aimed at people who have been unemployed for six months or more, and others at a disadvantage in the labour market. Jobclub members are given help and guidance in a variety of job hunting methods including interview technique, advice on applying for jobs, completion of application forms and preparation of CVs. Members also have access to telephones, stationery, newspapers, stamps and other resources.

The Job Interview Guarantee Scheme is also aimed at people who have been unemployed for six months or more. It offers employers a fuller recruitment and selection service in return for a guarantee that they will consider our long-term unemployed clients for their vacancies. I enclose a leaflet setting out the full range of help which unemployed people can access through Jobcentres.

Our policy for advertising services in Jobcentres is that my local office managers have full discretion to allow companies to display material likely to help our clients find work or training opportunities, providing there is sufficient space available and that no charge is made to the jobseeker for the service offered. There are no plans to change this arrangement.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Labour Statistics

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his latest estimate in percentage and absolute terms of unemployment among black adults in England and Wales.

Mr. McLoughlin: Results from the labour force survey show that in summer—June to August—1992 there were an estimated 102,000 black people aged 16 and over, in England and Wales, who were unemployed on the international agreed International Labour Organisation definition. The International Labour Organisation unemployment rate for the group was 25 per cent.

Construction Site Cradles

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action has been taken or is envisaged by the Health and Safety Executive to restrict or prohibit the use of modular system cradles coupled by drop pins on construction sites.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive has alerted users of any suspended access equipment on which drop nose pins link together sections of cradles, to the need for thorough examination and maintenance before such equipment is used.

The Health and Safety Executive has also met representatives of the Suspended Access Equipment Manufacturers Association and the National Association of Scaffolding Contractors. It was agreed that such cradles should be designed so that failure of a key component should not lead to total failure of the whole suspended access platform and that the training and competence of those who install and use them is important. The Health and Safety Executive has successfully advocated that these points be incorporated into the relevant British Standard codes of practice and is updating its own guidance on precautions essential for the safe use of suspended access equipment.

Youth Training

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the legal effect of the statement in leaflet IS 26 that a person aged 16 or 17 years has a right to the offer of a youth training place; and what remedy is available if such an offer is not made.

Mr. McLoughlin: The statement reflects the Government's guarantee of the offer of a suitable youth training place to young people aged 16 and 17 who are not in full-time education or a job and are seeking training. The Department contracts with training and enterprise councils for the delivery of the guarantee at local level and various remedies are available to my right hon. Friend if training and enterprise councils fail to deliver the guarantee. The contract requires training and enterprise councils to record and investigate any complaint made directly by or on behalf of a person in the guarantee group to the effect that the guarantee has not been discharged in respect of that person. Training and enterprise councils are required to use best endeavours to remedy any complaint which is upheld or, if a remedy is not available, to notify my right hon. Friend in writing.

DEFENCE

Hokum Helicopter

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made of the capability of the Hokum helicopter.

Mr. Aitken: While we have a reasonable appreciation of the capabilities of all helicopters, including the Hokum, which might be used in the anti-armour role, a full assessment of the Hokum's capabilities will only be undertaken if it is offered in the forthcoming attack helicopter competition.

Apache Helicopter

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made of the capability of the Apache helicopter.

Mr. Aitken: While we have a reasonable appreciation of the capabilities of all helicopters, including the Apache, which might be used in the anti-armour role, a full assessment of the Apache's capabilities will only be undertaken if it is offered in the forthcoming attack helicopter competition.

Gulf Trust

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria have been regarded as relevant in judging eligibility and in making distributions to beneficiaries from the Gulf Trust fund or the relevant service benevolent funds.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The deed of the trust for the Gulf Trust prescribes that moneys must be used to meet the financial needs of the beneficiaries and for the relief of sickness, distress and any other physical or mental disability, arising from the involvement of the armed forces in military or other operations relating to or in connection with the Gulf conflict. Potential beneficiaries are limited to members of the armed forces involved in the Gulf conflict; civilian personnel attached to or accompanying the armed forces in the Gulf conflict; and their respective dependants. The support which the service benevolent funds provide can thus cover a wide range of areas and will vary from case to case, in accordance with individual need.

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the range of needs which have been judged eligible, and have been met, by distribution from the Gulf Trust fund through the service benevolent funds.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The support that the service benevolent funds provide can cover a wide range of areas within the terms of the trust deeds and charity law. It is not the practice of the funds to release details of how they have dealt with individual cases.

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the latest figure of distributions made by the service benevolent funds, specifying the figures for the three individual funds, from moneys passed to them from the Gulf Trust fund.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

	£
King George's Fund for Sailors	nil
Army Benevolent Fund	304,990
RAF Benevolent Fund	287,630

The figures include moneys paid out up to 31 December 1992, but exclude adminstrative costs and miscellaneous expenses. Some of the payments that were made in the form of loans have already been repaid.

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the latest available figure of the sums donated by members of the public to the Gulf Trust fund; what total sums, and under what apportionment, have been passed on to the three service benevolent funds from the Gulf Trust fund; and on what basis the apportionments have been calculated.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 31 December 1992, a total of £3,008,051 had been donated to the Gulf Trust fund. No block allocation of funds has been passed by the united services trustee to the service benevolent funds. The benevolent funds are meeting claims arising from the Gulf conflict by payments made to them as necessary by the Gulf Trust fund. The amount of money allocated to each of the service benevolent funds will be announced when the Gulf Trust is wound up.

RAF Church Fenton

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans for the future use or disposal of the RAF Church Fenton headquarters buildings and residential accommodation have been made, following recent decisions about the RAF's future use and requirements of the landing facilities there.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The airfield at RAF Church Fenton is designated as a relief landing ground for RAF Linton on Ouse and this requirement will exist for the foreseeable future. The married quarters are to be retained for service use. The majority of the technical site, however, including the headquarters buildings is scheduled for disposal.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Self-employed Businesses

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total number of self-employed businesses in the north-east for each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The available information for the northern region—Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Cumbria, Durham and Cleveland—based on the labour force survey, is given in the table.

Vietnam

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South on 14 December, *Official Report*, column *27*, what discussions he has had with the Vietnamese Government with a view to recovering outstanding trade debts.

Mr. Needham: The Export Credits Guarantee Department has attempted to negotiate the settlement of trade debts owed by Vietnam on which ECGD has paid claims. These negotiations have proved fruitless. The Vietnamese Government have now signalled their intention to regularise their payments position with their creditors and to seek a formal restructuring of the official debt under the auspices of the Paris club.

North-East Businesses

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the net number of new businesses in the north-east for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The available information for the northern region—Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Cumbria, Durham and Cleveland—based on VAT data, is given in the table. During the period 1987 to 1991 the number of businesses registered for VAT in the northern region increased by 6,800.

VAT registrations and deregistrations in Northern region

	Registrations (000's)	*Deregistrations (000's)*	*Net change (000's)*
1987	7·3	6·2	1·1
1988	8·3	6·7	1·7
1989	9·1	6·8	2·4
1990	8·3	6·7	1·6
1991	6·9	6·8	0·1

These figures reflect the success of the Government's policies in encouraging enterprise and new business formation within the region.

Self-employed in Northern region

	(000's)
1983	91
1984	92
1985	104
1986	105
1987	108
1988	113
1989	110
1990	115
1991	115
1992	114

These figures underline the success of the Government's policy in encouraging the growth of the enterprise culture and self-employment within the region.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Allen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with *(a)* Nottinghamshire county council, *(b)* the European Commission and *(c)* any other bodies on the question of the compatibility of state aid to the nuclear industry with EC treaty provisions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Government are aware that Nottinghamshire county council has made representations to the European Commission concerning the Commission's decision in March 1990 not to raise objections to the provision of state aids to the nuclear industry. It is for the Commission to respond to these representations as it deems appropriate.

Wind Power

Mr. Colvin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his curent target in megawatts for wind power electricity.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) on 16 November, *Official Report*, column *69*.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Colvin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will respond to the fourth report of the Select Committee on Energy on renewable energy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Government's response to the Energy Select Committee report on renewable energy was announced to the House on 16 July 1992, *Official Report*, column *997*.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *479*, when he received the report by the renewable energy advisory group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The report by the Renewable Energy Advisory Group was received by the President's office on 24 November 1992. Its printing was then expedited to make it available to Members before the Christmas recess.

International Trade

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will state the value of imports, exports and trade balance in manufactured goods with the rest of the OECD countries, in total, and by individual country, in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Information for 1979 and 1991 is given in the table. Information for 1970 and each year from 1980 to 1990 could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

United Kingdom trade in manufactured goods[1] with OECD countries

£ million

	1979			1991		
	Exports	*Imports*	*Crude balance*	*Exports*	*Imports*	*Crude balance*
OECD total	23,260	27,208	−3,948	69,553	79,699	−10,146
France	2,320	3,038	−718	9,120	8,749	371
Belgium/Luxembourg	2,055	1,928	127	5,104	4,610	494
Netherlands	1,929	1,845	84	6,133	7,112	−979
Germany F.R.[2]	2,781	5,310	−2,529	12,564	16,484	−3,920
Italy	1,175	1,971	−797	5,135	5,649	−514
Irish Republic	1,835	877	959	3,985	2,860	1,125
Denmark	559	412	147	1,248	1,198	50
Iceland	37	22	15	85	39	46
Faroe Island	3	1	2	6	3	3
Norway	443	482	−38	1,078	991	87
Sweden	942	1,275	−333	2,032	2,657	−624
Finland	325	572	−247	643	1,252	−609
Switzerland	2,225	2,508	−283	2,007	3,659	−1,651
Austria	229	328	−98	738	892	−154
Portugal	261	245	16	880	847	33
Spain	360	441	−81	3,340	1,930	1,410
Yugoslavia	153	37	116	170	134	37
Greece	242	58	184	499	206	293
Turkey	129	19	110	547	298	250
Ceuta and Melilla	1	0	1	1	0	1
Canary Islands	24	5	19	48	4	44
Japan	481	1,441	−960	1,929	6,655	−4,726
Australia	743	247	496	1,229	416	813
New Zealand	284	19	265	233	52	181
Greenland	0	0	0	1	1	0
Canada	648	519	130	1,148	1,024	125
USA	3,075	3,610	−535	9,650	11,978	−2,328

[1] Manufactured goods are defined as sections 5-8 of the Standard International Trade Classification.
[2] 1991 figures include the former German Democratic Republic.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the United Kingdom share of the world trade in manufactures in *(a)* 1962, *(b)* 1970 and *(c)* for each year since 1979 to the present; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The figures requested are shown in the table.

United Kingdom value share of exports of manufactures from the MMC[1] to the World.

Year	*Per cent.*
1962	15·5
1970	10·6
1979	9·1
1980	9·6
1981	8·5
1982	8·4
1983	7·9
1984	7·5
1985	7·8
1986	7·6
1987	8·1
1988	8·3
1989	8·2
1990	8·6
1991	8·5

[1] Main Manufacturing Countries.
Source: Table E1, Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics, Annual Supplement No. 2, 1981.
Table E1, Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics, Annual Supplement No. 13, 1992

There has been a stable or increasing United Kingdom share throughout the 1980s overall, after years of decline.

Pit Closures

Mrs. Golding: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps are being taken to extend the term of the existing redundancy agreement for miners following the High Court judgment preventing the immediate closure of pits; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None. British Coal's redundancy terms are a matter for British Coal. It would, however, seem reasonable for the corporation not to determine its redundancy arrangements from 1 April 1993 until at least the outcome of the coal review is known.

Coal Industry

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he has made to the submission to him from Birmingham city council on the impact of coal industry restructuring.

Mr. Eggar: I have seen and considered the paper, a copy of which was handed to me by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight). We are taking its contents into account along with the other submissions we have received in the context of the coal review.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to repeal or amend section 46 of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* I am considering British Coal's suggestion that this provision be

repealed, along with all the other evidence to the coal review. We shall shortly publish a White Paper setting out the results of that review.

Accountancy Bodies

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has received the first annual reports on audit regulation of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants and the Association of Authorised Public Accountants as recognised supervisory bodies under Part II of the Companies Act 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have now received the first annual reports of these two associations on their activities as recognised supervisory bodies for the regulation of company auditors, and have placed copies in the Library. My Department will be discussing the contents of the reports with the bodies.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Community Regeneration

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show the sums expended under the Community economic regeneration scheme in each year to date and detailing the projects supported and the sources of the funds, showing in each case the amounts, or as much of such information as is readily available to him.

Mr. Atkins: The sums expended on the Community economic regeneration scheme in each year to date and the details of the projects supported are as follows:

Title	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93*[1] £	*Total* £
Dairy Farm, Belfast	140,411·00	2,294,559·92	2,467,744·28	40,601·58	4,943,316·78
North Howard Street, Belfast	145,962·67	1,505,163·58	1,771,311·17	998,451·68	4,420,889·10
Ashton Street, Belfast	65,442·69	315,463·54	637,434·64	4,365·05	1,022,695·92
Bryson Street, Belfast	—	—	613,745·30	317,898·25	931,643·55
Shantallow Village, Londonderry	—	—	1,099,774·66	1,784,814·94	2,884,589·60
Inner City Trust Heritage Centre, Londonderry	—	—	—	625,000·00	625,000·00
Community Enterprise Centre, Creggan, Londonderry	—	—	—	15,692·59	15,692·59

[1] To date.

Costs are generally shared equally between the International Fund for Ireland and the Department of the Environment (NI).

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show the sums expended on the Community regeneration initiative special project in each year to date; on which projects they were spent; and what were the sources of the funds, showing in each case the amounts or as much of such information as is readily available to him.

Mr. Atkins: The sums expended on CRISP in each year to date and the projects where the money was spent are as follows:

CRISP town	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*[1]
Coalisland			
Cornmill	12,557·39	330,079·28	486,445·41
Fireclay Works	—	11,213·11	319,805·28
Weaving Factory	153,529·75	113,894·65	9,300·53
Carrickmore			
Milestone Centre	8,480·14	171,795·47	1,010,739·55
Garrison			
Gillaroo Court	—	21,531·29	25,669·47
Plumbridge	—	6,171·05	17,564·20
Pettigo			
Environmental Improvements	—	14,675·88	227·86
Miscellaneous	—	442·50	—
Derrygonnelly			
Environmental Improvements	4,838·22	5,230·93	—
Creamery Complex	—	5,578·07	51,597·82
Newtownhamilton			
Core Project	—	2,038·15	2,394·05
Belcoo			
Environmental Improvements	—	4,731·79	17,347·78
Core Project	—	753·82	34·49
Dromore, County Tyrone			
Environmental Improvements	—	22,566·78	44,636·90
Workspace Units	2,921·45	7,448·65	110,350·78
Cullyhanna			
Core Project	—	236·54	3,311·03
Portaferry			
Brewery Yard	—	14,363·87	55,721·85
Downpatrick			
Core Project	—	555·42	3,220·00
Castlewellan			
Core Project	—	14,597·81	5,828·44
Crossmaglen			
Core Project	—	—	8,237·37
Drumquin			
Core Project	—	—	6,254·31

CRISP town	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93[1]
Hilltown			
The Downshire Arms	—	10,724·74	132,844·53
Castlederg			
Castle Site	23,920·22	48,495·00	32,654·00
Environmental Improvements	5,270·29	35,196·00	32,493·00
Cushendall			
Core Project	—	—	54·20
Keady			
Environmental Improvements	2,648·72	4,525·50	211,140·95
Old Mill	—	32,852·75	35,560·15
Draperstown			
Environmental Improvements	—	13,789·88	1,491·50
Belleek			
Envirnmental Improvements	9,029·69	53,023·95	3,268·94
Gateway Centre	—	92,518·50	256,668·12
Stewartstown			
Environmental Improvements	—	4,373·63	9,240·37
Core Project	—	9·78	17,935·22

[1]To 8 January 1993.

Costs of the core projects and environmental improvement elements of CRISP are shared equally by the International Fund for Ireland and the Department of the Environment, Northern Ireland.

Information on the urban development grant element of CRISP is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. This grant is for the refurbishment of property and is available throughout Northern Ireland outside Belfast and Londonderry. It is wholly funded by the International Fund for Ireland.

Water Services

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much of the regional rate paid by ratepayers in Northern Ireland is charged for water services, including sewage disposal.

Mr. Mates *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* Although the regional rate is based on expenditure by central Government in Northern Ireland on services which in Great Britain would be undertaken by local authorities, it is essentially a general charge and the proceeds are not allocated to the component services. However, since 1991-92 arrangements have been made to appropriate in aid of water services, including sewage disposal, the relevant share of regional rate income to facilitate transition to commercial accounting procedures. In 1992-93 the share of the regional rate appropriated in aid of these services is equivalent to poundage of 65·63 p.

PRIME MINISTER

Objectives

Q8. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister what are his objectives for 1993.

The Prime Minister: Among the Government's objectives for 1993 are continuing to work for economic growth and recovery and to encourage British industry to take advantage of the great opportunities offered by the single market; reducing the burden of regulations on business; pressing ahead with our reforms of education and health so that there will be more grant-maintained schools and more GP fund holders; continuing to drive for a return to basics in our schools and to give parents more information about how their children are doing; extending home ownership; making further progress with privatisation and contracting out; strengthening and modernising our police force and cracking down on juvenile offenders in particular; continuing our reforms as part of the citizens charter programme to give more power to those who use our public services; bringing forward proposals to develop a network of voluntary help in local communities; defending Britain's interests in Europe and the world.

Edinburgh Summit

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral statement in answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, of 14 December, *Official Report*, column 34, what was the result of his inquiries relating to Telecom's arrangements for incoming calls at the Meadowbank stadium for journalists attending the Edinburgh summit.

The Prime Minister: I wrote to the hon. Member on 16 December setting out the telecommunications arrangements at the European Council media centre.

Peerages

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the peerages created since 30 November 1990, together with the dates on which the holders were introduced.

The Prime Minister: The information is as follows:

Peers created under the Appellate Jurisdiction Act 1876

	Created	Introduced
Lord Browne-Wilkinson (a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary)	1 October 1991	15 October 1991
Lord Mustill (a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary)	10 January 1992	11 March 1992
Lord Slynn (a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary)	11 March 1992	11 March 1992
Lord Woolf (a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary)	1 October 1992	1 November 1992
Peers created under the Life Peers Act 1958		
Lord Waddington	4 December 1990	4 December 1990
Lord Sterling of Plaistow	17 January 1991	23 January 1991
Lord White of Hull	25 January 1991	29 January 1991
Lord Runcie	1 February 1991	26 February 1991
Lord Pallumbo	4 February 1991	12 February 1991
Lord Griffiths of Fforestfach	5 February 1991	20 February 1991

	Created	Introduced
Baroness James of Holland Park	7 February 1991	19 February 1991
Lord Laing of Dunphail	8 February 1991	19 February 1991
Baroness Seccombe	14 February 1991	26 February 1991
Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale	26 March 1991	26 March 1991
Lord Desai	5 June 1991	18 June 1991
Baroness Hamwee	6 June 1991	12 June 1991
Lord Marlesford	7 June 1991	11 June 1991
Lord Judd	10 June 1991	25 June 1991
Baroness Denton of Wakefield	11 June 1991	11 June 1991
Baroness Hilton of Eggardon	14 June 1991	2 July 1991
Baroness Mallalieu	19 June 1991	19 June 1991
Lord Hollick	20 June 1991	25 June 1991
Baroness O'Cathain	21 June 1991	3 July 1991
Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorn	24 June 1991	9 July 1991
Lord Mackay of Ardbrecknish	26 June 1991	26 June 1991
Lord Skidelsky	15 July 1991	17 July 1991
Baroness Perry of Southwark	16 July 1991	16 July 1991
Lord Cheshire	17 July 1991	24 July 1991
Lord MacFarlane of Bearsden	29 July 1991	15 October 1991
Lord Craig of Radley	30 July 1991	16 October 1991
Lord Rix	27 January 1992	12 February 1992
Lord Prentice	30 January 1992	12 February 1992
Lord Rodgers of Quarry Bank	12 February 1992	25 February 1992
Lord Wilson of Tillyorn	14 February 1992	15 July 1992
Lord Wakeham	24 April 1992	28 April 1992
Baroness Chalker of Wallasey	24 April 1992	23 April 1992
Lord Taylor of Gosforth	27 April 1992	29 April 1992
Lord Roger of Earlsferry	29 April 1992	29 April 1992
Baroness Thatcher	26 June 1992	30 June 1992
Lord Finsberg	27 June 1992	13 July 1992
Lord Parkinson	29 June 1992	7 July 1992
Lord Healey	29 June 1992	1 July 1992
Lord Owen	30 June 1992	8 July 1992
Lord Howe of Aberavon	30 June 1992	1 July 1992
Lord Lawson of Blaby	1 July 1992	6 July 1992
Lord Merlyn-Rees	1 July 1992	7 July 1992
Lord Howell	2 July 1992	9 July 1992
Lord Moore of Lower Marsh	3 July 1992	6 July 1992
Lord Tebbit	6 July 1992	9 July 1992
Lord Younger of Prestwick	7 July 1992	14 July 1992
Lord Amery of Lustleigh	8 July 1992	8 July 1992
Lord Walker of Worcester	8 July 1992	21 June 1992
Lord Archer of Sandwell	9 July 1992	14 July 1992
Lord Ashley of Stoke	10 July 1992	13 July 1992
Lord Eatwell	14 July 1992	19 October 1992
Lord Weatherill	14 July 1992	15 July 1992
Lord Ewing of Kirkford	17 July 1992	26 October 1992
Lord Geraint	18 July 1992	27 October 1992
Lord Stewartby	20 July 1992	20 October 1992
Lord Clark of Kempston	21 July 1992	28 October 1992
Lord Plant of Highfield	24 July 1992	4 November 1992
Lord Archer of Weston-Super-Mare	27 July 1992	20 October 1992
Lord Ridley of Liddesdale	28 July 1992	28 October 1992
Baroness Jay of Paddington	29 July 1992	21 October 1992
Lord Williams of Mostyn	30 July 1992	26 October 1992
Lord Braine of Wheatley	10 August 1992	2 November 1992
Lord Cooke of Islandreagh	11 August 1992	3 November 1992
Lord Barber of Tewkesbury	12 August 1992	2 November 1992
Lord Hayhoe	21 August 1992	3 November 1992
Lord Gilmour of Craigmillar	25 August 1992	4 November 1992
Lord Elis-Thomas	18 September 1992	27 October 1992

Squatting

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Prime Minister if he will transfer responsibility for squatting as an issue to the Department of the Environment.

The Prime Minister: No.

Treasury (Advice to Ministers)

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Prime Minister when he expects to market-test the provision of advice to Treasury Ministers.

The Prime Minister: The provision of advice to Treasury Ministers is one of the Treasury's core functions and there are no plans for it to be market tested.

London

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Prime Minister what machinery of government deals with London affairs.

The Prime Minister: Government Departments deal with issues within their areas of responsibility. The Cabinet sub-committee on London co-ordinates their policies. The 32 London boroughs and the corporation of the City of London are responsible for local government services in London, with joint arrangements where these are necessary.

Ministerial Committees

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Prime Minister if he will update the list of ministerial standing Cabinet committees published in May 1992 to include a list of those ad hoc ministerial committees established since the formation of his Government.

The Prime Minister: I will publish an updated list shortly.

Travellers

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Prime Minister where the responsibility lies for caravan site provision for the traditional travelling community.

The Prime Minister: The Caravan Sites Act 1968 requires local authorities in England and Wales to provide accommodation on caravan sites for travelling people staying in or resorting to their areas. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, local authorities have a discretionary power to provide sites for travelling people.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Prime Minister what provisions exist to improve access to state services for the traditional travelling community.

The Prime Minister: In England and Wales, the Department for Education and the Welsh Office respectively provide grant support to local education authorities to help them improve the attendance of traveller children at school and meet their particular educational needs. General medical and hospital services are available to travellers on the same basis as to the rest of the population and health authorities are expected to take account of travellers' needs when planning services. In addition, the Department of Health is funding a number of special schemes aimed at meeting the day-to-day needs of such groups as single rough sleepers, families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and traveller families.

In Scotland, education and health services for travelling people are under regular review by the Secretary of State's advisory committee on travelling people. In Northern Ireland, a document published in November 1992 by the advisory committee on travellers reviewed progress on travelling people's access to services. A consultation process is in train.

Cabinet Papers

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what is the reason for withholding release of certain Cabinet papers and departmental papers on the royal family and Cyprus beyond 30 years.

The Prime Minister: Records relating to these matters are considered for release after 30 years in the normal way in accordance with the provisions of the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967. Any which are deemed to require protection for longer than 30 years are either closed under section 5(1) or retained in Departments under section 3(4) of the Public Records Act 1958 in accordance with the criteria published in the Government's response to the Wilson Committee report "Modern Public Records", Cmnd. 8531.

Government of Scotland

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister what he has done since April 1992 to take stock of how Scotland is governed; when he plans to announce his proposals for the future; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I am examining a wide range of aspects of the governance of Scotland and have had fruitful discussions with numerous people in Scotland representing many walks of life and political viewpoints. Once the review is complete, the Government will announce the results to the House.

Bed-and-breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if he will take steps to investigate the incidence of poor nutrition and ill health among families living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation; and what representations he has received on this subject.

The Prime Minister: There is evidence concerning the association between ill-health and adverse social circumstances, but little to identify specific causes of this, particularly the role of nutrition. Indeed, the nutritional content of the diets of people of all incomes is remarkably similar. A balanced diet with more bread, cereals, seasonal vegetables and fruit, and fewer fatty foods can be cheaper than a less healthy diet. The Nutritional task force set up to help implement the White Paper "Health of the Nation" will seek ways to improve the promotion of healthy eating.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if he will direct the Secretary of State for Employment to discontinue replying to hon. Members' questions over regional unemployment by referring them to the NOMIS data base in the Library; and if he will make it his policy that the information requested should be published in the *Official Report*.

The Prime Minister: I endorse the procedure followed by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Employment, which is to refer hon. Members to NOMIS when more than 10 figures are asked for. The introduction of this procedure was announced, in answer to a parliamentary question, by the then Secretary of State for Employment, on 19 October 1990. This was done only after extensive consultation with both sides of the House and with the then Speaker. The procedure does not result in withholding information and does not deny hon. Members the opportunity of asking questions about unemployment or other labour market issues. NOMIS is a public data base, which can be accessed through a terminal in the House of Commons Library. It provides an open and an efficient way of publishing statistics, which I welcome under the citizens charter. The *Official Report* has never been a statistical digest.

Council of Europe

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Prime Minister whether he has made any changes to the composition of the United Kingdom delegation for the 44th Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Prime Minister: With effect from 1 February 1993 my hon. Friend the Member for Ravensbourne (Sir J. Hunt) and my noble Friend, Lord Newall will become representatives on the delegation and my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) and my noble Friend, the Earl of Dundee, will become substitutes. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) has resigned from the delegation.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 January.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Coreper

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what changes took place in the operation of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the European Council during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council.

The Prime Minister: None, other than that the chair was taken by the British representative.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Village Halls

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans his Department has to standardise the financial controls on loans given to village halls under different Government schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: There are no plans to standardise the financial controls on loans given to village halls under different Government schemes. However, the Government keep these schemes under review.

Cars (Taxation)

Mr. Olner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the yield in 1991-92, and what is the latest estimate of yield in 1992-93, from *(a)* petrol duty, *(b)* DERV duty, *(c)* vehicle excise duty, *(d)* VAT on petrol and derv sales, *(e)* VAT on vehicle sales and *(f)* car tax.

Sir John Cope: Information on the outturn yield in 1991-92 and the projected yield in 1992-93 is provided in the table:

	1991-92 Outturn £ billion	*1992-93 Forecast £ billion*
Petrol duty	8·0	8·3
DERV duty	2·8	2·8
Vehicle excise duty	2·9	3·2
VAT on petrol and derv	1·6	n.a.
VAT on vehicles sales	2·7	n.a.
Car tax	1·2	0·5

No direct figures are available for the VAT spent on petrol and DERV and on vehicle sales. The table contains estimates of the outturn on total VAT yield that can be attributed to these items on the basis of national accounts data on expenditure. For petrol and DERV the VAT estimate covers only consumers' expenditure—the yield from business expenditure is highly uncertain because the majority of businesses can reclaim the VAT paid as input tax. The relevant data are not available for 1992-93.

The 1992-93 forecasts for car tax have been revised to take account of abolition of the tax in November 1992.

HOME DEPARTMENT

IRA Bombing Campaign

12. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes he intends to make in the structure and operations of police forces in England and Wales to counter the current Irish Republican Army bombing campaign.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I consider that the existing operational arrangements for dealing with terrorism are satisfactory.

Safer Cities

13. **Mr. Duncan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the main achievements of his Department's safer cities initiatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many safer cities projects have been established; and what assessment he has made of their effectiveness.

Mr. Jack: There are currently 20 safer cities projects which through a partnership approach have delivered over 2,800 crime prevention projects many of which, as the latest safer cities progress report shows, are now delivering effective reductions in both crime levels and the fear of crime.

Prison Population

14. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest estimate of the prison population.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The prison population in England and Wales on Wednesday 13 January was 41,134, including 273 prisoners in police cells.

EC Presidency

15. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on what was achieved by his Department during the United Kingdom presidency.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We made progress on a wide range of interior and justice issues including immigration and asylum policy, police co-operation, action to combat drugs, and judicial co-operation. The meetings of Immigration and Trevi Ministers on 30 November and 1 December reached agreement on a number of issues, notably in relation to various aspects of asylum policy and member states' practices regarding expulsion.

In addition, at a special meeting of Interior and Justice Ministers held on 18 September, it was agreed to establish a joint group of police and judicial experts to report within six months on the organisation and structures of the Mafia and other international criminal organisations.

Asylum Applications (Europe)

16. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of asylum applications from European countries were successful in the last year for which figures are available; and what was the figure for the EC as a whole.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The large majority of recent asylum applications from the former Yugoslavia are still under consideration. Of applications from other central and eastern European countries that were decided in the period January to November 1992, 3 per cent. were recognised as refugees under the 1951 UN convention and granted asylum. We do not have corresponding information on the outcome of such applications to other EC member states.

Press Office

17. **Ms. Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 9 December, *Official Report*, columns *662-64*, what progress has been made in his review of his Department's press office's procedures for handling inquiries about individual inquiries.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have completed the review and am satisfied that, under existing procedures, there is no question of my press office divulging personal details of any individual who has not sought to publicise his own dealings with my Department. I propose to continue this policy while reserving the right to stop silly and unfounded rumours.

Police (West Yorkshire)

18. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police are available for duty on the beat in *(a)* West Yorkshire and *(b)* the Pudsey division.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the chief constable that a total of 2,834 officers out of the present force establishment are available for patrol duties. The corresponding figure for the Pudsey sub-division is 128.

Bombing (Manchester)

19. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional measures his Department has taken to assist Greater Manchester police following the bombing in central Manchester on 3 December.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Operational responsibility for the investigation of the terrorist incidents in central Manchester on 3 December rests with the Greater Manchester police, who are able to draw on any assistance which they might require from the Metropolitan police anti-terrorist branch. I have every confidence that, as in the investigation of other forms of crime, the police are well equipped to carry out this responsibility.

Rave Parties

20. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to increase the power of local authorities to levy charges and set conditions for the holding of rave parties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have no plans to make any changes to the present arrangements governing the licensing of such events by local authorities.

Police (Northumbria)

21. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans to meet representatives of the Northumbria police authority to discuss manning levels.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State met representatives of Northumbria police authority on 10 December to discuss resource matters of concern to them. Staffing levels were included in those discussions.

Young People (Recidivism)

22. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to deal with the problem of recidivism in young people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Government are concerned about recidivism generally. In particular, we believe that more could and should be done to deal with the problem of persistent offending by what appears to be a comparatively small number of juvenile offenders. We are therefore looking urgently and critically at the existing legal and administrative arrangements for responding to juvenile offending.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his plans for consultation on Sunday trading.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said in his statement on 26 November that we are consulting the Shopping Hours Reform Council and the Keep Sunday Special Campaign about how to reflect their models for reform of the law on Sunday trading in a Government Bill. My right hon. and learned Friend and I have also met representatives from a number of organisations and retailers to discuss our proposals for reform .

Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contribution the Home Office makes to the Government's overall strategy for tackling drug and alcohol abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Home Office works closely with other Government Departments to ensure that the law and the wide range of Government policies for tackling the misuse of drugs and alcohol are effective. It has responsibility for the national criminal intelligence service whose drugs division provides intelligence on drug trafficking to Customs and the police. The Government's drug prevention initiative is co-ordinated by the Home Office through a central drugs prevention unit which manages and supports 20 local drugs prevention teams in England, Scotland and Wales. The work of the prison and probation services includes helping offenders with drug and alcohol problems.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the percentage increase in crime since 1979 for *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* South Wales and *(c)* Neath.

Mr. Jack: This answer refers only to England and Wales. Between 1979 and 1991 recorded crime in England and Wales has risen at an average rate of 6·3 per cent. In South Wales it has risen by an average of 7 per cent. Crime figures for Neath are not collected centrally.

Unemployed Offenders

26. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of offenders appearing before the courts in the east midlands and in England and Wales were unemployed in 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Jack: Information on the employment status of those appearing before the courts in England and Wales is not recorded centrally.

Ethnic Minorities

27. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations his Department has received on the level of funding under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 for the financial year 1993-94 and subsequent years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have received a number of representations about future levels of section 11 funding from hon. Members, local authorities and representative organisations, individual schools and colleges, professional associations and other interested bodies such as racial equality councils. My right hon. and learned Friend and I regret that in the present economic circumstances it is not possible to sustain throughout the next three years the level of expenditure that had earlier been planned.

Violent Offences (Women)

28. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the penalties that can be awarded by the courts for violent offences against women.

Mr. Jack: Courts already have at their disposal tough maximum penalties for violent crimes against women, as against any victim: life imprisonment is mandatory for murder and is the maximum penalty for manslaughter, rape and the most serious woundings. Indecent assault carries up to 10 years' imprisonment. Within these maxima, it is for the courts alone to determine the most appropriate sentences in individual cases in the light of all the available information about the seriousness of the offence and the circumstances of the offender.

Under the Criminal Justice Act 1991, which came into force on 1 October 1991, the courts now have enhanced powers to sentence violent and sexual offenders; within the statutory maxima, courts may pass longer custodial sentences than would be commensurate with the seriousness of the offence, if it is necessary to protect the public from serious harm.

Police Complaints

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 4 December, *Official Report*, column *412*, if he will list the cases in which out of court settlements or court awards were made in civil actions against the police between 1988 and November 1992; and what disciplinary or other action was taken in each case against the police officer involved.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to the hon. Member.

Refugees

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of refugees from the former Yugoslavia who have been granted entry into Britain in the past 12 months; and what plans he has to increase the number of refugees who will be granted refuge in Britain.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In 1992, a total of about 5,600 nationals of the former Yugoslavia, excluding dependants, applied for asylum in the United Kingdom. The large majority of these applications are still under consideration and the applicants are being allowed to stay in the meantime.

In addition, as I announced to the House on 30 November 1992, we are willing to accept 1,000 ex-detainees from Bosnia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia, together with their dependants, totalling perhaps 4,000 in all. The first group of these ex-detainees have already arrived.

Indictable Offences

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list the number of persons found guilty of, or cautioned for, indictable offences, showing those cautioned as a percentage of all found guilty or cautioned for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Jack: Information on persons cautioned and found guilty of indictable offences is published annually in the Command Paper "Criminal statistics, England and Wales". Tables 5.3 and 5.11 of the 1990 publication give the requested data back to 1980. The 1991 volume will be published in February 1993. Table 1 of the Home Office Statistical Bulletin issue 30/92 "Cautions, Court Proceedings and Sentencing, England and Wales, 1991" gives estimated data for that year. Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Charities

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the support given by the Government to voluntary and charitable organisations in 1992-93; and to how many charities this support was given.

Mr. Jack: The information for 1992-93 is not yet available. Details of Government support for the voluntary sector during the last year for which information is available, 1990-91, were given in the reply to a question from the hon. Member for Chislehurst *(Mr. Sims)* on 16 July 1992, cols *868-69*.

Prison Education

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on prison education.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Stretford *(Mr. Lloyd)* on 8 December, col. *555*.

Kent county council has since been granted leave to apply for judicial review of decisions that were taken related to the competitive tendering of prison education. The action is due to be heard in the High Court next month. To avoid prejudicing the outcome of these proceedings and to ensure continuity of education provision in prisons, after 1 April 1993, the prison service has today written to local education authorities and colleges and institutions of further education which currently provide education in prisons. The letter invites them to continue to provide education services in prison establishments on the present basis of remuneration until 31 August 1993, by when the current action and any related legal proceedings should have been resolved.

It remains the Government's intention to ensure quality and value for money in the future provision of prison education through competition and to let contracts on this basis as soon as is practicable. Accordingly, if local education authorities and colleges and institutions of further education are either unwilling or unable to continue to provide these services on the present terms until 31 August 1993, contracts will be let on the basis of the current competition from 1 April 1993. Otherwise, and subject, of course, to the outcome of the hearing, it is the intention to let such contracts from 1 September 1993.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *597*, if he will list the 30 private sector organisations which have bid to provide prison education services in 1993-94.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. I do not believe it is right to provide individual details of the tenderers bidding to provide future educational services to prison establishments in England and Wales while the competition is still running and decisions on the placing of contracts have yet to be taken. It could commercially disadvantage the Home Office in its negotiations and there is no expectation or understanding on the part of tenderers that the information should be made public.

Channel Islands (Wartime Occupation)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 30 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *7-8*, what account he took, during his review concerning the wartime occupation of the Channel Islands, of the documents held by the authorities in Jersey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None. The Jersey records are not subject to the United Kingdom Public Records Acts and do not come within my responsibilities. Any decision relating to them is wholly a matter for the Jersey authorities.

EC Border Controls

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what documents or means of identification have to be shown to immigration officers at British ports of embarkation by travellers to another member state of the European Community; and for what reasons.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Immigration Act 1971 provides that an immigration officer may require any passenger on embarkation to produce a passport or some other document satisfactorily establishing his identity and nationality or citizenship.

My right hon. and learned Friend is considering the extent to which this power should be exercised in future in relation to travellers to other EC member states.

Race Relations

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many jobs section 11 funding is supporting in England and Wales currently; and what were the figures for 1992 and in 1991.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under new projects approved for funding from 1 April 1992, a total of 10,118 posts, in full-time equivalent terms, attract grant support under section 11. A final figure for 1991-92 is not yet available, but it is estimated that 10,425 approved posts were funded. In 1990-91, 9,662 approved posts were funded.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inner city projects in England and Wales are being supported by section 11 funding this year; and what were the corresponding figures for 1992 and 1991.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not available in the form requested. A project format for section 11 funding was introduced under new administrative arrangements for the grant which came into effect on 1 April 1992. The grant currently supports approximately 870 projects in England and Wales. Very many of these projects relate to activities throughout authorities' areas, both rural and urban.

Tyre Dumps

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many tyre dumps in the United Kingdom are classified as major hazard sites; what specific precautions have been taken against fire at such dumps; and if he will make a statement; (2) what contingency plans have been prepared for any serious fires at major tyre dumps occurring in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is the duty of each fire authority to make provision for fire-fighting purposes in its area and to ensure that its fire brigade has adequate and efficient fire cover arrangements. These would include contingency plans for all significant fire risks. Those inherent in major tyre dumps, for which the fire service has available special techniques, would typically include arrangements for liaison with the other emergency services and for the evacuation of the area if necessary.

Following two recent tyre dump fires in Canada and Wales, guidance on the storage of tyres in the open air is

being revised. No tyre dumps are covered by the CIMAH —Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards— Regulations or the NIHHS—Notification of Installations Handling Hazardous Substances—Regulations.

From 1 April 1993, all tyre storage in the open air becomes subject to the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This will require the occupier or operator of the tyre storage facility to make an application for a licence, under section 30 of the Act to the Local Waste Regulation Authority.

Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority in respect of its difficulties in fulfilling its statutory duties; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The chairman of the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority wrote to my right hon. and learned Friend on 30 December about the authority's difficulty in complying with the nationally recommended minimum standards of fire cover in two specific areas. I shall write to the chairman as soon as possible.

Pescado

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the Devon and Cornwall police to raise the fishing vessel Pescado; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The salvage company which has been contracted to raise the Pescado on behalf of the Devon and Cornwall constabulary, is monitoring the weather closely and awaits favourable wind and sea conditions for undertaking the salvage operation.

The chief constable is responsible for the police investigation into the sinking of the Pescado and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the investigation while it is continuing.

Inner Cities

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of self-help employment, social and training projects in inner city areas were supported by section 11, urban programme funds or both in the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not available in the form requested.

HEALTH

AIDS

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) on what date the London borough of Bromley applied for AIDS support grant for the current financial year; and what efforts have been made by her Department to urge Bromley to apply for it;

(2) what amount of AIDS support grant was allocated to each local authority in each year since 1990-91:

(3) what extra costs she estimates to have been incurred by neighbouring boroughs obliged to deal with HIV/AIDS cases turned away by Bromley social services department; and what steps she proposes to take to recompense the neighbouring boroughs;

(4) by what date London boroughs should apply for the AIDS support grant for 1993-94; and what steps she will take to ensure that the London borough of Bromley applies for the grant on time;

(5) how many people in each London borough have died from AIDS:

(6) how many cases of HIV have been reported in the borough of Bromley in each year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: In December 1991 the Department issued a circular (LAC(91)22) inviting all social services departments in England to bid for extra resources for HIV and AIDS services in 1992-93 under the AIDS support grant scheme. Criteria for bids under this scheme are set out in the circular. Copies are available in the Library.

The closing date for bids was 7 February 1992. The London borough of Bromley submitted an application in November 1992 although not in the form and detail set out in departmental guidance. By that time AIDS support grant moneys had been fully committed. The Department was, therefore, unable to allow Bromley's bid to proceed.

Although not in receipt of AIDS support grant money in 1992-93, we understand that the London borough of Bromley plans to spend £15,000 on HIV and AIDS services in the current year. We have no information to suggest that the borough has been compelled to turn away people affected by HIV.

For 1992-93 local authority social services departments will again be invited to apply for an AIDS support grant allocation. The closing date for applications will be 8 February 1993. It will, of course, be open to the London borough of Bromley to bid for funds under this scheme.

Information on the number of HIV and AIDS cases reported in individual boroughs and of deaths is not held centrally.

The table shows the AIDS support grant allocations which have been awarded since 1990-91:

Allocations for Individual Authorities

Authority	*1990-91 Allocation* £	*1991-92 Allocation* £	*1992-93 Allocation* £
Former 'A's			
Camden	471,000	489,840	730,000
Hammersmith	1,003,359	1,042,000	1,300,000
Kensington	627,500	652,600	970,000
Lambeth	551,000	573,040	930,000
Westminster	625,000	650,000	940,000
Former 'B's			
Avon	127,500	132,600	200,000
Birmingham	194,700	202,488	300,000
Brent	290,000	290,000	400,000
Ealing	250,000	260,000	290,000
East Sussex	317,500	263,690	400,000
Greenwich	136,280	136,280	190,000
Hackney	322,500	335,400	460,000
Hampshire	106,250	110,500	140,000
Haringey	357,500	371,800	500,000
Hounslow	231,250	240,500	320,000
Islington	235,000	244,400	360,000
Leeds	234,801	244,193	271,000
Leicestershire	86,084	89,527	115,000
Lewisham	163,750	170,300	240,000
Liverpool	263,000	253,000	276,000
Manchester	486,250	510,000	709,000
Newcastle	130,000	150,000	223,000

Authority	1990-91 Allocation £	1991-92 Allocation £	1992-93 Allocation £
Oxfordshire	156,250	162,500	240,000
Richmond	135,000	140,400	200,000
Southwark	215,000	215,000	300,000
Tower Hamlets	309,000	321,300	481,000
Wandsworth	165,122	120,152	188,000
Former 'C's			
Barking	14,000	17,173	32,236
Barnet	—	26,000	40,000
Barnsley	25,000	11,362	23,150
Bedfordshire	25,000	25,000	30,000
Berkshire	25,000	26,000	50,000
Bexley	25,000	26,000	46,000
Bolton	3,500	—	21,105
Bradford	25,000	36,000	200,000
Bromley	8,500	9,520	—
Buckinghamshire	5,950	17,640	16,870
Bury	25,000	26,000	63,000
Calderdale	25,000	26,000	32,915
Cambridgeshire	20,860	26,000	41,000
Cheshire	21,000	26,000	39,000
City of London	25,000	26,000	47,000
Cleveland	17,000	26,000	70,000
Cornwall	25,000	26,000	39,000
Coventry	25,000	26,000	68,000
Croydon	24,500	30,000	49,000
Cumbria	17,500	21,000	39,000
Derbyshire	25,000	26,000	39,000
Devon	12,250	25,000	50,000
Doncaster	—	6,500	39,000
Dorset	13,897	17,252	26,009
Dudley	25,000	26,000	39,000
Durham	35,000	36,400	55,000
Enfield	14,938	16,702	50,000
Essex	25,000	35,000	60,000
Gateshead	16,002	16,640	38,500
Gloucestershire	25,000	26,000	43,000
Harrow	25,000	26,000	42,000
Havering	—	—	—
Hereford	25,000	26,000	43,000
Hertfordshire	25,000	26,000	36,400
Hillingdon	23,207	35,000	120,000
Humberside	40,600	42,224	78,000
Isle of Wight	25,000	26,000	28,170
Kent	25,000	30,000	93,000
Kingston	25,000	26,000	64,000
Kirklees	25,000	26,000	49,000
Knowsley	25,000	26,000	39,000
Lancashire	25,000	26,000	27,140
Lincolnshire	22,050	22,955	39,000
Merton	14,000	17,178	66,000
Newham	72,500	110,000	250,000
Norfolk	25,000	26,000	27,066
Northamptonshire	25,000	26,000	45,000
Northumberland	25,000	25,000	31,080
North Tyneside	55,623	52,732	67,000
North Yorkshire	25,000	26,000	39,000
Nottinghamshire	17,003	26,000	60,000
Oldham	25,000	26,000	39,000
Redbridge	18,602	19,675	15,374
Rochdale	25,000	26,000	30,436
Rotherham	24,000	26,000	39,000
Salford	25,000	26,000	32,492
Sandwell	—	26,000	32,564
Sefton	25,000	26,000	39,000
Sheffield	25,000	26,000	107,000
Shropshire	25,000	26,000	130,000
Solihull	4,690	—	—
Somerset	25,000	26,000	30,800
South Tyneside	39,613	41,198	56,000
Staffordshire	24,860	26,000	39,000
St. Helens	18,750	20,365	29,675
Stockport	25,000	26,000	39,000
Suffolk	—	—	—
Sunderland	23,236	23,520	60,000
Surrey	25,000	25,000	39,000
Sutton	22,260	30,000	57,000
Tameside	25,000	26,000	39,000
Trafford	17,737	26,000	39,000
Wakefield	25,000	26,000	50,000
Walsall	25,000	26,000	50,000
Waltham Forest	70,000	90,000	135,000
Warwickshire	24,570	25,520	33,860
West Sussex	17,500	18,200	23,370
Wigan	25,000	24,290	26,180
Wiltshire	24,000	26,000	39,000
Wirral	—	22,500	39,000
Wolverhampton	14,700	13,050	15,727

Computerisation

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to ensure value for money from investment in the computerisation of the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: A national health service strategy for information management and technology was launched on 10 December. It included: new criteria for approving all substantial IT investments. Investments of £1 million or more will be scrutinised by the management executive and not approved unless the criteria are met; new procurement procedures to secure compliance with national standards to ensure compatibility of systems across the whole NHS; and a requirement for general practitioner systems to comply with national requirements as a condition of the GP systems reimbursement scheme.

Sellafield (Cancer)

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she has received from the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment on the study by Draper et al. published on 9 January about the incidence of cancer in young people living in the vicinity of Sellafield.

Mr. Sackville: The Government welcome publication of this study. It was commissioned by the Department at the request of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment following an earlier report which concluded that there was a higher than expected incidence of leukaemia in young people living in the vicinity of Sellafield over the period 1953 to 1983. This latest study's main finding was that the incidence of cancer in the age group 0 to 24 years in the village of Seascale has continued to be higher than expected when compared with national experience and that for the whole period 1953 to 1990 this was unlikely to have arisen by chance.

The Government are grateful to COMARE for its advice. In summary, the committee accepts the study findings while acknowledging that studies of this type cannot determine the cause of the raised incidence of cancer in young people in Seascale. The committee also considers that the level of concern raised by the earlier report is maintained by this study. COMARE notes that appropriate studies commissioned by the Government to elucidate the position are proceeding. These studies comprise epidemiological, dosimetric and laboratory-based research programmes which COMARE will wish to consider alongside this latest study as part of their current

review of the situation around Sellafield. The Government look forward to receiving COMARE's full report on cancer incidence in the vicinity of Sellafield.

Following is the full text of COMARE's advice:

COMARE statement on Sellafield epidemiology study

1. In September 1989 the Department of Health requested COMARE to review the epidemiological data concerning cancer in the vicinity of Sellafield. At COMARE's request the Department of Health commissioned a study from a group of United Kingdom independent experts including Dr. Gerald Draper, Professors Cartwright and Craft. The results of the study (Draper *et al BMJ reference*) have now been published and considered by COMARE.

2. The Report of an Independent Advisory Group, under the Chairmanship of Sir Douglas Black, had previously investigated the incidence of cancer in West Cumbria in the period 1953 to 1983. Draper *et al* review this earlier period and extends it to the end of 1990. They have considered, in particular, leukaemia and other cancers occurring at ages 0-24 years including four patients in this age range with cancer being diagnosed between 1984 and 1990. One Seascale resident is known to have developed acute lymphoblastic leukaemia in 1991, which is too recent for analysis in the current study.

3. Draper *et al* report that the incidence of cancer arising in the age group 0-24 years in the village of Seascale has continued to be higher than the level expected on the basis of experience in the rest of the United Kingdom. Assessing the whole period from 1953 to 1990, the authors conclude that the pattern of cancer incidence in Seascale is very unlikely to have arisen by chance, although this possibility cannot be entirely excluded.

4. Analysis of information for the surrounding districts of Copeland and Allerdale, or for the rest of Cumbria, does not show an excess cancer incidence.

5. COMARE welcomed the study and has accepted its findings. In comparing the information from the period 1953 to 1983 with 1984 to 1990, the Committee noted that the four new cases identified were: two patients with non-Hodgkin lymphoma, one patient with Hodgkin's disease, and one patient with pinealoma. There were no additional cases of lymphoid leukaemia in the latter period although this was the most frequent type of cancer among the cases in the earlier report. The Committee also noted:

(i) lymphoid leukaemia and non-Hodgkin lymphoma occurring in childhood should be considered as a continuous spectrum of disease and therefore agreed that it was appropriate to combine them in the analyses.

(ii) there is no body of medical data to suggest that Hodgkin's disease or pinealoma can be caused by radiation.

6. COMARE wish to include these new findings as part of their current review of the incidence of cancer in young people in the vicinity of Sellafield. The Committee considers that the level of concern raised by Sir Douglas Black's report is maintained by the new information provided by Draper *et al*. The Committee acknowledge that studies of this type cannot directly address the problem of determining the cause of the raised cancer incidence in Seascale, which remains unknown. The Committee is aware of the current hypotheses which have been made regarding the causation of these cancers and note that appropriate studies to address the issues are proceeding.

Community Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the full cost to her Department of correcting the calculation for the community care special transitional grant indicative allocations to individual local authorities; and what is her estimate of the cost to local authorities of adjusting their budgetary calculations in the light of these corrections.

Mr. Yeo: The cost was minimal. It is routine practice to issue proposed allocations to allow authorities to check and, if they wish, to query the figures. In this case, a revised circular notifying authorities of their revised allocations was issued less than two weeks after the first. A further circular would in any event have had to be issued detailing the distribution of the additional allocation of £26·8 million for authorities' additional responsibilities for severely disabled people following the closure of the independent living fund. The revised circular was able to include this and therefore give full figures for the special transitional grant.

DES

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representatives she has received from the daughters of the women who took the drug DES during their pregnancy; what plans she has to assist them with compensation; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have received a few representations, including some from DES Action UK, about the potential effects of Diethylstilbestrol. If an individual feels that she or he had been harmed through the mother's use of DES, they may seek legal advice on the nature of any remedy which may be open to them. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 12 January, column *699*.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each month in the period from July 1991 to July 1992 the number of applications to dental practice boards for approval of dental treatment above the £600 limit.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is shown in the table.

General dental services
Number of applications for prior approval
1 July 1991 to 7 July 1992
England and Wales

	Number
1991	
July	6,583
August	5,308
September	4,437
October	5,746
November	4,717
December	3,331
1992	
January	5,037
February	4,551
March	4,528
April	4,408
May	3,907
June	4,323
July[1]	902

[1] 1 to 7 July.

Note:
The prior approval by volume limit was set at £600 from 1 July 1991 to 7 July 1992 and reduced to £200 with effect from 8 July 1992. The figures show all applications for prior approval, including those made for reasons other than a cost in excess of £600.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each month in the period from July to December 1992 the number of applications to dental practice boards for approval of dental treatment above the £200 limit; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is shown in the table.

General Dental Services
Number of Applications for Prior Approval:
8 July 1992 to 31 December 1992
England and Wales

1992	
July (8 to 31)	5,476
August	10,624
September	17,765
October	24,609
November	24,069
December	23,591

Note: The figures show all applications for prior approval, including those made for reasons other than a cost in excess of £200.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to publish the Bloomfield report of the review of dental remuneration; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will inform Members of the content of Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's report shortly.

West Midlands RHA

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all of the investigations presently being carried out in relation to the West Midlands regional health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Health and the statutory auditor are currently investigating loans made by West Midlands regional health authority to a charitable company, Health Management Trust, to assist a subsidiary company, FIP Ltd. I am also aware that the auditor is conducting a review of West Midlands regional health authority's management of Healthtrac and the management buy-out of the management services information division by Qa Business Services.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the section 20(3) report issued recently in relation to the West Midlands regional health authority by the district auditor; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We will consider publication when our inquiries into the specific points raised by the report are complete.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to improve the management of the West Midlands regional health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Our priorities for the west midlands, which are shared with the West Midlands regional health authority, are to improve the health of the local population and to ensure that services are efficient and effective, underpinned by managerial and financial systems of the highest possible standards. Important changes have taken place in recent weeks to improve the management of the regional organisation, and I am confident that Sir Donald Wilson, the new regional chairman, will provide a strong lead on the challenging agenda ahead.

Patient Numbers

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to review the use of completed consultant episodes to measure patient throughput; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no plans to do so at present.

Regional Returns

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to publish information from the quarterly monitoring returns from the regions; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: These are management returns which were instituted in 1991-92 and which are still under development. There are no plans at present to publish the results on a regular basis.

Patient Numbers

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing (i) the number of acute in-patient completed consultant episodes for the first six months of 1991-92 and the first six months of 1992-93 and (ii) the number of day cases also dealt with over these two periods.

Mr. Sackville: The total number of general and acute ordinary admissions and day cases purchased by the national health service in England, and the number of those which were day cases in the two periods, are shown in the table.

	1991-92	*1992-93 (provisional)*
		000's
Ordinary Admissions and Day Cases	3,520	3,740
Of which: Day Cases	659	818

Note: Day cases are defined as acute elective admissions using a bed but not requiring an overnight stay.

London Health Care

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 6 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *450*, if she will now list the members of the implementation group for Tomlinson on the future of London's health care; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We shall publish membership of the London implementation group when we announce our detailed proposals for change in London's health services.

Nicotine Patches

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance her Department has issued on the use of nicotine patches; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has issued no guidance on the use of nicotine patches, but guidance for the user can be found in the patient information leaflet provided with the patches.

Female Circumcision

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to ensure that the law relating to female circumcision is monitored and enforced; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We are determined to eradicate this abhorrent practice. The Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985 makes it an offence to carry out any of the procedures which are known as female circumcision, but which are more accurately described as female genital mutilation. The Act also makes it illegal to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of these procedures. Further legal protection is provided by the Children Act 1989.

In October 1991 we issued guidance entitled "Working Together Under the Children Act 1989" to all local authorities, health authorities, the police, the probation service, schools, doctors and a wide range of voluntary organisations working in the child care field. This guidance contained advice on the 1985 Act and on dealing with FGM. We provide funding for FORWARD—the foundation for Women's Health and Development, which works to educate the relevant communities and the professionals concerned about FGM.

To date, there have been no prosecutions under the 1985 Act. This may be because it can be difficult to acquire evidence. Any information we receive about specific instances of alleged FGM is sent to the police, and we ask others to do likewise. It is for the police to investigate any such allegations and discuss with the Crown prosecution service how to proceed. When appropriate, we also pass details to the General Medical Council, the local social services department, and the district health authority, if the offence is said to have taken place in a private hospital or clinic registered and inspected by the DHA.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Bosnia

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the pledges made by the United Kingdom and others; and if he will list the pledges which have been converted into cash for relief supplies for Bosnia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have committed over £70 million in humanitarian relief to the former Yugoslavia. Of this, £41 million has been pledged multilaterally through the EC and over £29·5 million in direct bilateral assistance. Most of this is focused on central Bosnia. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) on 23 November, columns *452-53*, for details of how we are spending these funds. Comprehensive figures for the commitments made by other donors are not available.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits Agency Fraud

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the feasibility study into the market testing of sector fraud within the Benefits Agency has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The study commissioned into the feasibility of market testing all or part of the fraud work has not yet been completed. Once the eventual findings have been considered decisions will be taken on the extent to which market testing should be applied to this area of work.

Disabled People

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will compensate disabled people who are unable to make an application to the independent living fund because of delays in the processing of attendance allowance and disability living allowance claims.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to provide such compensation. The independent living fund is an independent charitable trust which is managed by trustees, who deal with all administrative matters.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of claims received by his Department for the disability working allowance in each month since its introduction; and if he will provide a breakdown by region.

Mr. Scott: A regional breakdown is not available. The total number of claims received in each month is as follows:

1992	*Total*
March	4,153
April	4,124
May	2,570
June	2,700
July	2,344
August	2,081
September	2,085
October	1,432
November	1,431
December	1,008

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown by number and percentage of the total number of (i) initial and (ii) renewal claims for disability working allowance received by his Department that were refused on the grounds that *(a)* the claimant was not in remunerative work, *(b)* the claimant's income was above the limit, *(c)* the claimant was not in receipt of a qualifying benefit, *(d)* the claimant was receiving family credit, *(e)* the joint income of the claimant and his or her partner exceeded the limit, *(f)* the claimant was working less than 16 hours a week or *(g)* for other reasons.

Mr. Scott: By 2 January the total number and percentage of claims refused in each category was as follows:

	Claims refused	
	Number	*per cent.*
Not in work or working less than 16 hours a week		
New claims	11,069	57
Renewals	61	33

	Claims refused	
	Number	per cent.
Income of claimant and partner exceeds DWA level		
New claims	2,150	11
Renewals	108	57
No qualifying benefit		
New claims	5,128	27
Renewals	8	4
Receiving family credit		
New claims	494	3
Renewals	0	0
Other reasons		
New claims	448	2
Renewals	12	6

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for the disability working allowance have been received by his Department to date; and if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* the number and percentage of these that resulted in an award, *(b)* the number and percentage of these that were refused and *(c)* the number and percentage of these that are awaiting a decision.

Mr. Scott: By 2 January 1993, 24,280 claims had been received with following results:-

	Number	Percentage
Awards	3,360	14
Refused	19,480	80
Awaiting further information	625	3
Withdrawn before decision	815	3

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the organisations he plans to consult and outline any other plans the Department has for consulting disabled people and their organisations on the next revision of the claim pack for disability living allowance and attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: The disability living allowance and attendance allowance claim packs were developed in close consultation with disabled people and the organisations that represent them. We continue to consult widely both formally and informally. A reprint of the claim packs is being produced for April 1993. A table of the organisations we have consulted since 30 November 1992 is as follows.

DLA claim pack—Draft consultation with outside organisations

1. Access Committee for England
2. Action for Blind People
3. ADSS Disabilities Committee
4. Age Concern
5. Alzheimer's Disease Society
6. Arthritis Care
7. ASBAH (Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus)
8. Association for Speech Impaired Children
9. Association of Hospice Social Workers
10. Association of County Councils
11. Association for Residential Care
12. Association of Parents of Vaccine Damaged Children
13. BACUP
14. Barnados
15. BCODP (British Council of Organisations of Disabled People)
16. Birmingham Welfare Rights
17. British Association of Social Workers
18. British Epilepsy Association
19. British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association
20. British Association of Social Workers
21. British Medical Association
22. British Diabetic Association
23. Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund
24. Carers' National Association
25. Caring for People with Disabilities
26. Caring Costs
27. Central London Social Security Advisers Forum
28. CHAR
29. Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
30. College of Occupational Therapists
31. Council on Disability for Shetland
32. Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust
33. Cystic Fibrosis
34. Derbyshire Centre for Independent Living
35. DHSS NI
36. Disability Alliance
37. Disabled Living Foundation
38. Disablement Income Group
39. Disablement Income Group (Scotland)
40. District Nursing Association (UK)
41. Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board
42. Federation of Independent Advice Centres
43. Good Practices in Mental Health
44. Health Visitors Association (Services) Ltd
45. Haemophilia Society
46. Help the Aged
47. Herfordshire Welfare Benefits Advisers
48. Huntingdon's Disease Association
49. Independent Living
50. Independent Health Care Association
51. Joint Committee on Mobility for Disabled People
52. Lancashire County Council Welfare Rights Service
53. Leonard Cheshire Foundation
54. MENCAP
55. MIND (National Association for Mental Health)
56. Motor Neurone Disease Association
57. Multiple Sclerosis Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
58. Muscular Dystrophy Group
59. Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association
60. NACAB (National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux)
61. National Deaf Children's Society
62. National Schizophrenia Fellowship
63. National Association for Health Authorities
64. National Council for Voluntary Organisations
65. National Information Forum
66. National Schizophrenia Fellowship
67. National Bureau for Students with Disabilities
68. National Association of Voluntary Help Organisations
69. National Association for Limbless Disabled
70. National Care Homes Association
71. NFBUK (National Federation of the Blind of the United Kingdom)
72. Northern Ireland Council on Disability
73. Parkinson's Disease Society of the United Kingdom
74. People First
75. PHAB
76. Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for the Disabled
77. RADAR (Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation)
78. RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind)
79. RNID (Royal National Institute for the Deaf)
80. Sandwell Social Services Department
81. Schizophrenia Association of Great Britain
82. Scottish Association for Mental Health
83. Scottish Council on Disability
84. Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped
85. SENSE (National Deaf-Blind and Rubella Association)
86. Social Work Department. St. Georges Hospital, Lincoln
87. Soldiers, Sailors and Airmans Families Association
88. Spinal Injuries Association
89. SSAC
90. Terrence Higgins Trust
91. The Prince of Wales Advisory Group on Disablement
92. The Disabled Drivers Association

93. The Spastics Society
94. Wales Council for the Deaf
95. Wales Council for the Disabled
96. Wales Council for the Blind
97. Wandsworth Social Services Department
98. Oakleaf Enterprise
99. London Borough of Hounslow
100. Tower Hamlets Law Centre

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many awards of the higher rate mobility component made since 3 February 1992 were made *(a)* on the grounds that the person was severely mentally impaired and displayed severe behavioural problems and *(b)* under the deaf-blind provisions.

Mr. Scott: Recorded numbers of people awarded the higher rate mobility component since 3 February 1992 are as follows:

(a) On grounds of severe mental impairment and severe behavioural problems—1,352 at 31 December 1992.
(b) Under deaf-blind provisions—110 at 30 November 1992.

Includes new claims and "top-up" claims from existing Attendance Allowance and Mobility Allowance beneficiaries.

All figures are provisional and may be subject to amendment.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to attempt to identify the numbers of people who lost the chance to submit an application to the independent living fund solely because the Benefits Agency had not processed their claim for the care component of disability living allowance or attendance allowance; and if he will compensate people in this position by extending the independent living fund deadline or otherwise.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the numbers of people expected to become entitled to the severe disability premium as a result of extending entitlement to people living with a person who is registered blind; and what is the estimated cost to his Department.

Mr. Burt: We estimate that a few hundred severely disabled people who are not currently entitled to the severe disability premium because they have an adult living with them will qualify for the premium because that adult is blind and their presence will be disregarded. We estimate that the cost will be of the order of £1 million a year.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many requests up to 26 November 1992 had been received for a review of a decision *(a)* not to award the highest rate of disabled living allowance care component and *(b)* not to award the higher rate of attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide details of the amounts, dates and basis upon which the chief executive of the Benefits Agency has been awarded any performance bonus.

Mr. Burt: The basis on which the chief executive of the Benefits Agency could earn a performance bonus under his contract was set out in my reply to the hon. Member on Tuesday 27 October 1992, at column *640*. The chief executive's total remuneration for 1991-92 is set out in the Benefits Agency annual report, a copy of which is available in the Library, although the elements within that total remain confidential.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide details of the changes he plans to make to the medical control procedures applied to invalidity benefit announced in his autumn statement; and if he will provide details of how he expects to achieve his estimate of £240 million savings and to specify the numbers of people expected to have their invalidity benefit withdrawn as a result of these changes.

Mr. Scott: The changes which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 12 November 1992 are intended to streamline the medical control procedures which already apply to all incapacity benefit claims. People invited to medical examinations will be given more notice, asked to tell us if they cannot attend, and warned that failure to do so without good cause will result in loss of benefit. Improved reports by examining doctors will reduce the number of people who need to be examined more than once; enabling them to deal with more of the cases referred for control action. In the first year, we estimate that some 80,000 people who no longer satisfy the entitlement conditions will be identified earlier than under the existing arrangements.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will express the average income of single people and couples in receipt of invalidity benefit as a percentage of average income of equivalent household units in the country.

Mr. Scott: The information in the table is based on the estimates for 1988-89, the two calendar years combined.

Per cent.

	Income before housing costs	*Income after housing costs*
Singles	70	69
Couples	76	79

Note:

The estimates are based on Family Expenditure Survey data from the 'Households Below Average Income' series.

Service Pensions

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) where and on what date the Naval, Military and Air Forces etc. (Disablement and Death) Service Pensions Amendment (No. 2) Order 1992 was first published;

(2) when he first announced his intention to make the Naval, Military and Air Forces etc. (Disablement and Death) Service Pensions Amendment (No. 2) Order 1992;

(3) on what date and through which media he has taken steps to publicise to the general public the terms of the Naval, Military and Air Forces etc. (Disablement and Death) Service Pensions Amendment (No. 2) Order 1992.

Miss Widdecombe: The legislation was announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr.

Hayes) on 17 December at columns *369-70*, and through a press release and letter to Members of the central advisory committee the same day. The legislation was laid before Parliament on 18 December 1992 and published by HMSO on 6 January 1993.

Hearing Loss (Military Service)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) why he proposes to remove the eligibility of ex-servicemen for lump sum compensation claims for hearing loss of less than 20 per cent. caused during their military service;

(2) if he will publicise the proposed abolition of the eligibility of ex-servicemen for lump sum compensation claims for hearing loss of less than 20 per cent. caused during their military service.

Miss Widdecombe: The introduction of a 20 per cent. disablement threshold for claims for noise induced hearing loss brings the war pension rules more into line with those for claims for occupational deafness under the industrial injuries scheme. The proposals form part of a package, the other element of which is the removal, from April 1993, of rank differentials in war disablement pensions; almost 200,000 war disablement pensioners will gain up to £5 a week as a result. The decision was announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on 17 December 1992 at columns *369-70*, and publicised through a press release and letter to members of the central advisory committee on war pensions the same day.

Retirement Pension

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to alter the relationship between the level of retirement pension and the cost of living.

Miss Widdecombe: The retirement pension is statutorily uprated each year in line with the movement in prices. We have no plans to alter this.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to make the retirement pension a means-tested benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: None.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to remedy the situation referred to by the social security commissioners in decisions CIS/587/90 and CSIS/78/92 whereby a retirement pensioner previously receiving an invalidity pension is deprived of the higher pensioner premium if he or she reached retirement pension age before 11 April 1988.

Mr. Burt: The rules discussed in the decisions quoted are intended to ensure that a person who was receiving the premium because he had invalidity pension did not suffer a reduction in income as a result of taking retirement pension. The premium continues provided he remains in receipt of the relevant income-related benefit. The regulations fully reflect this policy. It was never the intention that a person who had already ceased to receive invalidity benefit when the relevant income-related benefit was claimed should qualify for the premium. We have no plans to change this policy.

Maxwell Pension Fund

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to respond to the Social Security Committee's report published on 12 January.

Mr. Lilley: I shall want to read the Committee's report carefully before responding fully. But my immediate response is to endorse firmly its main objective, the early distribution of assets already recovered or in the common investment fund to the Maxwell pension schemes.

The Committee makes two recommendations intended to help secure that objective. I have, in line with its first recommendation, asked Sir John Cuckney to continue to encourage mediation as a preferred course of action. In this he has my firm support and backing. If rapid progress cannot be made in the common investment fund by agreement I hope all parties will consider mediation.

The Committee also recommended that Sir John's role be extended to help ensure that any administrator or liquidator does not delay a settlement by pursuing highly doubtful claims to assets that were once in the possession of Robert Maxwell companies. These office holders are variously appointed by, and are accountable to, the court or the creditors. The scope for direct action by other parties is therefore limited. However, I have agreed with Sir John that he will be available to assist the office-holders wherever possible.

Regulation of Earnings Factors Order

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the application of the Social Security Regulation of Earnings Factors Order 1992 as it applies to additional pension paid with invalidity benefit.

Mr. Lilley: The policy intention has been that the revaluation order should apply to additional pensions paid with invalidity benefit. We have received legal advice that provisions enacted in the Social Security Act 1990 and carried forward into the Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 have not given full effect to this. This means an estimated £9 million paid between April 1992 and April 1993 will have been paid on a basis which is incorrect on the strict interpretation of the law. We intend to continue payments on an extra-statutory basis to ensure that claimants receive a level of benefits in line with the policy intention. Appropriation will be obtained in due course. The total amount paid on this basis, initially estimated at a cost of £0·8 million, rounded, per month, will be reported in a note to the Department's appropriate account.

TRANSPORT

Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now reply to the letter sent to him on 2 October by the hon. Member for Gower relating to a constituent from Bishopston, Swansea.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I replied to the hon. Member on 18 December.

Public Transport Investment

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what limits are placed on the freedom of the chairmen of British Rail and London Transport to speak publicly on the investment needs and the maintenance spending required for their main businesses.

Mr. Freeman: None. However, in the context of the annual investment and financing review for nationalised industries, Government Departments and the industries find it useful to exchange information in confidence.

A46 Upgrading

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects *(a)* commencement and *(b)* completion of work on the Lincoln to Newark section of the upgrading of the A46.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The scheme is planned to go to public inquiry this spring and further progress will depend on the outcome of that inquiry. It is not therefore possible to provide a firm date for start of construction works, but it is likely to take about two years to complete.

Railway Expenditure

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what levels of investment spending have been assessed and requested by British Rail as required to *(a)* maintain the track and signalling so as to avoid speed restrictions and *(b)* replace outdated track, signalling and rolling stock.

Mr. Freeman: The British Railways Board allocates its investment spending within its overall external financing limit. The need for the board to maintain and replace infrastructure and rolling stock was taken into account in determining the additional resources for the railways announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement.

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the additional funds made available to British Rail in the autumn statement for leasing capital equipment could be appropriately used for the ordering of new long-distance network trains for the Kent coast services; and what constraints or impediments prevent British Rail from entering into such arrangements in the near future.

Mr. Freeman: The Chancellor's autumn statement enables BR to order on lease an additional £150 million worth of new rolling stock. Only the leasing payments will count against its external financing limit. BR is currently considering which rolling stock orders would be suitable for leasing; the options include new rolling stock for Kent coast.

I have asked BR to proceed as quickly as possible with negotiations on a suitable leasing arrangement.

Public Inquiries

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on the role of local public inquiries where decisions they take have national significance in cases where national policy is still under consideration;

(2) if he will suspend the public inquiry into the Port of Bristol Harbour Revision Order until the future is decided of the collieries in South Wales and the midlands which are linked to the outcome of this inquiry.

Mr. Norris: Issues of overall Government policy are not properly a matter for local public inquiries. The Harbour Revision Order about which a local public inquiry is now in progress deals with the transfer to a company, First Corporate, of some of the harbour authority powers of Bristol city council. I understand that the company is constructing a bulk import facility but that it is not relying upon the order to obtain the powers to do so. It is not therefore appropriate to suspend the inquiry.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when he expects to report to Parliament following the consultation on the future of the vehicle inspectorate; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he will take to ensure that road safety will be monitored in any changes that may be made in future vehicle testing following the current consultation exercise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My right hon. Friend is currently considering the responses to our consultation on the future of the vehicle inspectorate's heavy goods and passenger carrying vehicles testing functions and will make an announcement in due course. As the consultation paper made clear, the Government are determined that under all options for the future, existing standards of vehicle testing should be maintained and where possible improved.

Oil Tanker Pollution

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assumption he makes for the purposes of pollution compensation schemes of the likely pollution clean-up cost of a major oil tanker pollution casualty on the south coast of England.

Mr. Norris: The limits of the funds available under the international compensation arrangements are designed to meet fully the costs of any incident in European waters. The current limit is some £50 million and this has not been exceeded in Europe since the system came into operation in 1978. However a diplomatic conference in November, co-sponsored by the United Kingdom, has agreed on protocols to double the current limit which will come into force once a minimum number of states have ratified them.

Hazardous Cargoes

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will institute a comprehensive review of the existing methods and routes of transportation of crude oil, oil products and hazardous chemicals around the coastal waters of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norris: The inquiry, under the chairmanship of Lord Donaldson, which was announced by the Secretary of State on 11 January will include a comprehensive review of the routing of tankers around the coastal waters of the United Kingdom.

Salvage Convention

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans Her Majesty's Government have to ratify the 1989 salvage convention.

Mr. Norris: It is the Government's intention to ratify this convention as soon as parliamentary time can be

found for the necessary primary legislation. The main provisions of the convention are applied commercially when there is a Lloyd's open form 1990 contract between a shipowner and a salvor, as in the case of the Braer.

MV Braer

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the current arrangements for refunding the costs of pollution clean-up in a situation such as that caused by the Braer casualty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Under the relevant international conventions, to which the United Kingdom is a party, these costs are recoverable from the ship's insurers and the international oil pollution compensation fund. This is a tried and tested international scheme.

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will widen the terms of reference of the inquiry into the causes of the stranding of the Braer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: No. The terms of reference of the inquiry being carried out by the marine accident investigation branch are broad enough.

Tyre Treads

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek a derogation from the EEC requirement that tyre tread depths should be a minimum of 1·6 mm; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have no plans to do so.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 15 January 1993

NORTHERN IRELAND

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated proportion of economically active Roman Catholics and Protestants as at 31 December 1996.

Mr. Atkins: The Government have not carried out any projections of the economically active population in terms of religion.

Public Bodies (Targets)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has for the introduction of goals and timetables to other public bodies in Northern Ireland similar to those introduced for senior civil servants in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: It is not for the Secretary of State to set goals and timetables for other public authorities. Under section 31(3) of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989, all public authorities have a duty to consider the need for goals and timetables to assist in securing fair participation in their employment by both communities.

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many staff were employed by his Department's press office in each year since 1979.

Mr. Mates: Data on staff employed prior to 1989 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The available information is as follows:—

	Staff in Post as at 1 April
1989	50
1990	54
1991	58
1992	58·5

These figures include staff from the home and Northern Ireland civil services and the press offices of Northern Ireland Departments.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Electricity Transmission Wires

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment his Department has made of the effects of overhead electricity transmission wires on farm animals using fields adjoining or below.

Mr. Soames: The Department has not made such an assessment.

Green Pound

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the value in European currency units of the green pound in each year since 1987.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is given in the table.

Value of Green Pound in European Currency Units
(Day Weighted Rates)

Year	*Beef*	*Milk*	*Eggs and Poultry*	*Sector Sugar and Cereals*	*Sheepmeat*	*Pigmeat*	*Olive Oil*
1987	1·452	1·537	1·537	1·558	1·533	1·503	1·583
1988	1·407	1·503	1·503	1·524	1·532	1·428	1·524
1989	1·382	1·429	1·437	1·453	1·489	1·355	1·472
1990	1·295	1·351	1·362	1·347	1·424	1·284	1·397
1991	1·257	1·285	1·287	1·270	1·285	1·248	1·278
1992	1·233	1·233	1·233	1·233	1·231	1·190	1·231

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many staff were employed by his Department's press office in each year since 1979.

Mr. Curry: The number of staff employed in this Department' press office in recent years is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1985	35
1986	35
1987	30
1988	28
1989	26
1990	25
1991	20
1992	20

Figures for previous years are not readily available.

EDUCATION

Further Education

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he intends to publish advice with respect to changes of name for colleges in the new further education sector.

Mr. Boswell: The Department has today issued advice to colleges entering the new further education sector on 1 April 1993 on the procedure for applying for name changes. The advice also includes guidance on college titles.

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many staff were employed by his Department's press office in each year since 1979.

Mr. Boswell: Figures for the number of press officers are available only for the last three years. These are as follows:

Year	*Press officers*
1990	9
1991	8
1992	8

Student Grant Cheques

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if Her Majesty's Government will hold urgent discussions with clearing banks about the criteria they use for cashing student grant cheques.

Mr. Boswell: This is entirely a matter for the clearing banks themselves to decide. My right hon. Friend has received no representations about any difficulties over their arrangements for cashing student grant cheques.

Secondary Schools, Northamptonshire

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a list of secondary schools in Northamptonshire together with the amount spent per pupil in each school in the most recent available year.

Mr. Forth: Details of schools' planned unit costs are contained within part 2 of the budget statements prepared and published by each local education authority under section 42 of the Education Reform Act 1988. Information on schools' actual expenditure is contained in authorities' outturn statements. Copies of the relevant parts of the budget statements for 1991-92 and 1992-93 and the outturn statement for 1991-92 published by Northamptonshire county council have been placed in the Library.

PRIME MINISTER

Calcutt Inquiry

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister when he was first advised of the contents of the letter from Lord McGregor to Sir David Calcutt.

The Prime Minister: The first I knew of Lord McGregor's letter was when it appeared in the national press.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Prime Minister when he responded to a letter dated 9 December 1992 from President Dobrica Cosić of Yugoslavia concerning the conflict in the former Yugoslavia; if he will indicate what his response has been; and if he will seek agreement to the publication of the correspondence.

The Prime Minister: I replied to President Cosić's letter on 11 January. I believe it important to maintain the confidentiality of such correspodence.

Denmark

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 14 December, *Official Report*, column *37*, what is the basis for clear distinction between the intergovernmental binding decision in respect of Denmark taken in Edinburgh, and a treaty judiciable at the International Court at The Hague.

The Prime Minister: In the EC context 'treaty' is normally used for an instrument amending the Community treaties and thus requiring ratification. The decision in respect of Denmark does not amend either the Maastricht treaty or the earlier Community treaties and does not require ratification. It is, like a treaty, binding in international law.

Jamaica

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it the policy of Her Majesty's Government to withdraw all British economic aid to Jamaica if hangings are recommenced there in February.

The Prime Minister: No. But in line with normal practice, our bilateral aid policy for Jamaica will continue to take full account of all human rights considerations.

Seals (Russia)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister what written evidence or information Her Majesty's Government have received from the Russian authorities concerning the seal cull in Russia; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Russian authorities informed us of the 1992 culling quotas of 7,300 and 2,300 for adult hooded and harp seals respectively. We have not received any figures for 1993. The Russian authorities are well aware of public concern in the United Kingdom about seal culling.

Human Rights

Mr. Soley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to incorporate article 10 of the European convention on human rights into British law.

The Prime Minister: No. Our policy remains not to incorporate the European convention on human rights into domestic law, since we believe that it is for Parliament, rather than the judiciary, to determine how the principles of human rights in the convention are best secured.

Honours (Withdrawal)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister under what circumstances he would recommend to the Queen that awards be withdrawn posthumously; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* None that I can foresee, but the forfeiture of awards is considered on a case-by-case basis.

Prince and Princess of Wales

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister what consultations he held with *(a)* the Prince and *(b)* the Princess of Wales prior to his statement of 9 December 1992.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) on Tuesday 12 January at column 697.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Electrical Faults (Fires)

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of fires in *(a)* the private sector and *(b)* the commercial sector were caused by faulty electrical installations for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: The table shows the percentage of fires attended by local authority fire brigades in the United Kingdom in 1991 where the cause was reported to be faults in the electrical plugs, sockets, switches, leads to appliances and other wiring in buildings, by their trade or business activity. The classification of "private" or "commercial" is not available.

Percentage of all fires in each category of building in 1991 caused by faulty electrical distribution apparatus[1]

Category of building	*per cent.*[2]
Dwellings	5
Private garages, sheds etc.	2
Agricultural, forestry, fishing premises	9
Industrial premises	7
Premises used for distributive trade, hotels and catering; repairs	8
Transport and communication premises	6
Banking, finance, insurance, business services and leasing premises	12
Other service premises	5
Other	2
Unspecified	6
All occupied buildings	5

[1] Electrical distribution apparatus include plugs, sockets and switches, leads to appliances and other wiring.
[2] Provisional.
Source: Home Office Fire Statistics, based on reports from local authority fire brigades.

Betting Offices

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to meet the chairman of the British Greyhound Racing Board to discuss the possible extension of betting office opening hours in the evening.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have no present plans for a further meeting, but have previously discussed this matter with the chairman. In addition, I met a delegation including the chief executive of the British Greyhound Racing Board on 21 December 1992 to discuss evening opening. My officials also met the chief executive and his colleagues on 2 December 1992.

Immigration

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice he has taken on the continuing right to deny entry to the United Kingdom of visitors to other EC nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government have access to legal and other advice from a variety of sources, but it is not the normal practice to reveal details of the advice provided in relation to any specific issue.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his discussions with Commissioner Bangemann about the implications of proposed article 8A of the treaty of Rome in relation to the right of the United Kingdom to deny admission to visitors to other EC nations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend had a number of discussions with EC Vice-President Bangemann when Herr Bangemann had responsibility within the Commission for implementation of the internal market. My right hon. and learned Friend made it clear that, while the Government's policy was to make it as easy as possible for EC nationals to enter and leave the United Kingdom, immigration controls would be maintained on non-EC nationals.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will outline the reasons underlying his statement that the United Kingdom has a continuing right to exclude visitors to other EC nations following the implementation of proposed article 8A of the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Our view is that, insofar as it deals with the movement of persons, article 8A of the treaty of Rome applies only to EC nationals.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will use sequestrated assets from drug dealers in Liverpool to fund the expansion of the city's Dare to Care anti-drugs project; and if he will make a statement on measures he is taking to combat drug abuse in Liverpool.

Mr. Jack: Under present public accounting arrangements confiscated money is treated in the same way as fine revenue, and paid directly into the Consolidated Fund from which Government expenditure generally—including substantial support for drug-related work—is financed. In April 1991 the seized assets fund was established to recycle assets confiscated here under drug confiscation agreements with other countries to support work against drug misuse. £3·2 million has been made available from the fund in the current financial year to enforcement agencies and a variety of individual projects, including some based in Liverpool, directed against drugs misuse. The possibility of further funding being made available from this source is under consideration, but the final amount will depend on the success of international operations to confiscate the assets of drug traffickers.

Under the drugs prevention initiative, a local drugs prevention team has been working in Liverpool since 1990.

The team has provided financial and other support to a wide range of drugs prevention projects, including Dare to Care.

Merseyside police play an active role in tackling drug misuse. In addition to enforcing the law, they are involved with other agencies, including the regional health authority and the education authority, in a number of prevention and education initiatives.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many new drug addicts registered on Merseyside in 1992; how many crimes on Merseyside were drug related over the past five years; and what resources are available to patrol Liverpool bay and the River Mersey to combat the smuggling of drugs into the area via small craft.

Mr. Jack: Addict statistics for 1992 are not yet available. In 1991, the number of new addicts notified to the Home Office in the Merseyside police area was 893.

Information on drug-related offences in Merseyside is contained in table A2.1 of the Home Office Statistical Bulletin "Statistics of Drugs Seizures and Offenders Dealt With, UK 1991 (Area Tables)", a copy of which is in the Library.

Anti-smuggling control is the responsibility of the Customs and Excise Department. Patrol of the areas mentioned forms a part of the duties of the flexible anti-smuggling teams based in the Liverpool area. These comprise a total of 38 staff plus support of two further officers whose specific job is to gather coastal intelligence. There are, in addition, further staff based at Holyhead, Heysham and Ellesmere Port who can be called on should the need arise.

The staff are supported by a locally based Searider semi-rigid inflatable vessel, Customs marine branch cutters, aerial surveillance and mobile radar vans as necessary. A wide range of other technical aids is also available to local staff as Liverpool is the centre for the research and development of Customs equipment.

Youth Crime

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what measures he proposes to take to tackle youth crime in Mansfield and Nottinghamshire;

(2) what measures he intends to take to deal with car crimes committed by young people in *(a)* Mansfield, *(b)* Nottinghamshire and *(c)* England and Wales.

Mr. Jack: The Government have encouraged the police and other agencies in the development of effective crime prevention programmes aimed at tackling youth crime and have funded a number of initiatives. The Home Office safer cities project in Nottingham has committed more than £100,000 to youth crime prevention schemes since 1989. In addition, we have set up a local drug prevention team in the area. The Department of Education announced last month that Nottinghamshire is to receive £147,000 in 1992-93 under its grants for education support and training (GEST) programme for youth crime prevention schemes, one of which will be a "wheels" project in the Ashfield district to divert young people from car crime. The Department of the Environment's city challenge programme in Nottingham is also targeting youth crime prevention. In addition the probation supervision grant scheme provides funding for three projects in the Nottingham area for support for offenders and ex-offenders.

As part of its programme of action on youth crime for 1993, Crime Concern is planning a series of regional seminars, including two in the midlands, on best practice in diverting young people from crime.

The Government are also considering what means might be needed to reduce offending by the very small group of persistent juvenile offenders.

With regard to the measures being taken nationwide to prevent car crime, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the question from the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 16 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *208*.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of offenders appearing before the courts in *(a)* the east midlands, *(b)* Nottinghamshire and *(c)* England and Wales were unemployed in (i) 1989, (ii) 1990 and (iii) 1991.

Mr. Jack: Information on the employment status of defendants appearing before the courts in England and Wales is not recorded centrally.

Property Offences

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department will publish regional data on the relationship between property offences and consumption levels.

Mr. Jack: No.

Prison Education

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria he will use in deciding which contractors should be awarded contracts to provide prison education services.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Contracts will be awarded to those providers, whether from the public or private sector, who offer the best combination of quality and price which reflects the priority of the service.

Press Regulation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department was first made aware of the contents of the letter sent by Lord McGregor to Sir David Calcutt.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department first became aware of the letter when it was published in the press on Tuesday 12 January.

Offenders (Employment)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of offenders in *(a)* the east midlands, *(b)* Nottinghamshire and *(c)* England and Wales went immediately into employment on release from prison in (i) 1989, (ii) 1990 and (iii) 1991.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not recorded. However, the National Prison Survey 1991, which was based on a random sample of the prison

population, found that about one sixth of prisoners who had an earliest release date in 1991 said that they had jobs to go to on release.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of offenders under supervision by the probation service in *(a)* Nottinghamshire and *(b)* England and Wales were unemployed in (i) 1989, (ii) 1990 and (iii) 1991.

Mr. Jack: This information is not available centrally.

Terrorism

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been his response to a request from the Association of London Authorities for his Department to meet the costs of the Metropolitan police's counter-terrorism operations.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have not recently received any such request. But I shall be meeting representatives of the association later this month and will consider their views.

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff were employed by his Department's press office in each year since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Home Department's records do not contain a breakdown between press office and paid publicity (advertising, publications, exhibitions and videos) staff before 1982. Instead, public relations branch staff were listed together and this total, including clerical support grades, for 1979 to 1982 was 33 for each year inclusive.

Press office staff numbers, including clerical grades, for subsequent years are:

	Number
1983	22·25
1984	21·75
1985	20·50
1986	24·25
1987	24·50
1988	26·00
1989	28·50
1990	27·50
1991	26·50
1992	25·50

Crime Trends

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department of he will update Home Office research study No. 119: "Trends in Crime and their Interpretation."

Mr. Jack: The study examined a period of some 30 years up to 1987 and was published in 1990. More recent trends in recorded crime are being kept under review, but there is no reason to believe that there have been significant changes in the patterns which it describes in the period since publication.

In coming to its conclusion the study, published in 1990, based its findings on a period of some 30 years up to 1987 and as a consdquence I have no reason to doubt the continuing validity of its conclusions. I therefore have no immediate plans to repeat this particular work using post-1987 crime data.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Walsall, North of 17 December about inquiries into passport records.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I replied to the hon. Member on 13 January 1993.

Dr. Kypros Loucas

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *450*, if he will identify the professionals who gave references on behalf of Dr. Kypros Loucas.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Dr. Loucas gave the names of two professionals as personal referees whom the Prison Service could approach. The references were given in a personal capacity and with the customary assurance that they would be treated in strict confidence. On that basis, it would be wrong to identify them.

Central European Time

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate his Department has made of the cost of a move to central European time.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Estimates of some of the possible costs and savings resulting from a move to Central European Time were made in the 1989 Green Paper "Summer Time: A Consultation Document" (CM722). We will review the adequacy of this information in our further consideration of policy on future summer time arrangements.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cold weather payments were made in November 1992 and in December 1992 *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Merseyside.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Edward O'Hara, dated 14 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many cold weather payments were made in November 1992 and in December 1992 *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Merseyside.

There were no forecast or recorded periods of cold weather in November 1992. Following forecast and recorded periods of cold weather in December 1992, around 2·5 million payments nationally have been made costing approximately £15·5 million. More detailed national and local figures will be placed in the Library as soon as they are available.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Claims

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims remained to be cleared on 26 November 1992 *(a)* in total and *(b)* for claimants already in receipt of income support (i) for new claims for the highest rate of disabled living allowance care component and (ii) for new claims for the higher rate of attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Ms. Jane Kennedy, dated 14 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security concerning claims for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) outstanding on 26 November 1992.

A claim to either DLA or AA is a claim for the benefit as a whole and not for a specific component or level of component of the benefit. It is therefore not possible to give figures on the number of outstanding claims to a particular level of component. Information about outstanding claims for claimants who are already in receipt of Income Support is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

You asked about the number of claims outstanding at 26 November 1992. The information about claims is held on a monthly basis, therefore the number of new claims outstanding at the end of November was just over 66,000 for DLA, and 55,000 for AA.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number and percentage of all inquiries received by the benefits inquiry line which relate to disability living allowances and attendance allowances in each month since February 1992 and the number and percentage of calls recorded but not able to get through on this line over the same period.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the benefit inquiry line for people with disabilities is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 14 January 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the numbers and percentages of all enquiries received by the Benefits Enquiry Line related to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) in each month since February; and the number of calls recorded but not able to get through on this line over the same period.

The information requested is shown in the table:

Month	*Number of times subject covered in calls*		*Percentage of total subjects*		[1]*No calls and abandoned*	
	DLA	*AA*	*DLA*	*AA*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
February	49,431	8,249	66	11	37,943	33
March	55,230	7,247	68	9	11,474	13
April	57,455	20,983	52	19	11,370	10
May	33,133	16,159	45	22	10,438	13
June	45,917	20,350	45	20	11,019	11
July	30,233	10,979	44	16	11,551	13
August	25,010	9,065	44	16	9,290	9
September	23,460	8,880	40	15	8,793	11
October	21,505	8,645	37	15	8,130	11
November	18,954	8,650	33	15	9,379	16
December	15,048	7,397	31	16	7,380	16

[1] The number of abandoned calls is relevant to the whole service provided by the Benefit Enquiry Line.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to compensate claimants for the Benefits Agency delays in processing disability living allowance and attendance allowance and for backdating of linked benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance and attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 14 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, asking what plans he has to compensate claimants for Benefits Agency delays in processing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) and for backdating of linked benefits.

The present arrangements are that compensation can be considered only where, because of a clear and unambiguous Departmental error, a claim has taken longer than twelve months to process or, in the case of an existing award, there is an interruption in payment of three months or more. Normal backdating rules will apply in linked benefits and arrears can be backdated only up to the statutory maximum time limit of 52 weeks.

I recognise that delays are unacceptable at any stage, and Ministers have given a clear commitment that no-one will lose benefit due to the delays in processing claims.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many disability living allowance and

attendance allowance claims from *(a)* Stoke-on-Trent, North constituency and *(b)* the entire area dealt with by the relevant disability benefits centre have been outstanding each month since February 1992; and how many additional staff and at what grade have been taken on in each of those months.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Ms. Joan Walley, dated 14 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security concerning the number of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) claims in the Stoke North constituency and the relevant Disability Benefit centre.

Information about the number of DLA and AA claims from Stoke North constituency is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

All new claims from people in the Stoke on Trent area are dealt with by the Midlands Disability Benefit Centre in Birmingham. The following table shows the number of DLA and AA claims outstanding at the DBC for each month.

	Disability living allowance	*Attendance allowance*
February	1,712	11,238
March	7,536	15,237
April	12,617	17,027
May	18,187	18,486
June	19,978	20,210
July	19,759	20,639
August	20,004	18,787
September	16,713	15,168
October	11,357	7,136
November	9,639	8,464
December	9,121	8,557

You also asked about additional staff taken on at the DBC during each month. This information is in the following table.

	HEO	*EO*	*AO*	*AA*	*Casual AA*
February	—	5	—	2	—
March	—	2	[2]1	6	4
April	—	3	1	1	1
May	—	—	—	—	8
June	—	—	—	—	8
July	—	—	4+[2]1	—	36
August	—	—	6	—	1
September	[1]1	1	9	1	—
October	—	—	2	—	—
November	—	—	1	1	—
December	—	—	—	—	—

[1] 6 months.
[2] Part time.

In addition to the extra staff recruited, considerable overtime has been worked and staff have worked on a detached duty basis from other Benefits Agency offices. Work was also processed by staff at additional units which were set up elsewhere to assist in the clearance of the backlog. I gave details of this in my letter of 19 October 1992 to all MPs.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he received a copy of the report of the survey of disability living allowance and disability working allowance jointly undertaken by the Disability Alliance and Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation during this summer; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I received a copy of the report of the survey of disability living allowance and disability working allowance by the Disability Alliance and Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation on 25 November 1992 and I replied on 22 December. I noted that, although this report was based on an unrepresentative sample, it raised a number of issues, many of which were already being tackled. Officials from this Department intend to meet the researchers to discuss their findings and recommendations.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of successful disability working allowance applicants by *(a)* average hourly earnings, *(b)* average hours worked, *(c)* average age, *(d)* sex, *(e)* marital status, *(f)* householder status and *(g)* qualifying benefit.

Mr. Scott: Information on the householder status of applicants is not available. The table provides estimated figures derived from an analysis of successful claims up to 30 November.

	Number
Average hourly earnings	£2·95
Average hours worked a week[1]	30
Average age	37
Number of awards to men	1,538
Number of awards to women	1,099
Number of awards to single people	1,595
Number of awards to couples	1,042
Qualifying benefits[2]:	
Invalidity benefit	382
Severe disablement allowance	120
Income support with disability premium	196
Housing benefit with disability premium	27
Community charge benefit with disability premium	52
Lower rate disability living allowance	259
Higher rate disability living allowance and attendance allowance	1,601

[1] Mean average of cases analysed. Forty-five per cent. work more than 32 hours and 38 per cent. between 16 and 24 hours.
[2] Main qualifying benefit taken for claim purposes; applicants may have more than one qualifying benefit.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people awarded disability working allowance failed to apply to renew the benefit after six months; and what plans his Department has to monitor reasons for failure to renew in such circumstances.

Mr. Scott: It is not possible to say how many people fail to renew their claim at any one time because they have an eight-week period around the time their award expires in which they can make a renewal claim. However, an analysis of the 1,159 awards made by 30 June 1992 shows that by the end of December, 834 of these recipients had been given a second award. This figure is likely to increase when late claims are decided.

We are monitoring disability working allowance claims and awards carefully and are also planning further research.

Fraud

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many prosecutions there have been for social security fraud in the most recent six-month period for which figures are available and the previous five comparable six-month periods.

Miss Widdecombe: The investigation of social security fraud is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 14 January 1993:

As Chief Executive to the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of prosecutions that there have been for Social Security fraud in the most recent six month period for which figures are available and the previous five comparable six month periods.

The number of prosecutions conducted by, or on behalf of, the Benefits Agency in the six month period 1.4.92-30.9.92 was 2,047. Prior to April 1992 statistics were kept based on the number of prosecutions that had been authorised, not those actually prosecuted. These figures were:—

	Total
October 1991 to March 1992	2,069
April 1991 to September 1991	2,286

Before April 1991 these figures are only available on an annual total of the cases authorised, namely:—

	Total
1990-91	7,911
1989-90	8,671

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many invalidity benefit claimants in *(a)* York, *(b)* North Yorkshire and *(c)* England have been called for medical examination in the past 12 months; and what proportion these figures represent of all invalidity benefit claimants;

(2) how many claimants in *(a)* York, *(b)* North Yorkshire and *(c)* England have had their invalidity benefit withdrawn following medical examination in each quarter for the last two years; and what proportion of these claimants subsequently had their benefit reinstated.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many staff were employed by his Department's press office in each year since 1979.

Mr. Burt: Information for the years 1979 to 1988 is not available in the form requested. There was no separate Department of Social Security until August 1988.

The figures for 1988 onwards are as follows:

	Professional	*Administrative support*
August 1988—April 1989	8	1·5
April 1989—April 1990	8	1·5
April 1990—April 1991	8	1·5
April 1991—April 1992	8	1·5
April 1992—April 1993	9	1·5

"Wales This Week"

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what contribution his Department made to the HTV Cymru programme "Wales This Week", broadcast on 7 January.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department had no involvement in the broadcast.

Young People

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures for the numbers of persons aged 16 and 17 years by county or region who received hardship benefit *(a)* in the financial year 1991-92 and *(b)* in the period April to October 1992.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available in the precise from requested. The table gives details of the number of claims for income support under the severe hardship provision by old DSS regions. Some people will have made more than one claim.

DSS Region	*1991-92*	*April-October 1992*
Scotland	12,754	11,493
North Eastern	9,340	7,812
North Western	6,835	7,235
Midlands	6,926	6,792
Wales and South West	6,846	6,305
London North	5,805	5,794
London South	6,303	5,763

Source: Severe Hardship Claims Unit database.

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many of the applications made in 1992 by *(a)* 16 and 17-year-olds and *(b)* 18 to 21-year-olds for (i) social fund loans and (ii) community care grants were made by females;

(2) how many applications were made in 1992 by 18 to 21-year-olds for *(a)* social fund loans and *(b)* community care grants; how many of these applications were refused; and on what grounds;

(3) how many applications were made in 1992 by 16 and 17-year-olds for *(a)* social fund loans and *(b)* community care grants; how many of these applications were refused; and on what grounds.

Mr. Scott: Information is not collected centrally on social fund applications by people from these age groups. This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Licensed Premises

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to ensure that excise verification officers, in carrying out spot checks on licensed premises to prevent fraudulent sales of excisable goods, do not impose an undue burden on the operation of legitimate businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Excise verification officers are specially trained to counter the new revenue risks following completion of the single market. They will operate unobtrusively and will impose no undue burdens on legitimate businesses. Their controls will be largely intelligence-based and targeted at points of greatest risk, using information derived in many cases from trade sources. Legitimate traders will welcome this additional protection against dishonest competitors who have evaded United Kingdom duties on the goods they sell.

VAT

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the yield of VAT estimated for the current financial year; and what would be the yield if VAT at 17·5 per cent. were extended to all goods and services currently zero-rated or exempt;

(2) what would be the yield of VAT in the current year if a rate of 15 per cent. were applied to all goods including those presently exempted or zero-rated.

Sir John Cope: We estimate the VAT yield for 1992-93 will be £37·7 billion.

The ready reckoner published in table 4.8 of the 1991 autumn statement suggests that, had the VAT rate been reduced to 15 per cent. from April 1992, the yield might have been £4·3 billion less.

No estimates are available for the likely revenue effect from applying the standard rate of VAT to goods and services that are currently zero-rated or exempt from VAT. The 1992 "Financial Statement and Budget Report" provides some indication of the individual costs of the zero rates in 1991-92. These costs are not additive, however, and make no allowance for the likely behavioural response were the standard rate of VAT to be applied to these supplies.

Whisky

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much he received last year in duty on whisky and whiskey; and how much more in real terms was received 10 years ago.

Sir John Cope: In 1991-92 an estimated £730 million was received in excise duty on whisky and whiskey.

In real terms, at 1991-92 prices, £365 million more than this was received in 1981-82.

Carbon Dioxide Tax

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to introduce a carbon dioxide tax.

Sir John Cope: In 1992 the United Kingdom signed the United Nations framework convention on climate change, which, on entry into force will commit the United Kingdom to draw up a programme of measures aimed at returning emissions of carbon dioxide to their 1990 levels by the year 2000. The Secretary of State for the Environment has recently issued a discussion document designed to stimulate a public debate about how to achieve this target. A tax on carbon dioxide and energy, and a tax on carbon, were included in the summary of possible Government measures.

The European Commission has proposed a draft directive to introduce a tax on carbon dioxide and energy. The draft directive requires the unanimous approval of all member states. The proposal was discussed at the Economic and Finance Council of the European Community on 14 December 1992. The United Kingdom made it clear that the Government are not yet convinced that an EC-wide tax on carbon and energy is a necessary or appropriate response to the problem of global warming. The Council agreed that before a decision could be taken on whether, and if so under what circumstances, such a tax should be introduced throughout the Community, further analysis should be undertaken on the impact of the proposed tax, notably on energy consumption, economic activity and competitiveness.

Further work should also be undertaken on a number of important features of the Commission's proposals, such as the balance between the carbon and energy elements of the proposed tax and the treatment of electricity. This work will take account of the conclusions of the Edinburgh European Council on the principles of subsidiarity. The Government are examining the Commission's proposal carefully but without prejudice as to its final adoption.

Books (VAT)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to impose VAT on books.

Sir John Cope: The hon. Member will not expect me to comment in the period running up to the Budget.

Village Halls

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what financial controls are imposed on loans granted by *(a)* Action with Communities in Rural England and *(b)* the Sports Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The conditions attached to loans will depend on the terms of the scheme under which the loan is offered. Conditions vary between schemes and, over time, within schemes.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out in a table the value of *(a)* imports, *(b)* exports and *(c)* trade balance for manufactured goods for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* Information on imports, exports and the balance for manufactured goods is published regularly in the Central Statistical Office "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" and is also available on the CSO database which may be accessed by the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out in a table an index of United Kingdom manufacturing output for each year from 1979, with 1979 set at 100.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* Indices of United Kingdom manufacturing output can be accessed by the House of Commons Library. The indices are based on 1985 = 100, but may be scaled appropriately.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Marlborough High Street (Fire)

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what reports he has received about the fire in Marlborough high street, Marlborough, Wiltshire, on 1 January; and what approaches have been made to his Department with regard to assisting its full restoration.

Mr. Brooke: I was greatly saddened to read of the disastrous fire which destroyed a number of 17th century buildings in Marlborough high street, and I have requested a full report on the incident from English Heritage. The only approach so far made to my Department concerning the possibility of financial assistance has been from my hon. Friend. The extent to which such assistance may be appropriate is a matter which is currently being considered by English Heritage in conjunction with other interested parties.

Press Regulation

Sir Jerry Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the recipients of embargoed copies of the report by Sir David Calcutt and the dates on which they received the

Mr. Brooke: No embargoed copies of the report by Sir David Calcutt QC were made available outside Government and civil service prior to the date of the report's publication.

Broadcasting

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has had from the Broadcasting Standards Council and the Independent Television Commission regarding television broadcasts originating from outside the United Kingdom with regard to standards of taste, decency, violence and sexual content; which broadcasts have been mentioned; and if he will make a statement about the United Kingdom's ability to control pornographic broadcasts.

Mr. Brooke: I have received reports from both the Broadcasting Standards Council and the Independent Television Commission concerning the satellite channel Red Hot Dutch. I am considering what action is open to me to take under the powers available to me in the Broadcasting Act 1990, consistent with the United Kingdom's obligations under the EC broadcasting directive.

Listed Buildings

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his policy and procedure when he responds to complaints *(a)* from hon. Members and *(b)* from members of the public that listed buildings are being allowed to fall into a state of disrepair; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: When such complaints are received, my officials would normally make inquiries of English Heritage, the local authority concerned, or the owner, as appropriate. Further action would in the first instance be a matter for the local authority, but in exceptional cases consideration would also be given to the use of my reserve powers.

Press Freedom

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about ministerial consideration of the issues and proposals in the report from Sir David Calcutt QC.

Mr. Brooke: I would refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made on 14 January 1993, *Official Report*, columns 1067-82.

Bletchley Park

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the future of Bletchley Park as a museum dedicated to the cryptographers of world war two.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* Bletchley Park is at present owned partly by the Government and partly by British Telecom, both of whom plan to dispose of the site now that it is no longer needed for their own purposes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State looks on disposal as the opportunity to create at Bletchley Park a visible record of the code-breaking activities which took place there during world war 2. Departmental officials, and British Telecom too, are in touch with the Bletchley Park Trust about the trust's proposals for acquiring part of the site and developing a museum there. These discussions are aimed at translating the present proposals into firm plans.

WALES

Education Programmes

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the effective provision of personal and social education programmes in schools in the last two years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Personal and social education is subject to inspection by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools who have undertaken several surveys of aspects of its provision in parts of Wales over the past two years.

HMI has also addressed the subject, as appropriate, in its report on individual schools. Our new arrangements for inspections by registered inspectors will ensure more published reports on all aspects of the life of a school.

For 1993-94, the Welsh Office will be supporting expenditure by local education authorities to support schools in the personal and social development of young people.

School Building Design

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice has been published in the last two years in school building design; and what was the principal purpose of such advice in each case.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Guidance and advice on school building design in England and Wales is promulgated by the Department for Education. That Department seeks advice from the Welsh Office as and when appropriate.

Special Needs Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessments he has made of the number of educational psychologists, physiotherapists, speech therapists, qualified specialists in hearing and visual impairments and other specialist support staff needed to ensure that all statements of special educational needs are prepared within six months whilst work with other children with special needs is maintained at satisfactory levels.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is for local education authorities to assess and make provision for appropriate numbers of such specialist staff to ensure that statements of special educational needs are prepared within six months. I would expect LEAs to liaise and work closely with district health authorities and social services departments in this process.

Whorled Caraway Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to protect the whorled caraway plant species at the Rhigos site in Brecon Beacons national park.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. The whorled caraway plant is not protected by schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, nor is it classified as a nationally scarce species.

Sheep Producers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the procedure he intends to follow in the allocation of quota to individual sheep producers in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Over 90 per cent. of producers in Wales who were paid sheep annual premium in 1991 have by now received details of their initial allocation of ewe premium quota. Those remaining producers who have not received an allocation under this round are being considered under a second round of allocations. At a later date we will also be considering applications from producers who claimed premium for the first time in 1992 and producers who have inherited holdings from producers who ceased sheep production in 1992. Finally, applications for quota from the national reserve will also be invited following consultations with interested parties on how the reserve will be managed. The reserve has been established in order to deal specifically with cases where the determination of quota on a historical reference period would cause special difficulties for certain producers.

Total Management Centre

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the development of the north Wales QED site.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply given to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) on 17 November 1992 at column *144*. This has been supplemented by my letter of 16 December to the hon. Member for Wrexham, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many staff were employed by his Department's press office in each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of staff employed in my Department's press office during the years in question is as follows:

	Number
1979-80	8
1980-81	8
1981-82	8
1982-83	8
1983-84	8
1984-85	10
1985-86	9
1986-87	9
1987-88	8
1988-89	9
1989-90	9
1990-91	8
1991-92	9

Committee of the Regions

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Association of European Regions concerning the method of selection of the United Kingdom members and alternates of the proposed Committee of the Regions.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Electricity Cables

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received expressing public concerns over the electromagnetic effects of overhead electricity cables.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend has received one representation about the possible human health effects.

DEFENCE

Helicopter Carrier

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the timetable for the procurement of the landing platform helicopter vessel and list any foreseeable factors which might affect the timing of his placing of the construction contract.

Mr. Aitken: Evaluation of the tenders for the new landing platform helicopter vessel, received in October, will be complete this summer. It is planned to place the order in the autumn.

Any order would be dependent upon the outcome of our evaluation of tenders and the competing demands within the defence programme at the time.

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff were employed by his Department's press office in each year since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The numbers of information and administrative grades employed in the Ministry of Defence press and facilities office have been:

Numbers of information and administrative grades

	Number
1979	48
1980—82	24
1982—85	27
1985—87	23
1987 to mid 1992	20

Note: Current strength is 15.

Figures prior to 1987 are estimates based on the approved staffing levels.

Radiation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been made by his Department into the effects of electromagnetic field radiation and low-frequency non-ionising radiation, respectively, from facilities and equipment operated by his Department.

Mr. Aitken: The MOD assesses its facilities and equipments against national guidelines for non-ionising radiation. In addition measurement surveys are carried out to determine the field and effects from both existing equipments and new equipments as they are brought into service.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to respond to the study by the National Radiological Protection Board into the effects of radiation on personnel in attendance at British nuclear tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: When the National Radiological Protection Board report is published the Ministry of Defence will, in the light of its conclusions, consider how best to respond.

Iraq

Sir George Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the outcome of coalition operations against Iraq on 13 January.

Mr. Rifkind: I am delighted to report that information now received confirms that no coalition aircraft or personnel were lost or damaged in the attack. There are media reports of a small number of Iraqi casualties, but we are unable to substantiate these at present.

I am also in a position to confirm that the operation achieved a high degree of success. All the indicators so far are that a serious blow has been dealt to the Iraqi air defence network in the south, thereby significantly enhancing the safety of coalition aircraft patrolling the no-fly zone. The latest information indicates that the RAF Tornado GR1 aircraft involved successfully inflicted severe damage on their targets in the air defence facilities at Al Amarah.

Further reconnaissance will be required to provide firmer details, and it will be some time before final assessments of the success of the operation are available. I will continue to report to the House as more information becomes available.

HEALTH

Industrial Diseases

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are taken at the level of district health authorities, between them, or by the Health and Safety Executive, to survey the incidence of use, and collation of the contents of information supplied by medical practitioners signing death certificates consequent to changes in those certificates under the Industrial Diseases (Notification) Act 1981.

Mr. Sackville: All registered deaths, including those certified by coroners as due to an industrial disease, are statutorily drawn to the attention of the district directors of public health, under section 124 of the National Health Service Act 1977, who may analyse them as they feel appropriate.

Information concerning deaths from selected causes which may be the consequence of an industrial disease are routinely supplied to the Health and Safety Executive and analysed and published as appropriate.

Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the future of the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research.

Mr. Sackville: The centre for applied microbiology and research (CAMR) is at present part of the Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS), and reports to me through the PHLS board. Following recent consideration of these arrangements, we have decided that CAMR should become a separate body in its own right, remaining accountable to Health Ministers. This will be implemented by creating the centre as an authority under the Department of Health, which will report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State through its own board. I will make a further announcement once the necessary preparations have been completed.

Epilepsy (Computer Games)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations she has had with the British Epilepsy Association concerning the incidence of photo-sensitive epilepsy and causal links with computer games.

Mr. Yeo: None.

Community Care Grant

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the allocation of community care grant to each London borough and the City of London Corporation in 1993-94; and if she will make a statement on the ability of the London authorities to provide community care services in 1993-94;

(2) if she will provide details of the calculations for community care grant in London as provided by her Department to local authority associations and to provide an explanation for the corrections made.

Mr. Yeo: Indicative special transitional grant allocations for all authorities were given in the Department's circular LASSL(92)12 (amended) issued to local authorities on 14 December 1992. The circular sets out the basis of the calculations, and a copy is in the Library. The figures were revised because of a technical error in the original formula used to calculate the figures. The extra £565 million which has been made available to local authorities for community care has been ring fenced to enable all authorities to arrange and purchase appropriate care under their new responsibilities.

Tomlinson Report

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the estimated cost of funding the transfer or redundancy of 680 doctors in London, as envisaged by the Tomlinson report;

(2) if she will publish the detailed reasoning behind the Tomlinson report estimate of £150 million to be spent on developing primary care services; and if she will publish similarly detailed costing of the costs of implementing the Tomlinson report in respect of *(a)* transfer and redundancy of doctors and *(b)* capital investment in restructuring hospitals;

(3) what provision has been made in the public expenditure planning totals for 1993-94 to 1995-96 to fund the implementation of the Tomlinson report in respect of *(a)* transfer and redundancy of doctors, *(b)* developing primary care services and *(c)* capital investment in restructuring hospitals.

Dr. Mawhinney: We shall publish our proposals for health services in London in the light of the Tomlinson recommendations, and their financial implications, shortly.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of residential care and nursing home places in each London borough.

Mr. Yeo: Statistics on private nursing homes are not collected by borough. Details of nursing home places are held by district health authorities and the latest available information is contained in "Private hospitals, homes and clinics registered under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984", copies of which are available in the Library.

The reported number of places in residential care homes in London boroughs as at March 1991 was:

	Number
Barking	582
Barnet	2,262
Bexley	583
Brent	594
Bromley	1,489
Camden	939
City of London	0
Croydon	2,106
Ealing	1,379
Enfield	1,175
Greenwich	714
Hackney	809
Hammersmith and Fulham	651
Haringey	1,174
Harrow	1,008
Havering	1,387
Hillingdon	1,010
Hounslow	790
Islington	937
Kensington and Chelsea	635
Kingston upon Thames	658
Lambeth	1,681
Lewisham	1,334
Merton	719
Newham	774
Redbridge	1,112
Richmond upon Thames	1,109
Southwark	895
Sutton	889
Tower Hamlets	549
Waltham Forest	1,058
Wandsworth	1,611
Westminster	874

These figures include places in independent and local authority homes (both staffed and unstaffed). They do not, however, include places in most independent homes for fewer than four residents and some other independent homes which are not subject to registration under the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *615*, how many residential properties are owned by her Department, other than by the national health service; and what number and percentage of these are empty.

Mr. Sackville: The Department itself does not own any residential properties.

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff were employed by her Department's press office in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: Information for the years 1979-80 to 1987-88 is not available in the form requested.

	Professional staff	*Administrative staff*
1989-90	13	1
1990-91	14	1
1991-92	13	1
1992-93	14	1

Electromagnetic Radiation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has conducted into the health effects of electromagnetic energy subsequent to the study on electromagnetic fields and the risk of cancer, published in March 1992.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is funding the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) to undertake a programme of laboratory research into the effects on health of electromagnetic fields. This work was under way at the time the March 1992 study from the board was published. The programme includes the development of methods of measuring fields' strengths, theoretical assessments of energy distribution within the human body

and the effects of fields on the development and behaviour of animals and cellular systems. Results will be published as the various studies are completed.

In addition, an advisory group to the board, chaired by Sir Richard Doll, continues to review new published information from worldwide sources.

European Drug Prevention Week

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the promotional budget for European drug prevention week was spent on *(a)* leaflets advertising specific services, *(b)* radio advertising and *(c)* television advertising.

Dr. Mawhinney: Producing and screening television commercials advertising the week represented about 16 per cent. of the total expenditure on European drug prevention week of Government Departments in England and Wales.

No radio advertisements or leaflets advertising specific services were commissioned centrally. However, £590,000 was made available to regional health authorities, health districts and local drug prevention teams for the development of local projects. Some local radio advertisements and leaflets advertising services were produced from within the regional allocation as part of local campaigns.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent on producing *(a)* folders, *(b)* promotional pens and *(b)* balloons for European drug prevention week.

Dr. Mawhinney: A range of support material was made available to help local groups promote awareness about the dangers of drug misuse and the availability of services during the Week. This material included posters, flyers, folders, badges, pens and balloons. The cost of producing folders, pens and balloons was £27,500, £34,000 and £11,000 respectively.

Myelography

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what efforts are being made to ensure that patients for whom myelography is proposed are made fully aware of the risks of that specific form of treatment.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* This forms part of the process of achieving informed consent from the patient prior to the procedure.

Patients are entitled to receive sufficient information in a way that they can understand about the proposed treatment, any possible alternatives and any substantial risks. Patients must then be allowed to decide whether they will agree to the treatment. This important principle has been highlighted in the patients charter.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been issued to radiologists and radiographers regarding the dangers of use of the contrast medium iophendylate.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* Iophendylate is the active ingredient of Myodil. I refer the hon. Member to the replies that my right hon. Friend gave the then right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South, Mr. Ashley, on 13 December 1990 at columns *466-69*.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the level of use of magnetic resonance imaging within national health service institutions.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 11 January 1993]* **:** I am aware of 51 magnetic resonance imaging units in use in the national health service in the United Kingdom.

SCOTLAND

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the total number of residential properties owned by his Department, *(b)* the number of such properties which are empty, and *(c)*, *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 11 January 1993]* **:** The total numbers of residential properties owned by the Scottish Office, including the health service, as at 31 March 1992 was 1,666, of which 245 were vacant. The number of vacant properties expressed as a percentage of the total owned is 14·7 per cent.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nuclear Accident Prevention

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what reports he has received from British Nuclear Fuels plc on the effectiveness of its plutonium evaporator live visual inspection system to prevent radiological accidents at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: Following the incident involving the plutonium evaporator cell at Sellafield on 8 September and the recovery of the resultant spillage, a number of features have been introduced to prevent a recurrence and to improve early detection in the unlikely event of there being any such similar spillage in the future.

Such measures include detailed examination of relevant welds and where necessary repair, installation of drip trays with leak detectors, installation of television cameras and an improved inspection regime. The Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate also required British Nuclear Fuels plc (BNFL) to improve lighting and to install an automatic imaging system to detect any changes in the evaporator cell. These systems are in place and BNFL is confident that it would detect any similar leak if one were ever to occur.

Combined Heat and Power

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations his Department will have at the seminar on combined heat and power and the effects of EC environmental legislation on small-scale plants, to be held in Birmingham on 26 January.

Mr. Eggar: A representative of my Department will be speaking at the seminar. I understand that representatives of the Department of the Environment, including the energy efficiency office, and of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution are expected also to attend.

Offshore Oil and Gas

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will suspend the 14th round of offshore oil and gas production licences.

Mr. Eggar: I have no plans to do so.

Electricity Cables

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what studies his Department, or predecessor departments, has undertaken into the electromagnetic effects of high-voltage electricity cables.

Mr. Eggar: The Department and its predecessors have not themselves carried out such studies. However, the Department keeps in close touch with the work being done nationally and internationally on this subject. In the United Kingdom the National Grid Company, formerly the CEGB, is currently funding such work which is carried out by independent research bodies.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the number of jobs in those areas currently enjoying assisted area status.

Mr. Sainsbury: Of the 322 travel-to-work areas in Great Britain, 99 have assisted area status including Manchester which is part non-assisted. The latest available data on employment at TTWA level come from the 1989 census of employment. This gives the number of employees in employment, excluding self-employed, in all assisted areas as 7,230,384. The total for Great Britain was 22,234,458.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the amount of *(a)* Government grants and *(b)* European Community grants given in each of the last five years to assisted area status locations.

Mr. Sainsbury: On *(a)*, Government expenditure by my Department in each of the last five financial years in respect of regional selective assistance, regional enterprise grants, consultancy initiative, expenditure by English Estates on land and factories and on residual expenditure under the regional development grants schemes, to locations in England with assisted area status were:

	£ million at current prices
1987-88	271
1988-89	323
1989-90	280
1990-91	223
1991-92	175

Details of expenditure on other schemes run by my Department are not held on a regional basis.

On *(b)*, the European Community makes many different types of grant to the United Kingdom. Of these, part of the structural funds is regionally allocated under objectives 1, 2 and 5B. The only area in the United Kingdom that receives moneys under objective 1 is Northern Ireland. Regions designated under objectives 2 and 5B equate approximately to the assisted areas of Great Britain as designated by my Department. Totals allocated to these two areas in each of the calendar years 1989 to 1993 were:

	£ million at current prices
1989	321
1990	466
1991	450
1992	619
1993	643

Mr. Morley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to announce the results of the review of assisted area status.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our intention is to announce the results of the assisted areas map review as early as possible, taking account of the outcome of the coal review and after the necessary clearance of the European Commission.

Review Results

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he proposes to announce the results of his coal review; when he proposes to announce the results of his review of assisted areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The findings of the coal review will be set out in a White Paper to be published as soon as possible. The results of the assisted areas review will be announced as soon as possible and after the necessary clearance of the European Commission, but will need to take account of the coal review and the responses of the consultation document which the Government issued in June 1992.

Coal-water Mixtures

Mr. Dowd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans the European Commission has to invest in coal-water mixture research in *(a)* 1993 and *(b)* 1994.

Mr. Eggar: The European Commission has no plans to invest in coal-water mixture research in either 1993 or 1994.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information his Department has on the use of coal-water mixtures for power generation in non-EC developed countries and countries of the former Soviet Union.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is not aware that coal-water mixtures are used commercially for power generation in eastern Europe or the countries of the former Soviet Union. It is aware that extensive research and development has been carried out in these countries and the United States over several decades and that research and development is continuing in Japan. Japan is thought to be the only country undertaking extensive demonstrations of the technology with around 10 projects initiated over the past few years.

The previous research and development carried out in the United Kingdom indicated that the technology is not economic in this country.

Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Colvin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for extending the non-fossil fuel obligation to Scotland and Ireland; when it will happen; and if it will be on a rolling programme basis.

Mr. Eggar: Policy in relation to the making of non-fossil fuel obligation orders in Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively. Meanwhile, the coal review is considering the implications of the obligation on electricity suppliers to purchase non-fossil power.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Colvin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much his Department spent in each year from 1988-89 to 1991-92, and how much is planned to be spent in 1992-93, on research and development on renewable energy.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has spent the following amounts on research and development on renewable energy.

	£ million
1988-89	16·0
1989-90	17·9
1990-91	20·8
1991-92	24·0

Note
The provision for 1992-93 is £24·3 million.

Coal Industry

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will give the total cost of consultancies commissioned into the coal industry since April 1990;

(2) how much he plans to spend on consultancies into the coal industry during the current financial year.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The Department of Energy commissioned only one consultancy on the coal industry in 1990-91, from Alan Oakes. On grounds of commercial confidentiality, the costs of individual consultancies is not released.

In 1991-92 the Department of Energy commissioned six consultancies on coal privatisation at a cost that year of £3·3 million.

A further two consultancies have been commissioned by the DTI on coal privatisation in 1992-93. The Department has also commissioned four consultancies into the coal industry as a result of the coal review. I have in addition appointed John T. Boyd to report on the 10 pits currently subject to consultation. Total expenditure on consultancies into the coal industry by the DTI in 1992-93 is currently forecast to be £6·5 million.

A number of consultants have also contributed to the Department's coal research and development programme, managed by the energy technology support unit at Harwell.

Pit Closures

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade according to what criteria the review procedure ordered by Lord Justice Glidewell in his ruling of 21 December 1992 will assess the viability of the 31 pits listed for closure.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will now include the 10 pits proposed for immediate closure with the other 21 in his review following judgment of the High Court of 21 December 1992.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* Lord Justice Glidewell did not order a review procedure to assess the viability of the 31 pits. His judgment related only to the 10 pits subject to consultation by British Coal. He said that what was needed was the rapid addition to the consultation already under way of some independent scrutiny. While it was for British Coal and the unions to decide how such an independent scrutiny should be conducted and who should conduct it, he said he had the impression that if my right hon. Friend instructed Boyds to report on the 10 pits as well as the other 21 and in particular to consider whether British Coal's criteria for the closure of 10 pits would be met in relation to any or all of them, the unions and other applicants might well agree to that course. It was also in his view a solution which any future court might well conclude was within his declaration.

In his light of the judgment, my right hon. Friend has appointed Boyds to report on the 10 pits. This course is not intended in any way to pre-empt the outcome of the discussions between British Coal and the unions on the procedure which they should now follow. It is also a separate exercise from Boyd's current work on the other 21 pits being carried out as part of the coal review. No final decision will be taken on closing the 10 pits until the House has had the chance to debate the coal review White Paper, the consultation process has been completed and Boyds have reported.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans there are to resume production at the 10 collieries that he announced would be closed in his statement to the House of 19 October 1992, following the ruling of the High Court of 21 December 1992.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the steps being taken by his Department and British Coal following the judgment of the High Court of 21 December 1992 in respect of *(a)* resumption of normal working at the 10 pits proposed for immediate closure and *(b)* review of the redundancies occurring between 13 October 1992 and 21 December 1992 at those pits.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* These are matters for British Coal. However, I do not understand there to be anything in the judgment which requires coaling to resume at the 10 pits.

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many staff were employed by his Department's press office in each year since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: Separate figures for the years before 1987 are not readily available. The number of staff in post in the Department's press office on 1 April since then has been as follows:

	Number
1987	51
1988	51
1989	37
1990	37
1991	38
1992	135

[1] The total subsequently increased to 42 following the transfer of staff and functions from the former Department of Energy. It includes 15 clerical and other support posts.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC Committee of the Regions

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards establishing the membership of the EC Committee of the Regions *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in other member states of the EC.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Government are still considering the nomination of the 24 United Kingdom members of the committee (and 23 alternates) and how the seats should be allocated between the different parts of the United Kingdom. No decisions have yet been taken.

The position is broadly similar in most other member states. Only Greece has so far announced their candidates.

Visitors' Visas

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the number of appeals in the last 12 months against refusal of visitors' visas to people visiting relatives or friends in Walsall.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is not centrally recorded and could not be provided except at disproportionate expense.

Israel

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to Israel in regard to the expulsion of more than 400 Palestinians in December 1992; and what representations Her Majesty's Government have made on the expulsions to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have drawn the attention of the Israeli Government to the two EC statements which condemned the deportations, urged the Israelis to return the deportees, and emphasised the importance of pursuing the peace process. And since the adoption of the Security Council resolution 799 the British ambassador has continued to underline to the Israelis our strong views on this issue. The UNHCR is not at present involved in this issue.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evaluation Her Majesty's Government have made of the relevance of article 49 of the fourth Geneva convention (1949) on human rights to Israel's expulsion of over 400 Palestinians in December; and what representations have been made to the International Red Cross by Her Majesty's Government on the matter.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We consider the deportations to be in violation of the fourth Geneva convention. We remain in close contact with the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to his Israeli counterpart in regard to United Nations Security Council resolution 799(92).

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 799 the British ambassador has continued to underline to the Israelis our strong views on the question of the Palestinian deportees.

Jonathan Moyle

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he made during his recent visit to Chile to the Chilean Government on the death of Jonathan Moyle.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed the Moylé case at some length with both the Foreign Minister of Chile, Senor Silva Cimma, and the Moyle family's lawyer, Senor Trivino. Among the subjects discussed was the question of seeking the appointment of a special investigating magistrate.

Hong Kong

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the living conditions for refugees at the Whitehead detention centre in the Crown Territories of Hong Kong.

Mr. Goodlad: The Whitehead detention centre currently houses 20,354 Vietnamese migrants. They enjoy freedom of movement within their sections of the centre where medical, educational and social facilities are available.

The Hong Kong Government seek to maintain law and order in all the detention centres while trying not to run them as prisons. Conscious efforts have been made to encourage Vietnamese migrants to participate in the running of the centres through the establishment of camp committees.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions in regard to the role of British forces in civil emergency planning and evacuation in the Crown Territories he had during his recent visit to Hong Kong.

Mr. Goodlad: None. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not recently visited Hong Kong. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence visited Hong Kong from 7 to 8 January. These issues did not figure among the discussions that he held there.

Holiday Accommodation

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he is planning to make to his counterparts in the EC about unsafe holiday accommodation abroad.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no such plans. The safety of holiday accommodation is a matter for the individual Governments of the member states.

The Association of British Travel Agents offers advice to British tour operators on the safety standards of holiday accommodation. The EC package travel directive however makes tour operators liable for damage or injury suffered by customers, even if caused by negligence of the owner or manager of holiday accommodation they use.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that United Kingdom holidaymakers are not exposed to hazardous foreign accommodation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office offers the British travelling public advice about dangers to their safety resulting from political unrest, lawlessness, threats of violence, natural disasters or epidemics.

Holidaymakers are advised to consult their travel operator or the relevant national tourist office about the safety of their accommodation.

Thailand (Public Defender)

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps were taken by the British consulate in Thailand to advise *(a)* Karyn Smith, *(b)* Stephen Harris and *(c)* other British citizens accused of crimes in Thailand, of the existence of a public defender system in that country; and what consideration he has given to making ex-gratia payments to the families of British prisoners in Thailand who have been caused hardship by the failure of the consulate to inform them of the public defender system.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the cases of Karyn Smith and Stephen Harris the question did not arise. Karyn Smith's parents arrived in Thailand shortly after her arrest and assumed responsibility for appointing a lawyer. Mr. Harris specifically asked the embassy not to become involved in the legal aspects of his case. The public defender system in Thailand is well known among detainees. But because it is not regarded by Western embassies as a viable alternative to private legal representation, our embassy has not made a practice of recommending it. Few British detainees have opted to use it. Most opt for private legal representation. There are no grounds for making ex-gratia payments to the families of British prisoners in Thailand.

Argentina

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had with his Argentine counterpart on the prospects of Argentina joining the nuclear non-proliferation treaty during his recent visit.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and his Argentine counterpart discussed a number of non-proliferation issues, in particular the importance of bringing into effect as soon as possible the treaty of Tlatelolco which will create a nuclear weapons-free zone in Latin America. This is a vital agreement for the security of the region, and we consider it a step towards accession to the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's response to the Iraqi incursion into Kuwait around 10 January.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The UN Secretary-General reported to the Security Council that these activities were in violation of the procedures established by the Security Council. The Security Council responded on 11 January with a statement condemning the action taken by Iraq which constituted further material breaches of SCR 687 which established the ceasefire at the end of the Gulf war. The council demanded that Iraq co-operate fully with the United Nations Iraq/Kuwait observer mission (UNIKOM) and warned Iraq of the serious consequences that would flow from continued defiance. We fully supported this statement.

On 13 February the Iraqi ambassador to the UN notified the President of the Security Council that his Government had suspended incursions to retrieve equipment from Kuwait. The Permanent Four have since put the Iraqis on notice that coalition actions on 13 January will not be the end of the matter if Iraq continues to flout the will of the international community.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the visas which have been granted or other facilities extended in the last year to enable Iraqis to enter the United Kingdom for the purposes of discussion with telecommunication or other commercial companies.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Statistics according to nationality and purpose of visit are not centrally recorded and could not be provided except at disproportionate cost. However, we are aware that visas were issued to eight Iraqis in December 1992 to enter the United Kingdom for the purpose of discussions with a telecommunications company.

We have not extended any other facilities to enable Iraqis to enter the United Kingdom for commercial discussions.

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff were employed by his Department's press office in each year since 1979.

Mr. Goodlad: The numbers of staff employed in the FCO diplomatic wing news department and the aid wing press and briefing section are as follows:

Year	*Staff*
1983-84	26·0
1984-85	26·0
1985-86	26·5
1986-87	25·5
1987-88	19·0
1988-89	18·0
1989-90	18·0
1990-91	18·0
1991-92	18·0

Our records do not go back beyond 1983.

ENVIRONMENT

Radon

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the current average radon level in United Kingdom houses, expressed in becquerels per cubic metre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) estimates that the average radon level in dwellings in the United Kingdom is 20 becquerels per cubic metre of air. The action level is an annual average of 200 becquerels per cubic metre.

Homelessness, Walsall

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make an assessment of the extent of homelessness in Walsall; and how many *(a)* families and *(b)* single people will benefit from the additional funding announced in the autumn statement.

Mr. Baldry: An assessment is made on the basis of the local authority's own estimates contained in its housing strategy statement and statistical returns, together with the homelessness indicator in the housing general needs index.

This information was used to inform our decisions on the housing investment programme allocations to local authorities which were announced on 17 December 1992.

The autumn statement made considerable additional resources available to support capital programmes which will directly benefit families and single people in housing need:

An increase in the Housing Corporation spending to £2·3 billion this year, to enable the immediate purchase of about 17,000 new, empty or repossessed homes for those in housing need (against the original autumn statement target of 16,000).

Provide sufficient funds to exceed the target of 153,000 new housing association homes in the three years 1992-93 to 1994-95. This is now expected to be 170,000.

The release of local authority capital receipts, which are expected to add around £1 billion to housing spending between now and 1995-96.

And the creation of a new housing partnership fund where £30 million will be available nationally in the form of supplementary credit approvals to be bid for worthwhile housing investment projects.

Housing, Walsall

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses there are in multiple occupation in Walsall.

Mr. Baldry: The April 1991 census of population reports 52 shared dwellings in the Walsall local authority area.

Tarmac Construction

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of money the Government transferred to Tarmac Construction for the liability it assumed for the redundancy entitlements of staff who transferred with PSA Projects under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981.

Mr. Redwood: Money was not transferred to Tarmac Construction specifically for the liabilities it assumed for staff redundancy entitlements. Under the severance sharing scheme Tarmac will be reimbursed for the costs of making staff redundant on an agreed basis subject to the overall limit to the Government's liability for redundancy payments in respect of staff as detailed in the answer given to the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), on 25 November 1992.

Property Services Agency

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total estimated cost of closing PSA Building Management Scotland based on December 1992 staff-in-post figures.

Mr. Redwood: This figure is not readily available and would, in any event, be commercially confidential.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the PSA Projects board members were aware of the bids of the different potential purchasers for PSA Projects.

Mr. Redwood: All board members met the shortlisted bidders and, in preparation for that, were given copies of the bids with the financial details edited out.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Her Majesty's Government are willing to sell all five PSA Building Management business divisions to one purchaser.

Mr. Redwood: The Government are anxious to promote competition in the provision of maintenance services and would therefore be most reluctant to sell all the businesses to one purchaser.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made of value for money in the sale of PSA Projects to Tarmac Construction.

Mr. Redwood: Tarmac's bid for PSA Projects was assessed both against the value of competing bids and against the cost of closing projects.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government expect to receive a net income from potential purchasers of all the PSA Building Management business divisions.

Mr. Redwood: Each of the businesses will have a sizeable contractually committed workload at the point of sale. We expect this to be reflected in the financial arrangements for disposal.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for the future of those PSA Building Management business divisions which remain unsold by 1994.

Mr. Redwood: I have no specific plans as our intention is to sell the Building Management businesses this year.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when the memorandum for the sale of the five PSA Building Management business divisions will be issued to potential bidders;

(2) what is the timetable for the sale of the PSA Building Management business divisions.

Mr. Redwood: Final decisions have not yet been taken on the timetable for the sale of PSA Building Management business divisions or for the issue of the sale memorandum.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many times between December 1991

and 30 September 1992, on what dates, for what purpose and on what basis civil servants and others serving as PSA Projects board members formally and informally met representatives of companies bidding for PSA projects;

(2) how many times, on what dates, and for what purpose, and on what basis civil servants and others serving as PSA Projects board members formally and informally met representatives of the Tarmac Group between 1 December 1991 and 30 September 1992.

Mr. Redwood: Many meetings would have taken place both formally and informally between individual members of Tarmac and other companies bidding for PSA Projects, as with other major construction industry companies, in the normal course of business.

In addition during the due vigilance phase of the sales process both the board and individual board members met the shortlisted bidders. Following Tarmac's selection as preferred bidder at the end of September and before exchange of contracts on October 1 there was a meeting between the board and Tarmac Construction to discuss Tarmac's plans for the business and their communication to PSA Projects staff and a number of discussions between individual board members and Tarmac representatives on particular aspects of the prospective sale.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many outstanding claims against PSA Services have been lodged by companies within the Tarmac Group; what is their total value; and what is the total value of such claims relating to work at the Faslane and Coulport submarine bases;

(2) how many outstanding claims against companies within the Tarmac Group have been made by PSA Services;

(3) what arrangements he has made to settle outstanding claims lodged by Tarmac companies against PSA Services following the sale of PSA Projects to Tarmac Construction Ltd.

Mr. Redwood: There are no outstanding claims against the Tarmac Group of companies by PSA Projects or vice versa. Since 1 April 1992 the contracting authority for Government works contracts has been the individual client department. Any service provided by PSA Projects has been solely as agent.

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements exist to ensure that surplus staff from PSA Projects will be matched with vacancies in Departments and that Departments do not recruit externally while there are surplus staff in the same grade in PSA Projects.

Mr. Redwood: PSA maintains constant contact with other Government Departments through its personnel change unit which was specifically set up for the purppse of identifying alternative posts for all surplus staff in PSA. These Departments are sympathetic to the PSA's situation and generally respond positively to our approaches. Most Departments consider surplus PSA staff before embarking upon any external recruitment, but if they decide to advertise outside the service PSA staff are normally invited to apply.

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the dates, times and places, during the three-month period up to the sale of PSA Projects, of the internal meetings other than those with trade unions, at which PSA management discussed how the Agency's equal opportunities policies would be applied to the PSA Projects sale; and if he will make a statement on each step taken arising from those meetings, with regard to application of those policies.

Mr. Redwood: PSA Projects personnel staff, and representatives from the group personnel directorate, which has overall responsibility within PSA Services for all equal opportunities matters, regularly held meetings throughout the three-month period up to the sale of Projects, to discuss how the Department's equal opportunities policies should be applied in the sale of PSA Projects. The main meetings took place on 30 July 1992 in Marsham street and 21 September and 23 October 1992 in Croydon. Steps taken as a result of these meetings were:

(a) to produce a paper for the trade unions setting out the proposed secondee selection criteria and arrangements for the avoidance of sexual and racial discrimination.

(b) to undertake a further survey of the ethnic origin of those staff in PSA Projects who have hitherto declined to provide this information in order to improve the quality of information held on the ethnic origin database.

(c) to establish central monitoring by the equal opportunities unit of the secondee selection process.

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action was taken to ensure that there was no direct or indirect discrimination in the selection of PSA Projects staff for secondment; and if he will list the measures taken to prevent discrimination on the grounds of race, gender or disability.

Mr. Redwood: The trade unions were consulted about the proposed criteria for the selection of secondees in October 1992.

The procedures to be adopted in the selection of staff for secondment were set out in a letter from the then managing director of PSA Projects to all his senior managers. This letter drew specific attention to the requirement of the equal opportunities legislation and the importance of avoiding any direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of race, gender or disability. A copy of this letter was given to the trade unions in December 1992.

Throughout the selection process the results were monitored centrally to ensure that no direct or indirect discrimination had taken place.

Other measures undertaken during 1992 included the issue of guidance to all staff about the avoidance of racial or sexual harassment in the workplace. A new complaints and grievances procedure was also agreed with the trade unions and issued to staff throughout PSA Services in the form of a staff circular in advance of the PSA Projects sale.

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what written guidance was given to PSA Projects staff, setting out the appeals procedure to follow if they were turned down for secondment and they believed this was done on the grounds of gender, race or disability.

Mr. Redwood: The appeals procedure for staff to follow in the event of any complaint or grievance including any on sexual or racial discrimination grounds was set out in a departmental notice which was agreed with the trade unions and issued to all PSA staff in April 1992.

In the light of this no separate guidance for PSA Projects staff was thought to be necessary.

Rents

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 10 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *738*, when he expects the Housing Corporation to publish its report on rents and affordability.

Mr. Baldry: The Housing Corporation's report, "The Affordability of Housing Association Rents", was published on 15 December 1992 and a copy was placed in the Library.

Travellers

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* the traditional travelling community and *(b)* the new age travellers.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not hold information in the form requested. Section 16 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 defines gipsies as "persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin". In some cases, the Courts have held that individual new age travellers are gipsies within the statutory definition. Local authorities in England and Wales undertake regular counts of gipsy caravans in their areas, and in January 1992 English local authorities counted a total of 12,777 gipsy caravans.

Cable Identification Colours

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the extent of harmonisation of cable identification colours in the EC.

Mr. Baldry: Preliminary discussion on the possible harmonisation of cable identification colours has taken place within technical committees responsible for electro-technical standardisation at European and international level.

The representation of United Kingdom interests in these negotiations is the responsibility of the British electro-technical committee.

Electrical Contractors

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether an electrical contractor from another Community country will be required to comply with BS 7671 when carrying out an electrical installation in the United Kingdom after the completion of the single market.

Mr. Baldry: In accordance with treaty obligations United Kingdom regulatory authorities, public purchasers and certain private bodies would not be able to insist on strict compliance with the British standard. Compliance with a specification offering equivalent performance would also be acceptable under present arrangements.

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in which other EC states British electrical contractors have to comply with that state's national regulations.

Mr. Baldry: In general the details of regulations applicable to electrical installations are a matter for individual member states. Information on particular regulatory and other requirements applicable to British electrical contractors can best be obtained from the appropriate national authority. Where there is EC legislation—for example, relevant clauses of the workplace directive 89/654/EEC—affecting installations, the requirements of national regulations in all countries should be satisfied by meeting the requirements of the directive.

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provisions of United Kingdom legislation govern compliance with BS 7671.

Mr. Baldry: Compliance with BS 7671 is not an express requirement under United Kingdom legislation for electrical safety. However, compliance with the BS may be used as evidence in claiming conformity with certain statutory requirements. In this the role of BS 7671 is essentially the same as that of the "regulations" for electrical installations previously published by the Institution of Electrical Engineers.

Home Improvements, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what level of resources is available to Liverpool city council for home improvement grants in the current financial year; how many homes will be renovated in the current year; how many applications remain to be approved and works commenced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The level of resources dedicated to house renovation grants is a matter for Liverpool city council to decide within the framework of its capital programme and available resources.

Urban Programme

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what estimate his Department has made as to the impact on voluntary organisations of phasing out the urban programme;

(2) what procedures were followed by his Department in deciding to phase out the urban programme; and what guidance his Department has received in assessing the impact on the voluntary sector of changes in policy.

Mr. Robin Squire: There will continue to be a substantial urban programme (UP) in 1993-94 amounting to £176 million. We will honour in full existing commitments, including those for the voluntary sector and provide £20 million for urban partnership fund projects as part of the new capital partnership programme. It is open to local authorities to involve voluntary organisations in their urban partnership fund proposals. The decisions on the urban partnership were taken having regard to all the relevant factors, including their effect on the voluntary sector.

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many urban programme funded *(a)* social welfare and health and *(b)* housing projects targeted at ethnic minority communities will end in each of the financial years 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96; and what is the financial cost of these projects in each year;

(2) how many urban programme funded *(a)* social welfare and health and *(b)* housing projects run by voluntary organisations will end in each of the financial years 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96; and what is the financial cost of these projects in each year;

(3) how many urban programme funded *(a)* social welfare and health and *(b)* housing projects will end in each of the financial years 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96; and what is the financial cost of these projects in each year.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Empty Offices

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the current level of empty office space in *(a)* central London and *(b)* Greater London.

Mr. Baldry: Information on the level of empty office space in central and Greater London is not kept by this Department.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for the conversion of empty office blocks in London to housing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: A number of housing associations have been able to convert commercial property in London for short-term occupation by the homeless, and they are continuing to investigate properties on the market which might be suitable for this type of use. However, the scope for such work does appear to be fairly limited, compared with opportunities for permanent housing provision by more orthodox means.

Property Taxation Europe

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the countries in the Council of Europe which have a property tax which applies to houses and flats.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is not available in respect of Cyprus, Malta, Liechtenstein, San Marino, Hungary, Czechoslovakia or Poland. However, "Revenue Statistics of OECD Members 1965-1991" indicates that all other members of the Council of Europe collect recurrent and non-recurrent taxes on the use, transfer or ownership of property. Taxes on the use of properties for residence, where the amount payable is a function of the users' personal circumstances, are treated as taxes on income and are not separately identified.

City Challenge

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements his Department has made for a third round of bidding for city challenge funds in 1993-94; and what arrangements will be made in respect of future city challenge bids.

Mr. Robin Squire: The future of city challenge will be considered in the light of the general review of urban needs to be undertaken in 1993 and progress in the areas successful in the first two competitions.

TRANSPORT

Company Cars

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the proportion of cars in, entering or leaving central London in peak hours whose total running costs are not met wholly by the taxable income of their owners or drivers; and what are the comparable figures available since 1980.

Mr. Norris: A survey conducted in 1989 found that 85 per cent. of cars entering central London during the morning peak (7 to 10 am) received some form of travel assistance from their company or employer for the journey being undertaken. Comparable figures from surveys conducted by the GLC in 1982 and 1985 are 74 per cent. and 78 per cent. respectively. The types of assistance received in 1989 are shown in the following table.

Type of travel assistance received for car journeys to central London during the morning peak (7-10 am): 1989

	Per cent.
Percentage receiving any form of travel assistance:	85
Type of assistance received (per cent.)[1]	
Parking space provided	50
Parking charges fully or partly paid	25
Mileage allowance	8
Self-employed tax relief or company allowance	8
Fuel costs fully or partly paid	38
None	15

[1] Percentages sum to more than 100 because more than one form of assistance may be provided.

Railway Expenditure

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much capital expenditure British Rail incurred, or plans to incur, on regional network track renewal in each year from 1980 to 1994.

Mr. Roger Freeman: The figures for British Rail's expenditure on track renewals between 1980 and 1991-92, the latest year available, are in the table.

	£ million[1]
1980	244
1981	238
1982	200
1983	253
1984-85	232
1985-86	196
1986-87	181
1987-88	195
1988-89	163
1989-90	173
1990-91	131
1991-92	163

[1] In 1991-92 prices.

Rail Privatisation

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish current and historical profit and loss accounts and balance sheets for each of the proposed rail passenger franchise units; and if he will set a date for publication.

Mr. Freeman: It is our intention to provide financial information to bidders for franchises, with accounts based on the financial performance of the British Rail units to be set up to "shadow" the service groups to be franchised. The information will be made available to bidders when they are formally invited to tender.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provisions will be made for reimbursement of local authorities for investment in capital programmes in proposals for privatisation of the railways.

Mr. Freeman: A number of local authorities have supported worthwhile railway investment projects in order to secure enhanced services or facilities for local people. The benefits which the local authorities were seeking to secure will continue to be provided. Where the local authorities' investment has been made on the basis of British Rail providing a particular service this obligation will pass to British Rail's successor. So there is no case for reimbursement.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that British Rail cannot act in a manner detrimental to current private passenger and freight operators until Railtrack is totally separated from British Rail passenger and freight operations.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend and I remain in close touch with the chairman of the British Railways Board. I remain confident that British Rail will do all that it can to ensure an effective transition.

Rolling Stock

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what powers he has to allow locomotive, wagon and rolling stock manufacturers to acquire surplus British Rail assets for sale or lease to private sector operators in advance of franchising legislation receiving the Royal Assent.

Mr. Freeman: This is a commercial matter for British Rail. British Rail is always interested to hear from those who wish to be included in tender lists for surplus rolling stock. For example, freight locomotives have already been sold to railway manufacturers for refurbishment and use in the private sector.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to publish an inventory, on a regular basis, of the locomotive, wagon, and rolling stock assets of each proposed passenger franchise and provide the same information for freight services.

Mr. Freeman: An inventory of rolling stock assets, including locomotives and wagons, for BR's existing passenger profit centres was published in the consultative document, "The Franchising of Passenger Rail Services", which we issued in October 1992. Updated information will be provided to bidders for passenger franchises when they are formally invited to tender. Information on the assets of the freight businesses will be contained in the information memorandum which will be provided for each business when it is offered for sale.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that British Rail does not scrap locomotives, wagons and rolling stock which could be acquired by the private sector *(a)* for operations in advance of franchising routes and *(b)* for refurbishment to create a second-hand market in advance of refurbishment.

Mr. Freeman: BR's policy is to dispose of life-expired rolling stock by competitive tender. Not all disposals are scrapped.

BR is storing securely the best assets which successor private operators might be able to use.

Tankers

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps his Department takes, in the case of sightings of unidentified tankers being reported in the Minch, to determine the identity of the vessels concerned;

(2) in what ways his Department has pursued reports of sightings of tankers in the Minch as promised in the Government response to the 40th report of the Public Accounts Committee, Session 1990-91 in December 1991;

(3) how many sightings of tankers in the Minch have been reported to his Department since their request for such reports in the Government response to the 40th report of the Public Accounts Committee in December 1991;

(4) what was the precise wording of the request for reports of sightings of tankers in the Minch referred to in the Government response to the 40th report of the Public Accounts Committee, Session 1990-91, December 1991; and to whom this request was made.

Mr. Norris: In the summer of 1991 the Highland regional council held a symposium on tankers in the Minch attended by representatives of many interested organisations. At the symposium, my Department issued a general invitation to report sightings of vessels which might be large laden tankers to my Department. This invitation was followed up in detailed paper by my Department for the Council, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. On a number of other occasions we have asked that local people should report any sightings of tankers in the Minch to the Department. In a new initiative, supported by my Department, the Highlands regional council is shortly to issue a leaflet outlining the voluntary reporting scheme.

The Department has received no reports of laden tankers over 10,000 tons grt using the Minch from any source. Any such laden tanker identified would be investigated by the Department to discover the reasons for its presence in the Minch. There is no means of investigating unidentified tankers.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to consider a requirement on all tankers and bulk carriers passing through British waters to carry equipment to allow them to be tracked by satellite in the same manner as for passenger aircraft.

Mr. Norris: Extension of existing surveillance arrangements for ships fall within the terms of reference of Lord Donaldson's inquiry announced by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department currently takes to monitor the movement of laden oil tankers around the British Isles.

Mr. Norris: A reporting system for loaded oil and chemical tankers of over 1600 grt is in place in the channel and Dover strait (MAREP). This provides detailed information about such ships to surveillance centres. In addition the channel navigation information service monitors by radar all traffic in the Dover strait and its approaches.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement on the route for the channel tunnel rail link; and if he remains committed to the construction of an international station at Stratford.

Mr. Freeman: An announcement will be made as soon as possible. The Government's view has not changed that the route should run via Stratford and Union Railways route studies have taken account of this. The opportunity for a station at Stratford is thereby preserved.

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive and subsequently publish the report by Union Railways on the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Freeman: A report has now been received. We shall move as quickly as possible to commence public consultation.

International Driving Licences

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek to remove the requirement for United Kingdom drivers to hold a current international driving licence when driving in other European Community countries.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: United Kingdom licence holders driving within the European Community are not required to hold an international driving permit in addition to a current full driving licence.

Green Card Insurance Certificate

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether a green card insurance certificate is now no longer required by United Kingdom drivers driving in other European Community countries.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: United Kingdom motor insurance policies provide third party cover in all EC member states. Drivers are not required to have a green card though they may find that in some countries the green card is more easily recognised as evidence of insurance than their insurance certificate.

Farm Vehicles

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are taken by his Department to ensure proper lighting and registration marking on farm vehicles and on the implements they tow.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Requirements covering the fitting and use of lamps and reflectors on all vehicles used on public roads, including agricultural tractors and trailers, are set out in the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989 (SI 1989-1796). There is also a requirement that a registration mark should be displayed on agricultural machines and trailers in the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971 (SI 1971/450). Enforcement of these rules is a matter for the police.

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff were employed by his Department's press office in each year since 1979.

Mr. Norris: Details of staff in post in the Department's press office from 1984 (including administrative support) are as follows:

Year	*Total staff in post*
1984	12
1985	11
1986	11
1987	10
1988	10
1989	12
1990	12
1991	13
1992	13

Before 1984, the information division was a common service of the Department of Transport, Department of the Environment and Property Services Agency. Figures prior to 1984 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

M1–M62 Link

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the results of the public consultation process concerning proposals for an M1–M62 motorway link in west Yorkshire.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The results of the public consultation will be announced after the analysis of the responses has been completed. This is likely to take several more months due to the complexity of the scheme and the large number of responses received.

M20 and A20

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the widening of the M20 in the Maidstone area and the new A20 road from Folkestone to be completed.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The M20 junctions 5 to 8 widening and A20 Folkestone to Dover schemes are expected to be complete by late summer 1993.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 216**

SESSION 1992–93

14th December, 1992—15th January, 1993

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

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Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

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Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

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Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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